

“This delightful country:” Lansford W. Hastings’ *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* and the tradition of the California Prospect in pre-Gold Rush Travel Literature

by


Kirsty Joanne Peddle  
B.A., University of Victoria, 1996

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of


MASTER OF ARTS


in the Department of History

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Brian W. Dippie, Supervisor (Department of History)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Theodore Wooley, Departmental Member (Department of History)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Lorne Hammond, Outside Member (Department of History)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Andrea Walsh, External Examiner (Department of Anthropology)

© Kirsty Joanne Peddle, 2002  
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. Brian W. Dippie

## ABSTRACT

The pre-Gold Rush literature on California is marked by little variation in either content or form. From the earliest account, published in 1808, American visitors saw California as an earthly paradise in the hands of an undeserving Other. While historians have often attributed the repetitive nature of pre-Gold Rush travel literature to California itself, I argue that the forces that shaped early American responses to California are not found in California, but outside of it. When Americans came to write about the California landscape in the years before the Gold Rush, they fell back on conventional ways of ordering the landscape that have their roots in the earliest moments of American colonization. By the time Americans began visiting California in the early years of the nineteenth century, a primary American landscape had been articulated in the pages of American travel literature generally. Rather than develop new aesthetic strategies for responding to California, these early travelers employed these traditional aesthetic responses to create a California landscape that was a variation of a larger American landscape. In California, American visitors fell back on to deeply rooted *topoi* to shape their prospects – the Paradise tradition and anticipation.

Lansford Warren Hastings' *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, published in 1845, included a seductive vision of California's present condition and future prospects. In placing Hastings within the context of the more than twenty works published in the United States on California before the Gold Rush, and within the larger context of the literature of American discovery and exploration, it is clear to see not only an awareness of earlier California accounts, but of a national tradition of landscape description. Using Hastings' work as the guide, this paper examines the creation of these

*topoi* in the national literature generally and their specific application in the pre-Gold Rush literature of California.

Examiners:



---

Dr. Brian W. Dippie, Supervisor (Department of History)



---

Dr. Theodore Wooley, Departmental Member (Department of History)



---

Dr. Lorne Hammond, Outside Member (Department of History)



---

Dr. Andrea Walsh, External Member (Department of Anthropology)

## CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
DEDICATION .....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. LANGUAGE, LANDSCAPE AND PLACE .....	6
3. PRECURSORS: Early Images of California .....	24
4. THE OBJECT OF DESIRE: California's Image in the Era of Manifest Destiny .....	48
5. THE PROSPECT OF PARADISE: Lansford W. Hastings' California Prospect.....	68
6. CONCLUSION.....	92
WORKS CITED .....	95

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the following for their assistance in this project: the Huntington Library for opening its collection to me, Torrie Hester for her hospitality during my stay in Los Angeles, Mum, Dad, Ben, Marcia and Robert Bell and last but certainly not least, Ryan Stevenson – my husband and friend.

To my Mum

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Sitting in the Reading Room of the Huntington Library in San Marino in the Fall of 1997, I experienced an eerie feeling of déjà vu. Before me lay a volume of California travel writing published in the early 1830s, new to me but strangely familiar in its language and in its description of California. Such was the feeling that haunted me during the preliminary research for this paper. I had undertaken the research at the Huntington Library with no idea what I might find in the more than twenty traveler's accounts of California published in the years before the Gold Rush. Although this body of work pales in comparison with the reams of material published after James Marshall made his fateful discovery of gold in the wheel trace of John Sutter's Coloma Valley grist mill on January 24, 1848, these early accounts had a sense of wonder about them that came not from tales of easy wealth dug from river beds, but from a different kind of abundance. Although many early writers hinted at mineral wealth, it was an entirely different sort of abundance that drew the interest and attention of California's earliest American visitors. More tellingly perhaps, these early works all appeared to be united not only in their vision of California but also in the language they used to give shape to their California prospects.

That all these authors seemed to say the same thing did not appear to be much of a research finding at first, although the unity of vision and language did offer a good starting point for further inquiry. Certainly, the repetition of key images from work to work spoke of an awareness of the writings of previous visitors to California; but as I

read further into the travel literature of earlier frontiers, I became aware that American visitors to California were not just aware of each other, but of an older tradition of landscape description in America. When the time came to put their experiences into words, rather than create new aesthetic strategies for responding to California, these travelers fell back on conventional ways of ordering the landscape. The influence of these inherited conventions is best explained by what Wayne Franklin has termed rhetorical *topoi* or “a condensed formula of language and idea” which “allowed a writer to enclose new phenomena in the confines of a ready-made intellectual and linguistic order.”<sup>1</sup> These *topoi* provided a rich fund of images that, whether consciously or unconsciously, influenced the writer’s ability to describe what he or she had seen. Tasked with the responsibility of putting their experiences into some form of coherent narrative, California’s earliest American travel writers reverted to these *topoi* to organize their narratives.

Two of these rhetorical devices are the focus of this paper. Accounts of California’s landscape represent a continuation of a dream older than America itself, of the existence of a paradisiacal state holding out the opportunity to return to the Garden. The rhetoric of paradise, which has deep roots in the American intellectual tradition, exerted a profound influence on these early narratives. American visitors were impressed with California’s adaptation to European style agriculture, and with what they perceived to be its natural abundance of plants and animals. The image of superabundance was

---

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Franklin, *Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers: The Diligent Writers of Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 17-18

combined with admiration for its mild, healthy climate and facilities for commerce. California quickly emerged as a place well suited to human habitation, where a beneficent nature rewarded those brave enough to traverse its high mountain passes or cross the oceans. As Americans took stock of California's many natural advantages, they also anticipated a time when they would seize control of the region and realize the potential that was everywhere inscribed on the landscape they created. They found much to admire in the landscape and little to admire in the present population. The figure of anticipation, the rhetorical device that allowed these writers to imagine California's future, was also informed by deeply rooted ideas about Progress and America's Mission and a faith in the perfection of American democratic republicanism.

My examination of these two rhetorical devices in the literature of California is guided by two distinct meanings of the word *prospect*. From the Latin *pro* (forward) and *specere* (to look), *prospect* literally means to look forward and in its most common use has come to mean a future probability or chance for future success. An alternate, and perhaps less familiar, definition of *prospect* involves an extended view. In the early travel narratives, American visitors created a California *prospect* that fulfilled both meanings of the word, with each work providing an extended view of the region, all of which usually prompted the author to make some prediction about the future. The confines of this paper do not allow for a comprehensive study of the early California travel literature, although I would argue that such a study has its uses, particularly given that recent economic and environmental problems in California seem a direct challenge to the images of plenty and promise implicit in these early American landscapes. Rather, I

propose to examine one particular California “prospect” in detail, to show how paradisiacal imagery and the figure of anticipation functioned in the literature generally.

For this task, it seems only appropriate to select Lansford Hastings’ *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* (1845) as my guide. One of the more popular of the early travel accounts, and certainly one of the more controversial, it was the first publication aimed at actively encouraging overland emigration from the United States and providing practical advice to would-be emigrants. Although much is known about Hastings’ activities in California, little is known about Hastings himself,<sup>2</sup> and consequently he remains something of a shadowy figure in the history of American expansion. A lawyer from Ohio, the twenty-four year old Hastings had arrived in California in 1843 via Oregon and found much to admire in his new home. Convinced that all that stood between California and its untransacted destiny as an independent republic was the addition of a “few hundred more Missouri-type settlers,”<sup>3</sup> Hastings returned to Ohio in 1844 to publish a book intended to attract would-be settlers with glowing reports of California’s natural abundance, agreeable climate and untapped potential.

I have selected this work above all others, not because of Hastings himself but because of the depth of description he provided in his narrative. Hastings was unique among the travel writers in the narrowness of his focus. For many early visitors

---

<sup>2</sup> See Thomas Andrews, “The Controversial Hastings Overland Guide: A Reassessment,” *Pacific Historical Review* 37 (1968), 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Andrews, “Lansford W. Hastings and the Promotion of the Salt Lake Desert Cutoff: A Reappraisal,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 4 (April 1973), 134.

California was just one of the many places visited in a series of adventures whether at sea or as a member of a trapping party, and as such did not command the full attention of the author or audience. Hastings treated California as the primary subject in his narrative. Others beginning in the early 1840s did the same, but Hastings' account was the most complete.

The approach I have taken is twofold – first to examine the creation and application of the *topoi* of paradise and anticipation in the national literature, and then to consider the role of each in shaping the California prospect generally and Hastings' California prospect specifically. It is hoped that such an examination will lead to a greater awareness of the persistence of established cultural responses over time and space, and their role in shaping the frontier experience in America.

## CHAPTER II

### LANGUAGE, LANDSCAPE AND PLACE

In his memoir of the California Trail, Edwin Bryant recalled a campfire tale he heard while still camped on the Missouri frontier in the spring of 1846. Bryant and his companions were trading tales about their destination, and one of the tallest concerned a long-time resident of California who, owing to the healthiness of California's climate, had reached the advanced age of two hundred and fifty. Despite being in possession of his health and faculties, the man had grown increasingly weary of life and sought a solution to his unusual complaint. The tenets of his faith forbade him from ending his own life and so, in desperation, he turned to a close friend for advice. His friend suggested that he leave California for a short period, to see if Death might find him in a less kind climate. The man acted upon his friend's suggestion immediately and left for a neighbouring territory, where he quickly dropped dead. According to his will, his heirs were to return his body to California for burial upon threat of disinheritance if they failed to do so. He had only been in the grave a few days, however, before the life-giving properties of California's soil revived him, and although his heirs were distressed to find him back among the living, the man accepted his fate and continued to live out his natural, although much prolonged lifespan.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California: Being the Journal of a Tour by the Emigrant route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and Through California in the years 1846, 1847* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1967), 16-17.

Bryant included this tongue in cheek tale in *What I Saw in California* (1848) to draw attention to the fanciful and exaggerated nature of many of the descriptions of California circulating on the frontier that spring -- descriptions which portrayed California's many charms as "being scarcely inferior in their attractions to the Eden described in the history of creation."<sup>2</sup> Yet if many of the stories Bryant and his contemporaries heard that spring were of an extravagant nature, it was only because the reports that had come out of the region seemed to bear out even the wildest claims. In the space of a generation, California had gone from the distant outpost of an aging colonial empire to what one of Bryant's overland companions called the "promised land of all our hopes."<sup>3</sup> The authors of that promise -- the American trappers, explorers and mariners who came to California in the years before 1848 and who were moved to record their experiences -- were participants in a process of imaginative reconnaissance that gave shape to a California prospect that spoke to the nation on many levels.

Yet even as "the picture of California these [American] writings created became more vivid and distinct, the bold pattern never changed."<sup>4</sup> Though decades separate the earliest published account from the bulk of California travel writing, little deviation or innovation in either content or form marks the genre. The essential landscape articulated by the earliest Americans endured, even as California itself underwent significant

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Jackson Grayson; quoted in Anthony Kirk, "In a Golden Land So Far: The Rise of Art in Early California," *California History* 71 (Spring 1993), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850 to 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 46.

political, social and economic changes. American visitors encountered a California in constant flux but were seemingly able to contain and discount that change by describing the landscape in static terms. California historian Kevin Starr, for whom these pre Gold Rush narratives serve as a preface for California's post 1850 development, attributes the repetitive nature of these accounts to California itself, observing that "because Alta California was a simple society, visitors encountered a repetitive range of experiences. Guidance by previous reports gave interpretations a degree of standardization."<sup>5</sup> Yet something more is at work here.

Starr's assertion that the simple nature of Californio society contributed to the repetitive nature of California travel literature is problematic because it denies the complexity of Californio society before 1848. Recent scholarship has begun to challenge the parochialism of early California historiography. The New Western History has allowed historians to explore long neglected areas of study, such as the role of women, Hispanics and natives and to refute traditional assumptions about the pre-statehood era. A recent collection of essays prepared by the California Historical Society for the sesquicentennial of California statehood, *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush* (1998), employs the interdisciplinary approaches of the New Western History to frame interesting and challenging questions about the Spanish, Mexican and early American eras. What these essays reveal is that pre-Gold Rush California was more complex -- socially, economically and environmentally -- than historians have previously

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3.

believed.<sup>6</sup> Many of the essays trace the oversimplification of reports on Californio society to American travel writing itself, where an underdeveloped culture and landscape were cited as reasons enough for dispossession of the Mexican population. As California's earliest historians looked to these texts to recreate a pre-Gold Rush landscape, the cultural biases inherent in travel writers' estimations of Hispanic culture were repeated and, through repetition, were received as fact.

In order to discover what is at work in the literature it is necessary to find a "means of isolating aesthetic strategies which by their repetition...from work to work come to suggest something about the actual world in which they were created."<sup>7</sup> Such aesthetic strategies, I would suggest, are not to be found in California, but outside of it. When American visitors came to write about California, they missed the chance to "become original, primary namers"<sup>8</sup> and instead fell back on conventional ways of ordering the landscape that have their roots in the earliest moments of American colonization. By the time Americans began visiting California in the early years of the nineteenth century, a primary American landscape had been articulated in the pages of American travel literature generally. Rather than create new aesthetic strategies for

---

<sup>6</sup> See M. Kat Anderson, Michael G. Barbour, and Valerie Whitworth, "A World of Balance and Plenty: Land, Plants, Animals and Humans in a pre-European California"; Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California"; Antonia I. Castañeda, "Engendering the History of California, 1769-1848: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family"; William Preston, "The Serpent in the Garden: Environmental Change in Colonial California," in *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramón Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Franklin, *Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers: The Diligent Writers of Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 15.

<sup>8</sup> David Wyatt, *Fall into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.

responding to California, these early travelers employed these traditional aesthetic responses to create a California landscape that was a variation of a larger American landscape. In designing a California prospect, American travel writers simply reworked an existing design. It was, as Arthur Moore has suggested in his study of the literature of Kentucky, the “same story rewritten...with a change of local details.”<sup>9</sup>

To speak of creating or designing a landscape is to get at the heart of the term landscape. Far more than mere geographic space, a landscape speaks of human intervention and the imposition of order on the natural world. As John Stilgoe defines it, landscape is

Shaped land, land modified for permanent human occupation, for dwelling, agriculture, manufacturing, government, worship, and for pleasure. A landscape happens not by chance, but by contrivance, by pre-meditation, by design.<sup>10</sup>

The core of Stilgoe’s definition is a human creation -- roads, houses, towns, barns, fences and so on. Landscapes result from the physical shaping of the world. His own study of colonial and antebellum landscapes, *Common Landscape of America, 1620-1850* (1982), centers on the creation of artifice in the New World according to common knowledge and inherited beliefs. For Stilgoe, the antipode of landscape is the wilderness that surrounds the fruits of that common knowledge; unmodified nature does not qualify as landscape.

This definition, while useful for its acceptance of intent and design as necessary conditions of landscape, is limited for its focus on the actual physical shaping of land into

---

<sup>9</sup> Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), 6.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 3.

landscape. Instead, I would suggest that landscapes also find creation in the textual ordering of the natural world: “a non-literal, non-physical or symbolic ‘shaping’, one accomplished by an act of mind or imagination.”<sup>11</sup> A more flexible definition of the word, and one that allows us to consider non-literal shaping, is that offered by John Conron in *The American Landscape*, his anthology of imaginative landscapes. Conron suggests that landscape is “an old and necessary way of arranging and expressing what we see and imagine about our earth-space...the land’s shape as it is seen from a particular and defined perspective...”<sup>12</sup> Conron’s definition sees landscape as “an ideal design of hopes, needs, values and ideas.”<sup>13</sup>

Simon Schama shares such a definition in *Landscape and Memory*. Schama asserts that “Landscapes are culture before they are nature, constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock.”<sup>14</sup> Schama’s observation serves as an important caveat for the study of travel literature, because it hints at the genre’s inherent subjectivity. Although many travel writers claimed that they offered a true and accurate rendering of their subject based on direct observation, the prospects they created for their readers were never adventures of the eye alone<sup>15</sup>. Indeed it could be argued that travel

---

<sup>11</sup> Leo Marx, foreword to *Views of American Landscape*, ed. Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xix.

<sup>12</sup> John Conron, *The American Landscape: A Critical Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), xviii.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995), 61.

<sup>15</sup> Franklin, 21.

writers do not really see their subject, only the facts and features that allow them access to familiar ways of organizing the world in text and to remove the threat of space by replacing it with a familiar “vocabulary of interests.”<sup>16</sup>

To view landscape in this way is be reminded of the importance of *words* in the discovery and exploration of America. As Wayne Franklin has suggested in his own study of travel literature,

Removed from the tangible environment of their culture, travelers came to rely on this most portable and most personal of cultural orders as a means of symbolic linkage with their homes. More than any other emblem of identity, language seemed capable of domesticating the strangeness of America.<sup>17</sup>

Franklin uses the idea of “public speech” to explore how early writers used language to bring New World phenomena into European understanding; the “rhetorical *topoi*” that “often allowed a writer to enclose new phenomena in the confines of a ready-made intellectual and linguistic order.”<sup>18</sup> These *topoi* guided writers, instructing them to privilege certain facts over others in order to translate new world facts into existing European ways of thinking about the natural world.<sup>19</sup>

By utilizing these rhetorical devices and their attendant imagery, these early

---

<sup>16</sup> Stephen H. Daniels, “Reading Places: The Rhetorical Basis of Place” in *Commonplaces: Essays on the Nature of Place*, ed. David W. Black, Donald Kunze and John Pickles (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1989), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Franklin, 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18. See Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) for a detailed examination of the challenge of applying European language to New World facts.

<sup>19</sup> See Anthony Grafton, April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi, *New World, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 1992) for an interesting look at the persistence of tradition in the face of new world facts.

writers of the American scene were able to contain their new world and in doing so, create a sense of place for their readers. Like landscapes, *places* are intentional creations and expressions of human values -- "presences in nature raised to some sort of human significance."<sup>20</sup> As Yi-Fu Tuan has suggested in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, "Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning."<sup>21</sup> As a result, places are also intimately tied to language, for "to be a place...means to function within some grammar of human communal interests."<sup>22</sup> Much like Franklin's idea of *topoi*, this concept of a "grammar" of human interests is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions of those who create them. However, while landscape and place are intimately related terms, it is the quality of experience that ultimately differentiates place and landscape. Because "space becomes place as we get to know it better,"<sup>23</sup> a certain degree of repetition would appear to be a necessary condition for the creation of place.

The simple repetitive nature of the earliest American accounts of California now takes on special importance, especially when we consider the role of repetition and process in exploration itself. As William Goetzmann has observed in *Exploration and Empire*, the act of exploration is a process, not a series of isolated events. Exploration, he argues, is purposeful and more importantly, is

---

<sup>20</sup> Joseph C. Flay, "Place and Places" in *Commonplaces: Essays on the Nature of Place*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 136.

<sup>22</sup> Daniels, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Tuan, 6.

'Programmed' by some older center of culture. That is, its purposes, goals and evaluation of new data are to a great extent set by the previous experiences, the values, the kinds and categories of existing knowledge, and the current objective of the civilized centers from which the explorer set out...<sup>24</sup>

As already suggested, many travel writers looked only for what they could readily understand and contain through language. Older forms and earlier frontier experiences influenced their interpretation of new experiences. That Americans came to value California more as knowledge about the region increased was no accident. The creation of place in California was facilitated greatly by the fact that California's prospect reflected an older and deeply established national prospect, a continuation of a national story of progress and paradise.

When Europeans first started coming to America, they already possessed centuries of traditions and myths about the lands that were rumoured to lie to the west. As Richard Slotkin reminds us in *Regeneration Through Violence*, the very exploration of America was undertaken in the context of powerful and ancient myths about the West. In America "the explorers and conquerors themselves tended to see the landscapes of America through lenses coloured by their reading of romance-epics and pastoral verse."<sup>25</sup> As these newcomers came to write about America, the landscape took shape according to several closely related ideal designs that resulted from these ancient traditions. Through their repetition from work to work, these aesthetic strategies became, over time, the

---

<sup>24</sup> William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), xi.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 272.

dominant responses to America and the primary way in which *terra incognita* was made *cognita*, and space was made into place.

In Elizabethan America “several strands of the idea of the west were pulled together”<sup>26</sup> to create a primary landscape that became the “cardinal image of America.”<sup>27</sup> One of these European traditions, what Loren Baritz called the millennial west, was to have great importance in America. This view saw America as the place where a new Golden Age or Second Eden could take root and employed paradisiacal imagery to craft a landscape that appealed to a European longing for Paradise.<sup>28</sup> Although the most profound version of the millennial west to find its home in America was probably that of Puritan theology where America as second chance was no mere rhetorical device, there were also secular applications rooted in the romance epics and mythology of the ancient and medieval world. It is the secular version of the millennial tradition that tended to view the landscape as a garden and this imagery became the “controlling metaphor”<sup>29</sup> for American landscapes in the early years of settlement and exploration, particularly in the southern colonies.

---

<sup>26</sup> Loren Baritz, “The Idea of the West,” *American Historical Review* 66 (April 1961), 636.

<sup>27</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 37.

<sup>28</sup> Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 34-72; Slotkin, 30; Moore, 25-43; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 25; Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World: American Culture The Formative Years*, 3d ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), 1-34; Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 123; Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3-7; John Warfield Simpson, *Visions of Paradise: Glimpses of Our Landscape's Legacy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), Ch. 1 passim.

<sup>29</sup> Marx, *Machine in the Garden*, 37.

The lush precolonial terrain of the Southern colonies appeared very much as a garden to its earliest European colonists. Their accounts abounded with descriptions of the fertile soils, plentiful game and healthy climate and “every detail reinforced the master image.”<sup>30</sup> Such a landscape made comparisons with the Garden of Eden easy. Even in the north, enthusiastic promoters and settlers eager to defend their controversial choice to remove to America sought to apply paradisiacal imagery, despite the fact that life in the northern latitudes made Edenic images more difficult. Yet, even the seemingly harsh environment of New England could be wrought into a garden with a little human intervention. For if the lushness of the southern landscapes was seen as evidence of divine creation, then New England was evidence of a more worldly creation wrought from the very antipode of paradise, wilderness.

These gardens were of a very particular kind, no matter where or how they happened. It was not enough that they simply exist. American gardens had to serve a purpose. As a result, a constant utilitarian theme underscores landscape description in American travel writing -- an economic conception of landscape that was to resonate across centuries of American thinking about the natural world. This utilitarian concept of landscape,<sup>31</sup> as evidenced by Francis Drake’s estimation that California in the late sixteenth century was “stored with many blessings fit for the use of man,”<sup>32</sup> led to the

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Robert C. Bredeson, “Landscape Description in Nineteenth Century American Travel Literature,” *American Quarterly* 20 (Spring 1968), 91-94.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Drake, *Drake’s World Encompassed* (London, 1628), 131-2; quoted in Hubert Howe Bancroft *History of California* Vol. I 1542-1800, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1963), 83.

establishment of a second convention. In describing the abundant and seemingly endless resources of the new continent, these writers anticipated their use by future generations and the society that would result from that use. This strategy is also seen in the tendency present in many travel narratives to describe the future as though it already existed. This device was especially useful when garden imagery was impossible since the present landscape was viewed as inhospitable or unruly. It did not matter that wilderness prevailed if anticipation made it possible to imagine a time when wilderness was contained.

The rhetorical device that allowed Americans to imagine and describe the future landscapes they saw inherent in the present situation found its way into the national literature in many different forms. Like the character of Judge Temple in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823), whose mind was given "to look far into futurity,"<sup>33</sup> many travel writers possessed the ability to see the future all around them, so that "where others saw nothing but a wilderness, towns, manufactories, bridges, canals, mines, and all the other resources of an old country were constantly presenting themselves."<sup>34</sup> Unlike Judge Temple, however, most travel writers did not resist the urge to express their expectations. Indeed, anticipation was the primary aesthetic strategy for an appreciation of the American landscape, at least according to Thomas Cole (1801-1848), a pioneering American landscape painter and essayist whose influential works and

---

<sup>33</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers*, ed. James D. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 321.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

writings on the nature of the American landscape were contemporary with increasing American activity on the Pacific frontier.

According to many Europeans, the United States lacked a history long enough to provide the associations necessary for an appreciation of landscape.<sup>35</sup> By the nineteenth century, Europeans had moved beyond the economic conception of landscape that had so informed the travel writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to develop aesthetic and emotive responses to the natural world based on the idea of associations. This mode of thinking held that a landscape required some association with an historical event or ancient mythology in order to produce an emotive response in the viewer. Since America's history was relatively short by European standards, it lacked associations and therefore, landscape. In his famous essay "Notes on American Scenery" (1836), Thomas Cole argued that Americans had their own unique way of forming the necessary associations -- not through the past, but through the future. According to Cole,

...American scenes are not destitute of historical association and legendary association...But America associations are not so much of the past as of the present and future...in looking over a yet uncultivated scene, the mind's eye may see far into futurity. Where the wolf roams, the plough shall glisten; on the gray crag shall rise temple and tower - mighty deeds shall be done in the now pathless wilderness; and poets yet unborn shall sanctify the soil.<sup>36</sup>

Anticipation holds the promise of something *even better* to come; something that will

---

<sup>35</sup> See Stephen Fender, "American Landscape and the Figure of Anticipation: Paradox And Recourse" in *Views of American Landscape*, 52-56; Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 12-23.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Cole, "Notes on American Scenery" *The American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January, 1836) in Conron, 577-8; Also see Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865* (Washington: Smithsonian University Press, 1991) and Farrar Hyde for a review of Cole's career and contributions to a national landscape.

overshadow all that has come before it.

In these narratives “time is always future, the present moment pointing by ineluctable lines of argument and vision to some instant of realized intention.”<sup>37</sup> By anticipating the future, travel writers moved their discovery out of the realm of the purely experiential and into a world of action.<sup>38</sup> As Wayne Franklin has observed in *Discoverers, Explorers, Settlers*, the word *explore* comes from the Latin “to cry out,”<sup>39</sup> suggesting that the compulsion to announce a discovery is inherent in the act of exploration. It is this compulsion, Franklin argues, that separates exploration from mere discovery because it brings the discovery into the realm of “some actual and tangible objective”<sup>40</sup> and incorporates it into a larger national or international story. This was particularly true in California, where even before the phrase was coined by John O’Sullivan in 1845, the figure of anticipation was intimately tied to the language of Manifest Destiny.

The phrase “Manifest Destiny” did not enter the national vocabulary until the summer of 1845, the same year in which Lansford Hastings published his *Emigrants’ Guide*. John O’Sullivan, the editor of the pro-expansionist *Democratic Review* first used the phrase in support of the American claim in Oregon, when he asserted “the right of our

---

<sup>37</sup> Franklin, 77.

<sup>38</sup> See Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity From 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) for an interesting look at how America was perceived as a field for action or potential action in both Europe and in America.

<sup>39</sup> Franklin, 71.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

manifest destiny to overspread and possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.”<sup>41</sup> The ideas expressed by O’Sullivan in this statement drew on several strong American intellectual traditions, particularly a belief in the role of Providence<sup>42</sup> in shaping American events. This providential attitude combined with a faith in not only the uniqueness and superiority of American political institutions, but in human progress.

The nexus of these traditions is perhaps best expressed by the definition of Manifest Destiny offered by Norman Graebner in his anthology of American expansionist writings. The phrase, according to Graebner,

Implied that the United States was destined by the will of Heaven to become a country of political and territorial eminence. It attributed the probability and even the necessity of this growth to a homogeneous process created by certain unique qualities in American civilization – the energy and vigor of its people, their idealism and faith in their democratic institutions and their sense of mission now endowed with a new vitality.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> John O’Sullivan quoted in Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 220. For more on the expansionist writings of John O’Sullivan, mission and American Romanticism see Robert W. Johannsen, “The Meaning of Manifest Destiny,” in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, ed. Sam W. Hayes and Christopher Morris, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 7-20.

<sup>42</sup> See Carville Earle, “Pioneers of Providence: The Anglo-American Experience, 1492-1792” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 82 no. 2 (1992) for an interesting look at the early Republic’s tendencies to overlook the very real hardships experienced by previous generations during the colonial experience in favour of a Providential view of their history. For a very thorough look at American Providential thought see John F. Berens, *Providence and Patriotism in Early America, 1640-1815* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978)

<sup>43</sup> Norman Graebner, *Manifest Destiny*. The American Heritage Series, ed. Leonard W. Levy and Alfred Young (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), xv.

The idea of a mission has deep roots in American thought, beginning with the Puritan “errand into the wilderness,” a belief that Puritan activity in New England was meant to instruct the world, to act as “an example to other nations” and carried with it an “obligation to take the word to other peoples.”<sup>44</sup> Best expressed in the Puritan doctrine of post-millennialism, which held that “humanity might progress so far towards perfection while still inhabiting the secular world as to persuade the Divinity that they were prepared for the second coming,”<sup>45</sup> this sense of mission informed the doctrine of Manifest Destiny in ways great and small.

However, while Puritan theology gave this intellectual construct its core,

More fundamental myths of human progress gave a particular significance to the advance of pioneers across the American continent. In moving west, American pioneers were perceived, both in Europe and in America, as continuing a movement of civilization that had been continuous since the earliest times.<sup>46</sup>

Westward movement was viewed as part of a much greater story, not only of national expansion, but also of human progress. American faith in progress, the view that “the history of the world was a progressive phenomenon, one marked by a long series of steps or turning points that had brought the human race ever closer to realizing the ultimate ideals of humanity,”<sup>47</sup> was closely related to postmillennialism through a shared faith in the possibility of perfection. While the classical view of history held that human

---

<sup>44</sup> Horsman, 82. See Greene for more on American exceptionalism.

<sup>45</sup> Rush Welter, *The Mind of America 1820-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 20. Also, see Moore, 31 for a discussion of Millennialism in the West.

<sup>46</sup> Horsman, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Welter, 3.

experience was simply repetitive, and the medieval view discerned a story of continued decline, the progressive view saw humanity in a more positive light. History was a story of increasing accomplishments and in America, the success of the Revolution and the young Republic supported the idea that “the American people had already achieved historic European hopes...had already fulfilled the progressive dreams of humanity.”<sup>48</sup> However, “in America itself the idea of progress was never totally divorced from the belief in actual expansion and geographic destiny. Although this involved the literal transformation of the land, it also involved the idea of the West as a place of future greatness and perfection.”<sup>49</sup>

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, these conventions were brought to bear on the landscape of California. In the case of California however, the process of imaginative reconnaissance undertaken by American visitors was actually the second to shape California’s landscape. The Spanish had been visiting California for more than two centuries before establishing permanent settlements in the mid eighteenth century and during that pre-settlement period a Spanish landscape had taken shape according to a variation of many of the same powerful myths and legends that had informed the frontiers in English America. When Americans began to visit California in the early years of the nineteenth century, they launched a second process of imaginative reconnaissance that produced a new prospect for a new audience, according to their own cultural traditions. This prospect, arguably more successful than the first, effectively overwrote the original

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Horsman, 84.

Spanish landscape. As we shall see, this dispossession was inherent in California's American prospect.

## CHAPTER III

## PRECURSORS: Early Images of California

The imaginative landscape of California was set down on paper long before any European had set foot on its soil. More than a decade before Hernan Cortés came to Mexico; Garcí Ordóñez de Montalvo published a continuation of a popular European chivalric romance called the *Amadis de Gaule*. Montalvo's reworking of the tale, *Las Sergas de Esparnán* (The Adventures of Esparnán) contained within it a description of an island called California that lay to the east of the Indies,

Very near the Earthly Paradise, which was inhabited by black women without a single man among them, and there they lived much as Amazons. These women were powerful of body, valiant, ardent of heart, and endowed with great strength; the island itself was made up of great cliffs and rugged mountains, more so than any other place on earth; and their arms were all of gold - as were the harnesses of the wild beasts which they tamed and rode - since there was on this island no other metal.<sup>1</sup>

Montalvo's vivid description of California -- where Amazons clad in gold lived in caves, practiced infanticide, rode griffins and went out in fleets of ships to pillage and carry hapless men to their deaths -- made an impression on the generation of Spaniards who explored the Pacific coast of North America in the 1530s and who fully expected to find something like Montalvo's magic island in the western sea. Early expeditions had determined that what is now the Baja Peninsula was an island, and geographic knowledge

---

<sup>1</sup> Garcí Ordóñez de Montalvo, "Las Sergas de Esparnán," in *Into the Wilderness Dream: Exploration Narratives of the American West, 1500-1805*, ed. Donald Barclay, James McGuire and Peter Wilds (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 10.

of the time put the coastline very near the mythic Straits of Anían, or Northwest Passage.

Although the exact date that the name California was first applied to the Baja is not known, by the time of the Cabrillo expedition of 1542, the name was being used to describe the area around modern day La Paz and further south to Cabo San Lucas.<sup>2</sup> In *The History of California*, Hubert Howe Bancroft notes that the name first appeared on the record of Francisco Ulloa's expedition of 1539 as the name given to the Bay of Santa Cruz, now La Paz.<sup>3</sup> The area around Santa Cruz bore very little resemblance to Montalvo's mythic island and Bancroft offers the possibility that the name was given to the area in derision, by the disgruntled settlers of the failed colony Cortés had founded on the Baja in 1535.<sup>4</sup> It is not difficult to see how the Spanish could have found humour in the application of such a paradisiacal and magical name to the desert landscapes along the Baja peninsula. The Ulloa/Castellón expedition, which managed to explore two thirds of the way up the pacific side of the peninsula in 1539, described the landscape as "ugly and barren"<sup>5</sup> and decidedly Amazon free.

Despite the obvious lack of riches in California, the Spanish continued to explore, looking for the fabled islands of the western sea, the Northwest Passage and riches that

---

<sup>2</sup> Harry Kelsey, "Mapping the California Coast: The Voyages of Discovery, 1533-1543," *Arizona and the West* 26 (Winter 1984): 313.

<sup>3</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. I, 1542-1800, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1963), 65.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kelsey, 312.

would surpass those found in Mexico. If California was not *the* California of myth, it might still be close at hand, especially since the Baja, still thought to be an island in the 1530s, was right where Montalvo said California would be.<sup>6</sup> The Ulloa, Alarcón and Cabrillo expeditions of the late 1530s and early 1540s, however, would prove two very important things to the Spanish in Mexico: first, that California was no island, and second, that the entire territory bore little resemblance to its fictional namesake.

Until 1542, Spanish geographical knowledge about the coastal regions of present day Mexican and American California was severely limited. Expeditions in the early 1530s had explored the coastline along the Sea of Cortés, with Alarcón sailing up the mouth of the Gila River in 1538. The Ulloa expedition had explored the Pacific coast but had been turned back by bad weather at Punta Baja, about two thirds of the way up the Baja Peninsula. These expeditions cast doubt on the possibility that California was an island, especially since both explorers had been able to travel great distances along both its shores without finding the island's northern tip. The lack of conclusive geographical information led to the persistence of mythical geography -- especially in regards to the proximity of California to the Spice Islands, Asia and the Straits of Anían. This mythical geography, already called into question by the Ulloa and Alarcón voyages, would be severely challenged by the last of the early Spanish expeditions to the pacific coast of America, led by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

---

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive examination of the persistence of imaginary geography in the area see Michael W. Mathes, "The Mythological Geography of California: Origins, Development, Confirmation and Disappearance" *The Americas* 45 (January 1989) 517-37.

On June 28, 1542, Cabrillo left the port of Navidad with two ships. With his crew, he would become the first European to see what would later become American California -- sailing as far north as Cape Mendocino before poor weather turned them back. Although it would cost Cabrillo his life, his voyage increased not only the northern borders of Spanish America but also the geographic understanding of the region. As historian Harry Kelsey has shown, the failure of the expedition to reach the Spice Islands, Asia or the Straits of Anían despite sailing beyond the fortieth degree of latitude provided further proof to cosmographers in Spain that North America and Asia were separate and distant continents.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, despite the importance of Cabrillo's expedition to Spanish geography, his discoveries did not receive much attention in Spain. His reports were not received in Spain until the mid sixteenth century and, as Kelsey notes, the royal cosmographer, Sancho Gutiérrez, wrote "Unimportant" across the face of Cabrillo's reports,<sup>8</sup> perhaps because the expedition failed to yield up anything useful to the Spanish empire, as Mexico had done. A subsequent Spanish expedition in 1602, led by Sebastián Vizcaíno, renamed all the places Cabrillo discovered, as if he had never existed. What does remain of his account -- and that of his successor following Cabrillo's death as the result of a broken limb -- reveals a good land and abundant fishery, especially around the Santa Barbara Channel where the expedition spent the winter. That these reports did not

---

<sup>7</sup> Kelsey, 323.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

translate into direct action by colonial officials is not surprising. The promise of California was concealed from a generation bred to expect quick and obvious wealth in the New World. California's good land and abundant natural resources were too far away from the hub of Spanish America to be useful, and the territory lay fallow on the borderlands of the Spanish Empire for over two centuries.

During the interlude between discovery and settlement, various colonial officials sought a use for California in order to bolster Spain's claim to the area in the face of increasing foreign presence in the Pacific. The Manila Galleon trade that began with the Spanish conquest of the Philippines in the mid sixteenth century was the first impetus to serious colonial efforts on the northern pacific. These Galleons crossed the Pacific annually, laden with the fruits of the Philippine conquest. The international division of the globe between Spain and Portugal that followed the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 necessitated that the Galleons sail east towards America,<sup>9</sup> crossing the Pacific to Acapulco, but the enormous profits that could be realized from the Manila Galleon were tempered by the great cost in human life. The long crossing -- taking anywhere from two to seven months depending on the winds<sup>10</sup> -- translated into high mortality rates from scurvy, malnutrition and foul water. These treasure ships also attracted the British to the area and piracy posed a second threat to the Asian trade.

Piracy brought the first non-Hispanic Europeans onto California's coastline in the

---

<sup>9</sup> Henry J. Bruman, "Sovereign California: The State's Most Plausible Alternative Scenario," in *Early California: Perception and Reality*, ed. Henry J. Bruman and Clement Meighan (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981), 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

late sixteenth century, creating a counter claim to Spanish possession. While waiting for the Manila Galleon in 1579, Francis Drake aboard the *Golden Hinde* explored the northern reaches of California. There is some debate among scholars about the actual site of Drake's landfall in California -- with San Francisco Bay being the favourite, although not the only, choice.<sup>11</sup> Wherever Drake did anchor, he made a claim to the area on behalf of the English Crown -- placing a brass plaque with a coin underneath it and naming the area New Albion. If the Spanish had not yet seen the promise of California, Drake certainly did. In the account of his voyage, the countryside is described in glowing terms, very close to those used by later visitors. Drake noted that

The inland we found to be farre different from the shoare, a goodly country, and fruitfull soyle, stored with many blessings fit for the use of man; infinite was the company of very large and fat Deere which there we sawe by thousands as we supposed, in a heard....<sup>12</sup>

However, there were none of the more obvious forms of wealth readily visible to Drake, and the region was too distant from Britain to make any sort of colonization or even permanent possession possible. Drake's presence on the coast, and that of his fellow pirates, did have the effect of motivating the Spanish to make a serious effort towards colonizing California in order to shore up their claim against that of the British, while

---

<sup>11</sup> See Bancroft, 81-94; N.B Martin, "Portus Novae Albionis: Site of Drake's California Sojourn," *Pacific Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (1979): 319-334; Iris H.W. Engstrand, "Seekers of the 'Northern Mystery': European Exploration of California and the Pacific," in *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramón Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 78-110; Harry Kelsey, "Did Francis Drake Really Visit California?," *Western Historical Quarterly* 21 (November 1990): 444-462 for more on the Drake landfall controversy.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Drake, *Drake's World Encompassed* (London, 1628), 131-2; quoted in Bancroft, 83.

<sup>13</sup> Bruman, 18.

also providing a base for the Manila Galleon to resupply on their way to Acapulco.

The Vizcaíno expedition of 1602 sought out suitable sites for the Spanish settlement and identified San Diego and Monterey harbours as the most favourable spots. It is worth noting that what would later become the focus of American longing in California -- San Francisco Bay -- had still not been discovered by the Spanish since its entrance was frequently obscured by fog. Monterey was selected as the site for the first European settlement in Alta California in 1606 but nothing more than its selection ever took place. As Henry Bruman notes in *Early California: Perception and Reality*, internal politics and the persistence of mythical geography conspired against colonization. A new Viceroy objected to the choice of Monterey (perhaps owing to the fact that it was named after his predecessor) and instead suggested that the Spanish continue to look for the mythical islands of Rica de Oro and Rica de Plata and settle them instead.<sup>13</sup> These islands were thought to be west of California and would be a better place to resupply the Manila Galleon since they supposedly lay closer to the midpoint of the voyage than Monterey -- which was only a month or less from Acapulco.

The fact that the Spanish failed to locate these islands is not surprising, especially since they do not exist, but the pursuit of *terra incognita* in preference to *terra cognita* had significant consequences for California history. After the Vizcaíno expedition, California lapsed back into what historian William Preston calls its “protohistorical period.”<sup>14</sup> Had Monterey been settled in 1606, a year before Santa Fe and Jamestown,

---

<sup>14</sup> William Preston, “Serpent in the Garden: Environmental Change in Colonial California” in *Contested Eden*, 268.

the entire history of the region would have been significantly altered. As Henry Bruman suggests, early colonization of the area would have meant that the Americans would not have encountered a fledgling European colony scarcely out of its first years of growth when they started visiting the California coast at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but a long established territory in full possession of some of the best harbours on the Pacific.<sup>15</sup>

All this, however, was not to be and almost two hundred years would pass before the Spanish committed to colonizing California. The decision to create a permanent Spanish presence on the Pacific was spurred by increasing European activity on the Northwest Coast, with the Russians and the English being the immediate threat. The settlement of Alta California began in 1769 with the establishment of the Franciscan Mission at San Diego followed by another at Monterey in 1770. These two Spanish missions, at the northern and southern tips of Spanish California, were the first of a chain of twenty-one missions, four presidios and three pueblos built over the next several decades. California was Spain's last colonial effort in North America and was the most remote and isolated of any Spanish territory. Several centuries of experience in the New World had perfected the process of colonization but colonial officials had little success in recruiting colonists for the province. By 1820, the non-native population of Alta California was only about 3270 and the native population itself was dwindling because of

---

<sup>15</sup> Bruman, 30-33.

colonization and its attendant baggage.<sup>16</sup>

A small Spanish presence, rudimentary economy and meager defenses did little to prevent foreign activity on the Northwest Coast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Over time, California played host to a number of foreign visitors who stopped in to resupply or explore, notably Jean-François De Galaup de la Pérouse in 1786 and George Vancouver in 1792. The French and English were not the only ones on the coast, however. American vessels were coming to the Pacific in the years following the American Revolution looking for new sources of furs. When Robert Grey aboard the *Columbia* discovered the mouth of the Columbia River and ascended it some distance in 1796, the Americans had a claim on the coast that would have profound importance for coastal history in the nineteenth century. The Russians also expanded their Pacific claims, lured by an abundance of sea otters, and directly challenged Spanish domination by building a permanent settlement at Bodega Bay in 1809 and Fort Ross in 1812.<sup>17</sup>

The visits of la Pérouse and Vancouver must have alarmed the Spanish who later read their accounts. Both men saw not only the extensive promise of California but also its limited defenses. La Pérouse noted that economic development was slow to come under Spanish rule and observed, “The soil...is inexpressibly fertile. Every kind of

---

<sup>16</sup> Doyce B. Nunnis, Jr., “Alta California’s Trojan Horse: Foreign Immigration” in *Contested Eden*, 299-300.

<sup>17</sup> See Harvey Schwartz, “Fort Ross, California: Imperial Russian Outpost on America’s Western Frontier, 1812-1841,” *Journal of the West* 18 (April 1979): 35-48; Nunnis Jr., 303-305; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. II 1801-1824 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Heberd, 1966), 294-320; Richard H. Dillon, “Czarist California,” *American History* 31, no. 2 (1996): 36-41; Clarence John Dufour, E.O Essig and Adele Ogden, *Fort Ross: California*

garden plants thrives astonishingly.”<sup>18</sup> While la Pérouse felt that California lay too far from Europe at present to attract must settlement, he did believe that “its proximity to Asia may well compensate for this, and I am convinced that good laws, and particularly freedom of trade, would soon procure it a certain number at least of inhabitants.”<sup>19</sup> La Pérouse also recognized that Spanish regulations were stifling the province, but did not suggest that the Spanish be divested of their possessions by another power because their settlement was slow to improve. In this, he stands alone.

Unlike la Pérouse, George Vancouver fully believed that the Spanish were fated to lose California because of mismanagement. On his first visit in 1792, Vancouver was the guest of Bodega y Quadra and was afforded unlimited access to the area around San Francisco harbour and Mission Santa Clara. His freedom of movement permitted him to observe Spanish progress in the region as well as the mean defenses that protected that progress. On his second visit in December of 1793, Vancouver was forced to act in a more circumspect manner.<sup>20</sup> Vancouver took this second opportunity in California to

---

*Outpost of Russian Alaska, 1812-1841* Alaska History, ed. Richard A. Pierce, no. 39 (Kingston ON: Limestone Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Jean-François de Galaup de la Pérouse, *A Voyage Round the World Performed in the Years 1785, 1786, 1787 and 1788 by the Boussoule and Astrolabe Vol. I*, Bibliotheca Australiana #27 (Amsterdam: N. Israel, 1968), 441.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 435.

<sup>20</sup> See George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World, 1791-1795 Vol. III*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society Series II, No. 165 (The Hakluyt Society, 1984), 1121.

describe it in detail, perhaps as a direct challenge to the “profound secrecy”<sup>21</sup> of the Spanish government when it came to their western settlements. Vancouver described California with an aggressively calculating edge that would be repeated by Americans in the nineteenth century, and seemed to take great pains to explain California’s strategic weaknesses.<sup>22</sup> What little the Spanish had done in California would only be their undoing, according to Vancouver, as

The Spaniards, in doing thus much, have only cleared the way for the ambitious enterprizers of those maritime powers, who in the avidity of commercial pursuits, may seek to be benefited by the advantages which the fertile soil of New Albion seems calculated to afford.<sup>23</sup>

Knowing that they had little defense against foreign activity on their borders, the Spanish in California implemented a defense of a different kind. The best way to deal with foreign interest in California was to keep foreigners at arm's length. Colonial officials designed policies that were intended to limit foreign access to the coast. California was “forbidden to trade with any foreign vessels; foreigners were strictly prohibited from taking up permanent residence; manufacturing and agricultural diversity were not encouraged; and shipbuilding was prohibited without a government license.”<sup>24</sup> In short, colonial policy was designed to foster isolation, economic stagnation, consumption-based agriculture and demographic homogeneity. By limiting foreign access to the coast, the Spanish hoped that their last colonial enterprise would remain on

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 1133-34.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1134.

the borderlands of European and American knowledge. These restrictive policies merely whetted the appetites of foreign visitors, however, and published reports concerning California by la Pérouse and Vancouver made people all the more curious about the remote territory.

Occasionally however, the Californians could employ something stronger than rudeness or excessive bureaucracy in order to keep foreigners at bay. In 1803, William Shaler and Robert Cleveland discovered exactly how far the Spanish would go in order to enforce the law. When Shaler and his business partner Cleveland sailed into San Diego harbour in March 1803 aboard the American *Leila Byrd*, they were told by Spanish authorities their vessel was strictly prohibited from engaging in any sort of trade while they waited for supplies. In order to ensure that these limits were observed an armed guard was placed aboard the *Leila Byrd*. Shaler and Cleveland took aboard the needed supplies but were determined to take in some otter pelts as well, which may have been their main motive for being in San Diego in the first place. They arranged to take aboard some pelts at night, but their nocturnal excursion resulted in the arrest of three crewmen and the seizure of the furs. A rescue party was dispatched, led by Shaler and Cleveland, and they were successful in retrieving not only the crew but also the cargo of furs. Taking the guard as hostages, the *Leila Byrd* made its escape from San Diego harbour, even as it was fired upon by the presidio guns. Putting the Spanish guard ashore a short time later, the ship sailed for Hawaii and on to China where the furs secured a significant

---

<sup>24</sup> Nunnis Jr., 299.

profit.<sup>25</sup>

It may have been those profits that brought Shaler back to the coast two years later. Cleveland had returned to Massachusetts leaving Shaler in sole command of the *Leila Byrd*. On his second visit, Shaler stayed away from the centers of authority, cruising the coastline in search of furs. If circumstances had been otherwise, Shaler's comments concerning California would have been limited to "On the 24th of February, I arrived without incident on the coast of California, where we got plentiful supplies of provisions as usual and were not unsuccessful in our collection of furs."<sup>26</sup> However, Shaler would stay on the coast until early June and his long stay allowed him to observe something of the country. He engaged in the illicit coastal fur trade until the first week of May and then brought the *Leila Byrd* to Catalina Island where he had previously set up a number of tents for the purpose of landing the cargo and careening<sup>27</sup> the ship in the shallow harbour. The lack of proper marine supplies and a number of small mishaps delayed completion of the hull repairs and Shaler surmised that the ship could not sail back to China. He eventually got the ship in sufficient condition to sail for Hawaii and in early June, the *Leila Byrd* left the California coast for the last time. Shaler sold it in Honolulu where, as Robert Cleland tells us, the *Leila Byrd* went on to a sad end in the

---

<sup>25</sup> For a complete description of Shaler's 1803 visit, see Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. II, 10-15.

<sup>26</sup> William Shaler, "Journal of a voyage between China and the Northwest Coast of America, made in 1804 by William Shaler," *American Register* 3:1 ([1808]; reprint Claremont CA: Saunders Studio Press, 1935), 46-7.

opium trade,<sup>28</sup> and took passage on another vessel bound for China.

Shaler eventually returned to the United States and in 1808 published an account of his transoceanic voyage aboard the *Leila Byrd*. His “Journal of a voyage between China and the northwest coast of America, made in 1804 by William Shaler” appeared in the *American Register* out of Philadelphia and contains the first extended description of Alta California by an American. Shaler’s history of the settlement of Alta California, its missions, pueblos, presidios and military defenses was interspersed with descriptions of the remarkable fertility and beauty of the coast. His California was resource rich and excellently adapted to European agriculture. His brief description of the commercial and agricultural possibilities, combined with an appreciation of the mild climate and the natural beauty contrasted starkly with his description of the people who inhabited the coast. He did not find much to admire in the native populations, whom he considered to be overrun with venereal disease,<sup>29</sup> nor in the Mission fathers, whose medical and mechanical skills he found lacking.<sup>30</sup> His assessment of the Spanish settlers was similarly damning; he called the population “inconsiderable,” a “mixed breed,” “of an indolent and harmless disposition, and fond of spirituous liquors.”<sup>31</sup> All in all, Shaler

---

<sup>27</sup> To bring a ship up onto a beach in order to clean or repair the hull. In the case of the *Leila Byrd*, Shaler probably had to make repairs to the hull, as the ship was later thought to be unfit to return to the US from Hawaii.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Glass Cleland, *From Wilderness to Empire: A History of California by Robert Glass Cleland*, ed. Glenn S. Dumke (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 56.

<sup>29</sup> Shaler, 58

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

found much to admire in the land, but little to admire in the populace – native or Spanish. But the future possibilities were everywhere for Shaler, inherent in the land itself, prompting him to conclude “all these circumstances prove, that, under a good government, the Californias would soon rise to ease and affluence.”<sup>32</sup> Although Shaler did not specify which “good government” would be best suited to the task, he did propose that it would take nothing at all to conquer the province and keep it.

Shaler’s vivid rendering of the province, particularly its abundant natural resources and limited defenses, failed to capture the American imagination, just as Cabrillo’s report had failed to capture the Spanish imagination centuries before. Shaler’s *Journal* described a country on the border of the American imagination – an American *terra incognita*. Despite this, Shaler was the first American to articulate a California prospect for an American audience and, in doing so, introduce the content and form of the American responses to California for the next forty years. An unwelcome visitor on the coast, Shaler had neither the luxury nor the inclination to explore California’s coast at leisure, as la Pérouse and Vancouver had done a decade earlier. What Shaler was not able to observe directly, he supplemented with the opinions of those earlier European visitors, especially when it came to his estimation of California’s defenses. Historians from Bancroft to Kevin Starr have dismissed Shaler for this excessive borrowing,<sup>33</sup> but I would argue that this borrowing served an important purpose. By referring to earlier

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>33</sup> See Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. II, 23 and Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850 to 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 16.

works and repeating the conclusions of their authors in their own works, American travel writers found a means to supplement direct observations and to provide weight to their conclusions. This repetition from work to work was vital for the creation of a sense of place in California, largely because the growing body of literature produced by Shaler and his fellow travelers proved so homogeneous in both content and form over time, even as its subject experienced rapid social, political and economic changes.

Shaler's California emerged through a series of observations and descriptive sound bites --- showing a rare economy of words in a genre marked by verbosity and flourishes. "Fine harbour,"<sup>34</sup> "most agreeable,"<sup>35</sup> "most beautiful regions of the universe" and "finest part of the new world"<sup>36</sup> are typical examples. Shaler's descriptions of specific spots on the coast attended to the utilitarian, no doubt resulting from Shaler's preoccupation with trade and commerce. At Monterrey, for example, Shaler noted only that "Water and Wood are plentiful at Monterey, and the neighbouring missions are capable of furnishing ample supplies..."<sup>37</sup> Such a utilitarian response to landscape allowed the reader to form a basic picture of California as a place able to supply its population, both permanent and transient, with the basic necessities of life. Later writers would wax poetic on California's ability to do so and take the simple utilitarian response to the next level, beyond its more mundane applications. Yet however brief and however

---

<sup>34</sup> Shaler, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 58.

utilitarian in focus, Shaler's lasting contribution to the literature was the essential image of California as a paradise.

Shaler's *Journal* was the first of many such after-the-fact memoirs by a series of American visitors to California, although several decades passed before another American visitor to California felt moved to publish his experiences. Starting in the early 1820s, Americans began to visit California in greater numbers, particularly after the Mexicans won independence from Spain in 1821 and restrictions on foreign trade were relaxed.<sup>38</sup> When fur trader Jedediah Smith arrived in Los Angeles in 1826, he became the first American to cross into California via an overland route from the United States. Following Smith's example, American trapping parties began visiting the region.

As American interest in the region grew, so too did the number of published works on California, echoing William Shaler in their estimation of California's present abundance and future prosperity. In 1824, James and Sylvester Pattie left Kentucky on a trapping expedition. Although their original intention had been to trap furs on the upper Missouri River, they instead joined a larger party heading for the Gila River and the Santa Fe trade. In 1827, the Governor of New Mexico granted Sylvester Pattie a license to trap in Chihuahua and Sonora. After experiencing a series of hardships, the party found its way to Mission Santa Catalina in Baja California where they were arrested for not having the required documentation. Taken under guard to San Diego, James and his father were officially charged and held in San Diego. The hardships of the overland

---

<sup>38</sup> See Nunnis, Jr., and Steven W. Hackel, "Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California" in *Contested Eden*.

journey and the confinement at San Diego proved too much for Sylvester, who died shortly after arriving. James eventually won his conditional release, largely because his father had a small quantity of small pox vaccine in his possession and an epidemic was raging up and down the coast at the time James arrived in San Diego.<sup>39</sup>

In the course of vaccinating some 22,000 individuals in the Missions, Presidios, and Pueblos from San Diego to San Francisco, including the Russian colony at Bodega Bay, James Pattie had ample opportunity to observe the country and its inhabitants and upon his return to the States, some six years after he and his father had left to trap on the Missouri, Pattie published *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie, of Kentucky*. Edited by Timothy Flint, and published at Cincinnati in 1831, Pattie's *Narrative* was remarkable for its scope, and for its anti-Mexican sentiment. Pattie described a landscape of great beauty and natural abundance, possessing an inviting climate and excellent adaptability to agriculture and commercial activities. Pattie, like Shaler, also saw much to dislike in the inhabitants and government, noting simply "its inhabitants are equally calculated to excite dislike, and even the stronger feelings of disgust and hatred."<sup>40</sup> Pattie also shared Shaler's assertion that "a good government"<sup>41</sup> was all that was needed to

---

<sup>39</sup> For a complete account of Pattie's six years in the Far West, see Robert Glass Cleland, ch. 6 and William Goetzmann's *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 71-75.

<sup>40</sup> James Ohio Pattie, *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie, of Kentucky*, edited by Timothy Flint (Cincinnati: Printed and Published by John H. Wood, 1831), 306.

<sup>41</sup> Shaler, 60.

capitalize on California's bounty<sup>42</sup> although neither put a name to that 'good government.' Unlike Shaler, however, Pattie had been granted complete access to every inhabitant and every settlement in California, lending his report the authenticity of the eyewitness.

James Pattie's account of his experiences in the Far West greatly enhanced American knowledge of California and of the West in general. Indeed, as William Goetzmann has observed, "Few men had seen more of the West than he."<sup>43</sup> Pattie's California proved so durable that in 1847, in order to capitalise on an unprecedented demand for information on California, one enterprising individual reworked Pattie's *Personal Narrative* as *The Hunters of Kentucky*, substituting Ben Bilson for James Pattie, and bringing the events of Pattie's narrative forward by ten years. The 1847 edition reproduced Pattie's narrative word-for-word, substituting names and dates where required. This reworking effectively misrepresented the history of California, particularly the Solis revolt and the operation of the Mission system. However, despite its distortion of the facts, the description of California offered in *The Hunters of Kentucky* was still current. It had simply been *repackaged* for a new audience hungry for information on California – a testimony to both the durability and appeal of the earliest American images of California.

James and Sylvester Pattie represented the vanguard of overland travel to

---

<sup>42</sup> Pattie, 286.

<sup>43</sup> Goetzmann, 75.

California. The majority of California's American visitors in the 1820s and 1830s still came by sea. In the early 1820s, Captain Benjamin Morrell visited San Diego, Santa Barbara, San Francisco and Monterey. A native of Rye, New York, Morrell had taken to the seas in 1812, and between 1822 and 1831 he made a number of voyages around the world. In California, he found a country rich in natural resources with excellent harbours, a mild climate and a lazy and indolent population. Like those of his fellow Americans, Morrell's description of California turned on the central theme of Paradise misused.

In 1832, after retiring from the sea, Morrell published *A Narrative of Four Voyages to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean, from the year 1822 to 1831*. Although written in an overtly melodramatic style – the preface alludes to cannibal attacks in which members of the crew were eaten – Morrell's account was quick to take in the commercial possibilities offered by California's harbours and agricultural resources. In California, Morrell found facilities for trade far superior to any other point on the Pacific<sup>44</sup> and saw the Pacific trade as destined to become linked with the existing trade out of St. Louis, observing that

The day is not far distant when this long-neglected and much depreciated region of America will become the envy of its neighbors. As soon as its resources and advantages become better known, and more justly estimated, its increase and

---

<sup>44</sup> Capt. Benjamin Morrell, *A Narrative of Four Voyages, to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean From the Years 1822 to 1831* (New York: J&J Harper, 1832), 197.

prosperity may challenge a competitor in the same parallel of latitude on the western continent.<sup>45</sup>

Although he articulated a vision of continental trade, Morrell was no agent of empire.

Like Shaler and Pattie before him, he decried the lack of improvements and mourned the failure of the Mexican people to realize the inherent potential of the land, observing that

Man, enlightened, civilized man, alone is wanting to complete the picture, and give a soul, a divinity to the whole. Were these beautiful regions, which have been much libeled, and are so little known, the property of the United States, our government would never permit them to remain thus neglected. The eastern and middle states would pour out their thousands of emigrants, until magnificent cities would rise on the shores of every inlet along the coast of New California, while the wilderness of the interior would be made to blossom like the rose.<sup>46</sup>

Despite his enthusiastic rendering of California's American prospects, however, Morrell did not suggest that the American government move to secure the region.

From the very start, American visitors to California were in agreement that California could not long remain in the hands of its present possessors before another nation stepped in to seize the region's untapped potential for itself. What was left unsaid by such conclusions, however, was suggestion that the United States was destined to play a part in shaping California's future. This was soon to change. Like James Pattie, Zenas Leonard left home to seek adventure and profit in the Far Western fur trade. Leaving Clearfield, Pennsylvania in 1830, Leonard obtained a post as clerk for a Pittsburgh mercantile house. Leonard joined Joseph Walker's expedition in St. Louis and the following year the party began to trap extensively in the Far West – from the Great Salt

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 198-199.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 210.

Lake, to the headwaters of the Columbia, to the Colorado River.<sup>47</sup> Arriving on the Pacific in 1833, Leonard spent time in the Monterey area and San Juan Baptista and had some opportunity to observe the country. Although several members of the Walker party remained in the area after the expedition returned, contributing to the growing community of American and British expatriates who resided in the Monterey and San Francisco Bay area, Leonard left for the United States in 1834, arriving in Independence, Missouri in August of 1835. After returning to Clearfield, Leonard published his experiences in a local newspaper. Interest was so great<sup>48</sup> that the paper could not satisfy the demand for copies from people outside of the Clearfield area. In response, Leonard published *A Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard, a Native of Clearfield County, PA Who Spent Five Years In Trapping For Furs, Trading With Indians, etc., etc., of the Rocky Mountains* in 1839.

Like Shaler, Morrell and Pattie before him, Leonard found much to admire in the landscape and little to admire in the population. Unlike his predecessors, however, Leonard did name the government that he felt would be California's redemption, chastising the United States government in Washington for not acting to "assert her claim by taking possession of the whole territory as soon as possible."<sup>49</sup> Writing just before the era of Manifest Destiny, Leonard looked on California with an acquisitive eye and his

---

<sup>47</sup> For a good account of Leonard's activities with the Walker party, see Goetzmann, 151-156.

<sup>48</sup> Zenas Leonard, *A Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard, a Native of Clearfield County, PA Who Spent Five Years In Trapping For Furs, Trading With Indians, etc., etc., of the Rocky Mountains* (Clearfield PA: D.W Moore, 1839), publisher's note.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

reflection on California's American prospect revealed a deep faith in the progressive view of history and in both the transformative power and superiority of American political institutions, asking

Will the jurisdiction of the federal government ever succeed in civilizing the thousands of savages roaming over these plains, and her hardy freeborn population here plant their homes, build their towns and cities, and say here shall the arts and sciences of civilization take root and flourish? yes, here, even in this remote part of the great west before many years, will these hills and valleys be greeted with the enlivening sound, of the workman's hammer, and the merry whistle of the plough-boy.<sup>50</sup>

Leonard was sure of his answer but not of his own government's will. The time was running out for the Americans to seize the opportunity to direct events in California, according to Leonard, as other powers were now involved on the Pacific. Leonard observed that

The Spaniards are making inroads on the South - the Russians are encroaching with impunity along the sea-shore to the North, and further North-east, the British are pushing their stations into the heart of our territory, which, even at this day, more resemble military forts than trading stations. Our government should be vigilant. She should assert her claim by taking possession of the whole territory as soon as possible - for we have good reason to suppose that the territory west of the mountain will some day be as important to the nation as that on the east.<sup>51</sup>

For the first time, an American visitor to California saw the land through the lens

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 50. For a comprehensive look at American fears of European, and particularly English, involvement in the West in the years just after Leonard issued his warning, see Frederick Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963). Reginald Horsman also examines Anglophobic rhetoric during this era in *Race and Manifest Destiny: the Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), as does Thomas R. Hietala in *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Also see Norman Graebner, *Manifest Destiny*, The American Heritage Series, ed. Leonard W. Levy and Alfred Young (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), ch. 4 for a representative sample of pro-expansionist rhetoric in defense of American action in the region.

of Manifest Destiny, as the likely stage for America's untransacted destiny of coast-to-coast dominion. Leonard urged quick action, charging the federal government with leaving the vital work of developing its possessions "undone"<sup>52</sup> until it was "too late to apply the remedy."<sup>53</sup> With the injection of Manifest Destiny, the relatively passive rhetoric about a paradise languishing in the hands of the undeserving took on a more aggressive tone. Zenas Leonard's account contributed to the growing sense of place in the California literature, and to America's sense of its place in California's future. In doing so, Leonard foreshadowed the next generation of American visitors – visitors such as Lansford Hastings, who were more than willing to echo Leonard's call to action in their own writings.

---

<sup>52</sup> Leonard, 49.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE OBJECT OF DESIRE: California's Image in the Era of Manifest Destiny

As interest in California grew, so too did the number of visitors who shared Zenas Leonard's belief that the United States had to act fast in order to secure California's riches. Despite the admonitions of Zenas Leonard, however, Americans were slow to realize their part in California's untransacted destiny, and the general reluctance to suggest that the American government take action to bring the territory into its sphere of influence persisted into the early 1840s. To the vast majority of Americans beyond the small audiences who followed the adventures of Shaler, Pattie, Morrell and Leonard, California was still foreign and remote both physically and imaginatively. This was soon to change. In 1835, California received perhaps its most famous American visitor, one who would work the theme of Eden in the hands of the undeserving Other into a classic of American travel literature.

Richard Henry Dana, a native of Boston, had left home as a foremast hand aboard the *Pilgrim* in 1834. While studying law at Harvard, Dana caught the measles. Although he recovered, his eyesight had weakened to the point that continuing his studies was impossible. Hoping that the sea voyage would help to restore him to health, he took the opportunity to join the crew of the *Pilgrim*, which was engaged in the growing California hide trade. The lucrative trade, a byproduct of the secularization of California's Missions and the easing of trade restrictions by the Mexican authorities, took Dana up and down the coast trading with the inhabitants and collecting hides for sixteen months. Like James Pattie, Dana had great opportunity to observe the country and its inhabitants. Upon his

return to Boston, Dana set about organizing his experiences into a book. Although Dana had some difficulty in finding a publisher,<sup>1</sup> in 1840 *Two Years Before the Mast* appeared to great success.

Dana's book offered a detailed and sympathetic account of life at sea and a vivid depiction of the California hide trade, but its description of California advanced little on earlier accounts. What set his narrative apart was not the content, but rather the depth of his California description. Shaler, Pattie, Morrell and Leonard all came to California on their way to and from somewhere else. Dana was the first writer to leave the United States with the intention of visiting California, and the first to spend an extended period there.

Like other Americans on the coast, Dana found primitive economic conditions and an indolent population that preferred to buy "bad wine made in Boston and brought round by us" even though the country "abounds in grapes."<sup>2</sup> He did find much to admire in the climate and the landscape, however, echoing the sentiments of earlier visitors. He shared Morrell's appreciation for the commercial possibilities afforded by California's many harbours, particularly that of San Francisco Bay.<sup>3</sup> All this led Dana to conclude, "In the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this might be!"<sup>4</sup> Like Shaler,

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast Twenty-Four Years After*, ed. Richard Armstrong (London: J.M Dent & Sons Ltd, 1969), xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

Pattie and Morrell, however, Dana was reluctant to name the enterprising people that California needed, and worried that even if such people did come, their industry would be corrupted over time by “the “California fever” (laziness)”<sup>5</sup> that came with living the Mexican lifestyle.

Dana’s hesitation in naming the United States as the nation destined to seize California from Mexico and realize its true potential marks the last time an American travel writer hesitated to link his own nation’s destiny with that of California. One of the more strident supporters of this new expansionist view was Thomas Jefferson Farnham. A lawyer from Peoria, Illinois, Farnham went west in 1839, as the head of a group determined to wrest Oregon from the control of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Although the party numbered less than twenty, including several Englishmen, Farnham was convinced that it was sufficient for the task. The sheer folly of their mission caused dissension on the trail and only nine of the original party reached Oregon. Once there, Farnham was forced to rely on the Hudson’s Bay men for food and shelter, and returned their generosity by helping the American settlers draft a petition asking Congress for protection against the British.<sup>6</sup>

In December 1839, Farnham left Oregon and headed to Hawaii, where he spent several months. While sailing to Hawaii, Farnham met an American who had lived in California as a carpenter before being jilted by his Mexican lover. Farnham’s bitter and

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> For a good account of Farnham’s adventures in Oregon and California, see Charles B. Churchill, “Thomas Jefferson Farnham: An Exponent of American Empire in Mexican California” *Pacific Historical Review* 60 (November 1991): 517-537.

lovesick companion provided him with a good description of the region with Farnham observing “California itself, not including the bodies or souls of the people, he thought to be a desirable country.”<sup>7</sup> Determined to go to California himself, Farnham arrived off Monterey in the spring of 1840 only to discover the passengers aboard ship could not disembark owing to the fact the country was in a “state of revolution.”<sup>8</sup> They had arrived in the middle of the Graham Affair,<sup>9</sup> which would prove to be the perfect vehicle for Farnham’s anti-Mexican sentiments and expansionist zeal. As Farnham tells his readers, the voyage from Hawaii had so emaciated him he was desperate to land and enjoy some fresh “California beans and beef.”<sup>10</sup> Attempting to plead his case to the Mexican authorities, he accidentally used French instead of Spanish; taking him for a Frenchman, the Mexican official allowed him to disembark. Once on land, Farnham reported to Governor Juan Baptiste Alvarado to obtain the necessary papers for him to remain at Monterey until his health was restored. After receiving his papers, Farnham was able to learn of the troubles that had prevented his vessel from disembarking.

During his stay in Monterey, Farnham became involved in the Graham case and upon his return to the United States, published *Travels in California* in 1844 to tell

---

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Travels in California, with Map*, The California Centennial Editions, ed. Joseph A. Sullivan, no. 10. (Oakland: Biobooks, 1947), 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> The Graham Affair, as it became known, involved a number of expatriate Americans and Britons living in Alta California who had been arrested by Governor Alvarado on suspicion of organizing against him. The men had been arrested all over California and brought to Monterey to await deportation and trial at Tepic, Mexico. See Churchill for a good overview of the Graham Affair and Farnham’s role.

<sup>10</sup> Farnham, 55.

Graham's story. Farnham took no pains to hide his dislike for the Mexican population, who were cast alternately as cruel villains and blundering incompetents.<sup>11</sup> Graham and the other prisoners, mostly former British and American trappers and sailors, were cast in the best possible light as proud Anglo-Saxons bowed by oppression and as the innocent victims of an unfair regime. Their treatment at the hands of Mexican authorities outraged Farnham, as did the American government's failure to avenge their wrongs.<sup>12</sup>

While the bulk of Farnham's narrative was given over to a thorough, if highly biased, account of the Graham Affair, it did contain a very favourable description of California's natural beauty and abundance. Farnham's *Travels* embroidered the new pattern of paradise in the hands of the undeserving so effectively it became a masterwork

---

<sup>11</sup> As David Weber as observed in "Scarce More Than Apes: Historical Roots of Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans," in *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West*, ed. David J. Weber (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 299; the anti-Mexican stereotypes offered by American visitors in California and other border regions was not based on direct observation and experience but on the extension of "negative attitudes towards Catholic Spaniards which Anglo-Americans had inherited from their protestant English forebearers" known as the Black Legend.

For more on the development and application of the Black Legend in North America and its role in shaping American stereotypes of Mexican-Americans on the borderlands and in California see David J. Langum, "Californios and the Image of Indolence," *Western Historical Quarterly* 9 (April 1978): 181-196 and "From Condemnation to Praise: Shifting Perspectives on Hispanic California," *California History* 61 (Winter 1983): 282-291; Doris L. Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses to negative Stereotyping," *New Mexico Historical Review* 53 no. 1 (1978): 75-91; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: the Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Charles Gibson, ed., *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971); Phillip Wayne Powell, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (New York: Basic Books, 1971); Thomas Hietala, "'This Splendid Juggernaut': Westward A Nation and its People" in *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 48-67. For more on anti-Catholic sentiments in America in the antebellum period specifically see Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*, *The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, no. 28 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Farnham, 163.

of Manifest Destiny. Farnham had no trouble identifying the nation he thought would<sup>13</sup> redeem California's potential, writing that "the old Saxon blood must stride the continent, must command all its northern shores, must here press the grape and the olive, here eat the orange and the fig, and in their own unaided might, erect the altar of civil and religious freedom on the plains of the Californias." Like Zenas Leonard, Farnham considered himself an agent of expansionism, and his virulent anti-Mexican writing fit perfectly within the American rhetoric of the mid 1840s.

With Thomas Jefferson Farnham's publication of his *Travels*, the pattern of response to California was now firmly in the service of Manifest Destiny. Interest in the region grew steadily in the years after Farnham's publication, especially along the Missouri frontier, where economic pressures made the tales of easy abundance and economic opportunity particularly attractive.<sup>14</sup> Although Oregon was initially more attractive to settlers from the United States, with increasing frequency parties set out with California as their intended destination.<sup>15</sup> With the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846,

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>14</sup> The economic collapse of 1837 hit the newly settled regions of the Old Northwest and Southwest particularly hard. See Cardinal Goodwin, *The Trans-Mississippi West (1803-1853): A History of Its Acquisition and Settlement* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1922) for some discussion on the effect of the economy on people's receptiveness to Far Western Emigration. See also Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 233-4.

<sup>15</sup> In 1841, the Bartleson-Bidwell party became the first organized overland emigrant party to arrive at Sutter's Fort, traveling over old trapping routes across the Sierra Nevada. In 1843, the Walker and Chiles parties arrived in California over two separate routes, Chiles via Fort Boise and the Malheur and Pit Rivers, and Walker via the Owens and Tulare Rivers. The following year, the Steven-Murphy-Townsend party arrived in Sutter's Fort following roughly the same route as the Bartleson-Bidwell party, along Mary's River, and over the Sierras in the area of modern Reno, Nevada.

interest in California reached a fever pitch. To capitalise on the sudden swell of interest in all things California, publishers scrambled to find California content, even if it was simply a reworking of older material. In 1846, Albert Gilliam published *Travels over the table-lands and cordilleras of Mexico during the years 1843 and 1844; Including a description of California, and the principal cities and mining districts of that Republic...* Gilliam had left his home in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1843 to take a position as consul in San Francisco and to deliver documents to the American diplomats in Mexico City. He never assumed his post as consul at San Francisco, however, due to the anti-foreign sentiments in Alta California. Instead, he returned to the United States after traveling extensively in Mexico and published his Mexican experiences. His lack of direct experience did not prevent him from including a description of California in his account. No doubt trying to capitalize on the sudden interest in Mexico and its provinces, Gilliam included several appendices -- one devoted to a description of California, the others to biographies of Santa Ana and Iturbide.

Gilliam himself recognized the seductive nature of his subject, observing that

It is not then strange that the attention of all Christendom should be directed to that vast extent of country, lying west of the United States, embracing a coast of great length along the Pacific; a country which, from the extent of its rivers, the number of, and valuable minerals of its mountains, as well as for the richness and variety of the products of its soil, should claim the protection of laws and civilization.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Albert M. Gilliam, *Travels Over the Table-Lands and Cordilleras of Mexico During the Years 1843 and 44; Including a Description of California, the Principal Cities and Mining Districts of that Republic and the Biographies of Iturbide and Santa Ana* (Philadelphia: J.W Moore, 1846), 372-3.

It was this belief in the redemptive power of American laws and civilization that laid the foundation for much of Gilliam's staunchly expansionist agenda, which brimmed with virulent anti-Mexican and anti-British sentiments. He was so certain of California's American destiny that in his map of his travels in Mexico, he sketched a railroad connecting San Francisco Bay to New Orleans and Napolian, on the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers. Gathered from the sources available while he was preparing his Mexican experiences for publication, Gilliam's *Travels* repeated the now timeworn essential image of California found in earlier accounts, particularly its agricultural and commercial possibilities, which Gilliam eagerly employed to underscore his expansionist hopes. Gilliam imagined a time when San Francisco would be to the Pacific coast "what New York is to Atlantic countries, the great emporium of commerce and civilization, and ere another century shall have passed away, a wealthy, populous, and powerful empire, will have arisen on the Pacific, and San Francisco will rival many of its Atlantic neighbours."<sup>17</sup> Yet, such a transformation could not be brought about without American intervention. Gilliam warned that, "Should California remain under the dominion of Mexico,

Which is neither a naval nor commercial power, with a selfish and isolated colonial policy, jealous of the innovations of enterprise and civilization, and better satisfied with the gains of an illicit trade and domestic free-booting, than the legitimate profits of an enlarged, liberal, and honest intercourse with the world, San Francisco would remain a small, unimproving, and decaying old town, and the rich country around it an undeveloped waste.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Gilliam was sure, however, that such a fate would not be realized, appealing not only to Providence but also to the idea of progress to underscore his argument. The United States was destined to keep California for itself, Gilliam believed, since

Time in its onward course, has been constantly developing new points and circumstances, which, however unimportant in themselves, when taken in connexion with others, have eventually filled a large space in the history of the world; and when we look at the history of empire throughout the world, the progress of population, wealth, and civilization to the west, the already rapid American emigration to California, and the natural and necessary future connexion of that country with the United States, we can but regard it as the great magnet, and the *ultima thule* of the rapid movement of the past - the progress of empire towards the setting sun.<sup>19</sup>

American intervention in California was simply another step in the great forward moving story of human progress for Gilliam. Many of his readers would have agreed.

Gilliam was not the only opportunist. Long time resident of California Alfred Robinson took advantage of the sudden interest in his home to publish *Life in California* in 1846. Robinson had arrived in California in 1828 and had traveled extensively through the province. His long experience in California did not provide him with any special insights into California, however, and he offered much the same information as Gilliam and others, including the expansionist view. Robinson asked, “Why not plant the banner of liberty there, in the fortress, at the entrance of the noble, the spacious bay of San Francisco?”<sup>20</sup> The result, Robinson claimed, would be the ultimate realization of California’s latent potential:

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Robinson, *Life In California: During a Residence of Several Years in That Territory, Comprising a Description of the Country and the Missionary Establishments, with Incidents, Observations, Etc., Etc., Illustrated with Numerous Engravings* (New York: Wiley & Putnam 1846), 225.

It requires not the far-reaching eye of the statesman, nor the wisdom of a contemplative mind, to know what would be the result. Soon its immense sheet of water would become enlivened with thousands of vessels, and steam-boats would ply between the towns, which as a matter of course, would spring up on its shores. While on other locations, along the banks of the rivers, would be seen manufactories and saw-mills.<sup>21</sup>

Such was the transformative and improving power of commerce that “Everything would improve; population would increase; consumption would be greater, and industry would follow.”<sup>22</sup> Robinson took a providential view of California’s prospects, demanding not action but simple acquiescence to the progressive view of history when he observed, “All this may come to pass; and indeed, it must come to pass, for the march of emigration is to the West, and naught will arrest its advance but the mighty ocean.”<sup>23</sup>

Also in 1846, the “year of decision” in which Manifest Destiny took center stage,<sup>24</sup> Rufus Sage published *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas and the Grand prairies; or Notes by the Way, During an Excursion of Three Years, with a description of the countries passed through*, making sure not to miss any of the suddenly contentious areas in the West. Sage published in response to what he felt was a dearth of accurate information, noting that:

Although our newspapers teem with professed descriptions of those countries...and are redundant with animadversions upon their admitted importance – while the ambitious politician prates of them learnedly, and quotes by the day from

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 225-26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See Bernard de Voto, *Year of Decision: 1846* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943) for a full account of the emigration of 1846 and its effects on western expansion.

fugitive paragraphs of doubtful verity...a palpable ignorance in evinced throughout in regard to a vast store of interesting particulars.<sup>25</sup>

In his description of California, however, Sage reworked the existing prospect, finding much to admire in the landscape and little to admire in the “inert, ignorant, stupid”<sup>26</sup> population. Sage even went so far as to demonstrate his reading of earlier works, quoting a recently published description of San Francisco Bay and sharing in his contemporaries’ naivety about the overland route, noting, “The emigrant can direct his course to any part of the country, as interest or inclination may suggest.”<sup>27</sup>

The following year, two more accounts of California by American visitors appeared. Captain Daniel Heustis published *A Narrative of the adventures and sufferings of Captain Daniel D. Heustis and his companions, in Canada and Van Dieman’s Land, during a long captivity; with travels in California, and voyages at sea*. A native of Vermont, Heustis had arrived in California in 1845 from Hawaii after serving time in the British penal colony on Van Dieman’s Island.<sup>28</sup> Returning home in 1846, he prepared his experiences for publication. Joseph Clark, a member of the Wilkes Expedition,<sup>29</sup> had

---

<sup>25</sup> Rufus Sage, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas and the Grand Prairies; or Notes by the way, during an excursion of three years, with a description of the countries passed through* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846), xi.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>28</sup> Heustis was imprisoned for his part in the Upper Canada Rebellions in 1837. Born in Coventry Vermont in 1806, he became sympathetic to the Canadian cause after visiting Upper Canada on business. Heustis was captured after the battle of Prescott and imprisoned on Van Dieman’s Island (now Tasmania).

<sup>29</sup> The Wilkes Expedition (1838-1841) under Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, was formed to survey the South Sea islands, South America and the Far East in addition to the Northwest Coast of the United States. Six ships were charged with the task and Wilkes’ crew included several trained scientists, including

visited California in early 1841. A number of years passed before he felt moved to write his memoirs, but in 1847 he published his experiences in California and elsewhere in *Light and Shadows of a sailor's life, as exemplified in fifteen years' experience, including the more thrilling events of the U.S. Exploring Expedition and reminisces of an eventful life on the "Mountain Wave."* Describing a place of unmatched beauty, abundance and opportunity squandered by its present possessors, both Heustis and Clark insisted that California's destiny lay in the hands of a people who would seize its potential, with Clark predicting that

It is not too much to predict that many years will not elapse, ere the shrill whistle will echo through these verdant glens and deep ravines, as the car thunders along the plains of California to its metropolis on its western borders. The steam-ship may ascend its gulf and be moored at the mouth of the Colorado freighted with the production of the East Indies, China, or the British Isles. Works of art may soon gild these hill-sides, where now the grazing herds bear undisputed sway; - fortifications may rise along these almost uninhabited shores, and Loreto and San Diego become to western California what Boston and New York are to the Eastern States.<sup>30</sup>

These sentiments were echoed by two other works published that same year.

David Coyner, who had moved to Missouri in 1844, made a promise to an editor back in Virginia to gather pieces of information about the frontier. Coyner's collected materials, including conversations with those engaged in the Santa Fe trade, trappers and a journal

---

botanists, geologists, and draftsmen. For a good overview of the Wilkes Expedition and its politics, see William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 233-240. For a more recent examination of the Expedition and its contribution to American ethnography see Barry Alan Joyce, *The Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Clark, *Light and Shadows of Sailor Life, As Exemplified in Fifteen Years' Experience, Including the More Thrilling Events of the U.S Exploring Expedition and Reminiscences of an Eventful Life on the "Mountain Wave"* (Boston: John Putnam 1847), 235.

written by a Captain Williams containing a description of California, appeared in 1847 as *The Lost Trappers; A Collection of Interesting Scenes and Events in the Rocky Mountains; Together With a Short Description of California*. In the fall of that year, a series of letters began appearing in two eastern newspapers – the *New York Journal of Commerce* and the *Philadelphia North American* - written by another long time resident of California, William Garner. Garner had been put ashore at Santa Barbara with four others after an attempted mutiny aboard the British whaler *Royal George* in 1824. He eventually married into a local landowning family, settled a large ranch, and began lumbering in Santa Cruz and Carmel. Hoping to attract capital to the region,<sup>31</sup> Garner began writing a series of letters in the fall of 1846, no doubt hoping to exploit not only recent events in California but also the growing interest in the Pacific. In his packaging of California, Garner highlighted both the great physical beauty of the region and its agricultural and commercial possibilities. Frankly promotional, his letters exploited the pattern of American response in California, giving it extra dimension through his descriptions of the nascent economic conditions found on the coast. Calculated to draw venture capitalists and labour to the coast by describing many of the opportunities offered by California's developing economy, Garner's letters invited his audience to imagine the future they could create for themselves in such primitive economic conditions. Garner encouraged the United States to keep control of California after the conclusion of hostilities, concluding that

---

<sup>31</sup> Donald Munro Craig, *William Robert Garner: Letters from California 1846-1847* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 21.

Should this be the case, what an amazing field for enterprise will California hold out! At present there is not a yard of tape, a pin, or a piece of domestic cotton or even thread [in California] that does not come from the United States of North America; and this in a country where everything connected with their manufacture can be procured with less trouble and expense on account of the superiority of climate, than in any other part of the American continent.<sup>32</sup>

By 1848, the California prospect first introduced by William Shaler more than forty years earlier was firmly entrenched. No claim about California's riches now seemed too implausible when set against a body of work that cast California as the last location of Paradise in the Americas. But not everyone was a believer. Edwin Bryant, who had been drawn west in 1846 partly by idle curiosity and partly by the promotional literature then circulating along the frontier, was determined to give an accurate account of California by keeping a journal of his trip. Bryant was certain that much of what had been written and reported about California was shamefully overwrought, advising his reader that he had "carefully avoided such embellishments as would tend to impress the reader with a false or incorrect idea of what he saw..."<sup>33</sup> Despite his mocking of many of the stories and "second-hand testimony"<sup>34</sup> that permeated camp-fire discussions about California, once he arrived in California Bryant was seduced by the landscape, using much the same language as his predecessors to relate details of the climate, scenery and natural resources. Upon his return to the United States, Bryant in 1848 published his

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>33</sup> Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California: Being the Journal of a Tour by the Emigrant route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and Through California in the years 1846, 1847* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1967), Preface.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 16.

journal as the aptly titled *What I Saw in California: Being the Journal of a Tour by the Emigrant route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and Through California in the years 1846, 1847*.

Appearing before the discovery of gold was widely known, Bryant's book repeated the original California prospect for the last time. After 1848, a new element was introduced into California literature, rooted in a desire not for a return to a Golden Age, but for gold itself.

Bryant had been an overlander during the famous "Year of Decision," 1846, and was one of a small group of emigrants who had left the usual route to follow a widely promoted short cut that summer. The short cut would soon bear the name of its promoter, Lansford Warren Hastings, and those who followed it would find themselves forever linked with one of the more shocking events in the history of the Overland Trail.<sup>35</sup>

Lansford Hastings was no stranger to the Trail. In 1842, he left Elm Grove, Kansas as a member of an emigrant party led by Dr. Elijah White, a Methodist Missionary in Oregon. White had returned to the United States in 1841 to promote American settlement, and the 160-person party he organized at Elm Grove that spring was then the largest to make the overland journey. Dissension set in quickly, however, and the party soon elected the twenty-three year-old lawyer, Lansford Hastings, as its new captain. The party eventually split into two, one group led by Hastings and the other

---

<sup>35</sup> See George R. Stewart, *Ordeal By Hunger: The Story of the Donner Party* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960); C.F. McGlashan, *History of the Donner Party: A Tragedy of the Sierra*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Sacramento: H.S Crocker and Company, 1890); Hoffman Birney, *Grim Journey* (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1934) and Robert Glass Cleland, *A History of California: The American Period* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), ch. 9 for varied accounts of the Donner Party's history and interpretation.

comprised of White and his supporters.

Arriving in the Willamette Valley in October 1842, Hastings took a position with Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company's operations in Oregon, surveying McLoughlin's land claim at the Willamette Falls and preparing the deeds for the new town site at Oregon City. Hastings had been drawn to Oregon by stories of its great natural beauty, abundance and opportunities, but he was disappointed with what he found there. In the spring of 1843, he decided to lead a group of similarly-minded settlers to California. Hastings admired what he found in California, and like others who had come before him, felt its present possessors unworthy. He spent his time in California preparing his experiences for publication, and in 1844 returned to Ohio where he became a temperance lecturer to raise the necessary funds. The following year, he published *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*. Though it appeared too late to affect the emigration of 1845, Hastings' book would have a profound effect the following year.

Much of the historical work done on the Hastings' *Guide* revolves around its author's involvement with the Donner party tragedy and his responsibility for the quality and practicality of the advice his *Guide* provided.<sup>36</sup> In the summer of 1846 Hastings, who had returned to California the previous summer, headed east with the intention of promoting California to Oregon-bound parties already on the trail. Hastings and his

---

<sup>36</sup> See Thomas F. Andrews, "The Ambitions of Lansford W. Hastings: A Study in Western Myth-Making," *Pacific Historical Review* 39 (1970): 473-491 and "The Controversial Hastings Overland Guide: A Reassessment," *Pacific Historical Review* 37 (1968): 21-34 for a detailed review of the scholarship.

party, including veteran mountain men James Clyman and Caleb Greenwood, traveled east over the shortcut he had proposed in his *Guide* but had never seen. After crossing the Salt Desert, the group continued on to Fort Bridger where Hastings and his friend James Hudspeth parted from Greenwood and Clyman and continued on to the Green River to wait for the emigrants.<sup>37</sup>

Hastings prepared a series of open letters directing emigrants to leave the Oregon Trail at Fort Bridger, and entrusted them to an eastbound traveler to be distributed along the trail. Hudspeth and Hastings were successful in convincing a number of parties to leave the established trail and take what would soon become known as Hastings' Cut-off. James Hudspeth served as guide for the first group, which included Edwin Bryant, and Hastings guided a second party known to history as the Harlan-Young party. A third group lagged a week behind, following Hastings' tracks and written instructions left along the way. This group, the Donner Party, would ensure Hastings' place in the more controversial pages of western history, as it became stalled on the trail and finally overtaken by a winter storm in sight of the pass that now bears its name. Forced to spend the winter beside what is now Donner Lake, the Donner Party ran out of food, and several members resorted to cannibalism before rescue parties from California reached them in the spring of 1847.

---

<sup>37</sup> Thomas F. Andrews, "Lansford W. Hastings and the Promotion of the Salt Lake Desert Cutoff: A Reappraisal," *Western Historical Quarterly* 4 (April 1973), 146.

Since that fateful winter, Lansford Hastings' *Emigrants' Guide* has been roundly condemned as "erroneous advertising"<sup>38</sup> in the service of ambition. As Hastings apologist Thomas Andrews observed, critics of the *Guide* "beginning with [Hastings'] associates, have differed only on the degree to which it should be denounced."<sup>39</sup> For his part in the tragic story of the Donner party, Hastings has been consigned to play the villain's role in the history of the overland trail -- a role made darker by the prevailing opinion that Hastings viewed the Overlanders as a means to achieving his political ambitions in California. This black image of Lansford Hastings has persisted from the late nineteenth century, where it found its first articulation in Hubert Bancroft's *History of California*, to more modern assessments, as Andrews has shown in his study of what he has called the "Hastings myth."<sup>40</sup>

In several articles dedicated to countering Hastings' negative image, Andrews has demonstrated that historians of the emigrant experience have minimized Hastings' *Guide* partially because of its associations with the Donner tragedy but largely because of the frankly promotional nature of its description of California and Oregon. For more than a century, it has been the "quiet verdict of both historians and popular writers that [Hastings' *Guide*] can be classed a promotional tract...and summarily dismissed."<sup>41</sup> Yet, despite this prevailing historical opinion, there is value in Hastings' *Guide* not only in its

---

<sup>38</sup> Andrews, "Controversial Guide," 22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> Andrews, "The Ambitions," 475.

<sup>41</sup> Andrews, "Controversial Guide," 24

depiction of the journey, as Andrews has argued, but for its representation of the destination.

Since the quality of advice Hasting provided is at issue here, it is worth noting that only the addition of a nine page description of the route and a ten page discussion of equipment and supplies -- almost an afterthought at the end of a comprehensive account of his experiences in Oregon and California -- make his book a guide at all. Andrews notes that Hastings did not even plan to publish his experiences as a guide book until after he returned to the United States,<sup>42</sup> deciding on his return that a book specifically aimed at aspiring emigrants would reach a wider audience than another simple description of one individual's experiences in the Far West. What really distinguishes *The Emigrants' Guide* from its rivals is not its form, then, but the depth and focus of Hastings' narrative. Hastings' only concern was with creating an attractive prospect for his audience, not with righting the wrongs of the Graham Affair or with the lot of sailors engaged in the commercial trade or with any of numerous other causes and adventures that formed the core of the preceding forty years of travel writing. Hastings' focus was on California and Oregon. While Hubert Howe Bancroft has accused Hastings of painting everything in "*couleur de rose*"<sup>43</sup> when it came to his description of California, this point was central to Hastings' California prospect. Indeed, I would argue that one of the central features of American travel writing is its inability to see the landscape in any

---

<sup>42</sup> Andrews, "The Ambitions," 488.

<sup>43</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. IV 1840-1845, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1969), 397.

other way. As we shall see, Hastings was not the only enthusiast to paint a glowing picture of California's many charms. However, while his California prospect drew heavily from earlier accounts and in turn became the guide for many who came after him, Hastings' California prospect represented a high point in the literature – a seductive image of a pacific Arcadia rich in natural resources, blessed with a mild and healthy climate and ripe for the taking.

## CHAPTER V

## THE PROSPECT OF PARADISE: Lansford W. Hastings' California Prospect

The landscape that took shape in the pages of Lansford W. Hastings' *Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* was informed by the language of the garden archetype. Arriving in California from Oregon in the summer of 1843, Hastings wrote that many of his party were determined to encourage their friends and family to "exchange the sterile hills, bleak mountains, chilling winds, and piercing cold, of their native lands for the deep, rich and productive soil, and uniform, mild and delightful climate, of this unparalleled region."<sup>1</sup> Through his description of California's many charms, Hastings sought to encourage his readers to make the same exchange, using the twin image of a rich, fertile land and mild, salubrious climate as the core of his California prospect. What Hastings offered his readers was not a new prospect, but simply a more complete version of the prospect sketched by previous accounts, providing a more detailed, if occasionally erroneous,<sup>2</sup> description of California's geographic, natural and human composition. Even Hastings' harshest critic, Hubert Howe Bancroft, for all his disparagement of Hastings' motives and his often misguided and prejudicial assertions, had to agree that Hastings'

---

<sup>1</sup> Lansford Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, ed. Charles Henry Carey, *Narratives of the Trans-Mississippi Frontier*, ed. Carl L. Cannon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), 69.

<sup>2</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, Vol. IV 1840-1845, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1969), 397.

description of California's natural features was the best part of the book.<sup>3</sup> It is in these sections of Hastings' *Guide* that we find the imagery most likely to conjure up an Earthly Paradise in the reader's mind, since Hastings' treatment of the soil, its fecundity and the climate were the very soul of commodity and commodiousness.

Hastings built his landscape quite literally from the ground up. Opening his description of California with an overview of its many mountain ranges, principal valleys, major rivers, islands and harbours, he sketched the foundation of his landscape. It is here that Hastings also made an important division between what he called the Western and Eastern sections of California. For Hastings, the Western section emerged as the primary focus of his narrative. Encompassing the lands between the Pacific Ocean and the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, it was most calculated to allow access to a rich fund of paradisiacal images. The eastern section, with its arid climate and mountainous terrain simply did not figure into his description, except when he could make positive claims on its behalf. Hastings hinted at California's fecundity and abundance in his opening chapter, noting that the valleys of the Sacramento and its tributaries possessed "a soil, which is scarcely paralleled, for fertility and productiveness."<sup>4</sup> Even the islands of Santa Cruz and Saint Clemente appeared as Californias in miniature, with "a most productive and fertile soil...admirably adapted

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Hastings, 77.

both to the purposes of grazing and agriculture.”<sup>5</sup> In the following chapter, Hastings provided a more detailed account of California’s soil, observing that throughout California, “The soil is extremely varied, not only in the two sections, but also in the different portions of each section... That of the valleys is vastly rich and productive.”<sup>6</sup> His enthusiastic endorsement of the soil found in what he called the western section led him to write, “I think I venture nothing when I say, that it is not only not surpassed, but that it is not even equaled. The deep, rich, alluvial soil of the Nile, in Egypt, does not afford a parallel.”<sup>7</sup> Hastings, perhaps realizing that such assertions might appear overstated,<sup>8</sup> asked for his reader’s patience, promising that he would prove his claims in

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> As overstated as they may appear to modern readers, Hastings’ claims for the extraordinary fecundity of the soil and California’s other charms were common to promotional and travel literature from the sixteenth century onwards. See William Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), Carlos A. Schwantes, “Landscapes of Opportunity: Phases of Railroad Promotion of the Pacific Northwest,” *Montana* 43 (Spring 1993): 38-51, Anne Marvin, “Irrigation and Boosterism in Southwest Kansas,” *Kansas History* 19: 36-51; B.H Baltensperger, “Plains Boomers and the Creation of the Great American Desert Myth,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 18 (January 1992): 59-73; G. Malcolm Lewis, “Rhetoric of the Western Interior: Modes of Environmental Description in American Promotional Literature of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, eds. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), Chapter 5 for only a small representation on the scholarship of promotional literature in America consulted in creation of my thesis.

For some excellent examples of this type of writing, see also John Filson, *The Discovery and Settlement of Kentucky*, March of America Facsimile Series, no. 50 (Wilmington: James Adams, 1784. Reprint, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966.); William Wood *New England's Prospect*, ed. Alden T. Vaughn, The Commonwealth Series, ed. Winfred E.A. Bernhard. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977); Gilbert Imlay, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, Series in American Studies, ed. Joseph J. Kwait (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1968) and Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 20 vols. (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906).

the following chapter, “especially that part of it, which treats of the productions, which it is believed, will not only convince him of their truth, but may, perhaps induce him to indulge in assumptions and speculations, even more enlarged.”<sup>9</sup>

Hastings wasted no time in providing such inducements. Fertile soils yielded an abundance of natural products. Hastings here reverted to an old and deeply established method of ordering the landscape, the list, whereby “the landscape exists as nothing more than the sum of disparate objects; these kinds of trees and plants, those kinds of animals, and so on.”<sup>10</sup> A list speaks to abundance, and in Hastings’ recitation of a virtual catalog of flora and fauna California became a series of potential commodities, all obtained with little or no labour. This was ably demonstrated by the abundance of fruits that could be found, including several types of apples and numerous species of berries. The strawberries and grapes were of special interest to Hastings, who observed that “strawberries are extremely abundant and they are the largest and most delicious that I have ever seen.”<sup>11</sup> Wild grapes, which grew in great variety near rivers and lakes, were also abundant and were gathered by the Indians in great numbers, “thirty or forty bushels at a time,”<sup>12</sup> to be taken to trade at Sutter’s Fort. Hastings also informed his readers that

Both the climate and the soil are eminently adapted to the growing of wheat, rye, oats, barley, beans and peas, hemp, flax, tobacco, cotton, rice, coffee, corn and cane,

---

<sup>9</sup> Hastings, 81.

<sup>10</sup> John Conron, *The American Landscape: A Critical Anthology of Prose and Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), xxii.

<sup>11</sup> Hastings, 90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

as well as all kinds of vegetables, and especially, such as potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots, onions and the like. And both the soil and the climate are no less adapted to the growing of the greatest variety of fruits; among which are apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries and grapes, as well as most tropical fruits, particularly such as oranges, lemons, citrons, dates, figs and pomegranates.<sup>13</sup>

In enumerating this abundance, Hastings gave credit not to Spanish and Mexican cultivation but to nature itself, observing that “many kinds of the grains and fruits above enumerated are indigenous, for instance the oats, wheat, rye; many of the tropical fruits and a great variety of grape; flax, a kind of hemp, and red and white clover, are also indigenous productions.”<sup>14</sup> As M. Kat Anderson, Michael Barbour and Valerie Whitworth have shown, however, the indigenous vegetation of California’s coastal plains and interior valleys presented an entirely different prospect from the one Hastings described.<sup>15</sup> The introduction of European species of plants and domesticated animals had profound consequences for California’s ecosystem, with many of the plants that Hastings enumerated arriving with the earliest Spanish settlers. As William Preston has observed, “Old World Annuals such as wild oats, ripgut, mustard, and filgaree quickly became dominant near the coastal missions and began to spread inland.”<sup>16</sup> By the time Hastings and his contemporaries arrived in California, this process was complete, leading the Americans to take these old world species for indigenous ones.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>15</sup> See M. Kat Anderson, Michael G. Barbour and Valerie Whitworth, “A World of Balance and Plenty” in *Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush*, ed. Ramón Gutiérrez and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> William Preston, “Serpent in the Garden,” in *Contested Eden*, 273.

That these old world species were admirably suited to California is evident from the sheer abundance of wild oats and clover throughout the western section. To bolster his earlier claim that California's soil was superior to that of any other known part of world, including the Nile valley, Hastings provided his readers with several examples of California's superabundance. The immense fields of wild oats and clover that covered the hillsides in California were evidence of California's natural bounty, Hastings reported:

Several of the farmers here informed me that they had often seen many thousands of acres in a body which were growing higher than they could reach, when on horseback... In traveling through the various sections of the country, I have passed through thousands of acres, which were from two to five feet in height, and as dense as they could possibly stand.<sup>17</sup>

As a result, according to Hastings, farmers who desired a field of oats had only to fence an area off to keep stock out. No further labour was required, he assured his readers, to yield "a much larger crop than we are able to do in any of the States, with all the labor and expense of cultivation."<sup>18</sup> Clover grew just as abundantly. Hastings reported that it was similar to the clover found in the United States, except in terms of its size. Just as wild oats grew to considerable size, clover could be found growing "four or five feet in height, and as dense as it can possibly grow."<sup>19</sup> He went on to say that, when dried, the clover "affords a most excellent natural hay, of which all kinds of stock are extremely

---

<sup>17</sup> Hastings, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

fond,”<sup>20</sup> underscoring the theme of use so prevalent in travel writing.

Under cultivation, the soil was equally productive. Hastings told his readers that

Several very respectable and credible gentlemen informed me that there had been an instance, within their own knowledge, of a farmer’s having received one hundred and twenty bushels to the acre; and that, the next year, from a spontaneous growth, upon the same ground, he received sixty-one bushels to the acre.<sup>21</sup>

As with his earlier claim regarding the soil’s fertility, Hastings was aware of how this information might be viewed as an exaggeration by his readers who were used to far lower returns. However, he insisted on its veracity:

To many it will appear impossible that one acre of ground should produce that quantity of wheat, and hence to them, the above statement will appear incredible; but I have not the least doubt of its entire correctness. This is no more extraordinary that it would be to see oats growing spontaneously, four or even five or six feet high, over thousands of acres; nor is it farther removed from the common order of things, than it would be to see spontaneous growths of flax and clover, of three or four feet in height, covering vast plains and valleys as far as vision extends, yet *these things are true*.<sup>22</sup>

California’s superabundance was not limited to the botanical, however. The country was also home to innumerable herds of domestic and wild animals. The sheer numbers of cattle were a source of amazement to Hastings, especially given the lack of animal husbandry in California. He observed that

They require neither feeding nor housing and are always sufficiently fattened for the slaughterhouse. Instead of becoming lean and meager during the winter, as our herds do, they are always much the fattest and in the best condition during that season.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 92.

Herds of cattle, Hastings wrote, “Are everywhere seen upon all the different valleys and plains,”<sup>24</sup> and despite their use in the yoke or as dairy cattle, they were “as wild as the deer or elk”<sup>25</sup> until they were brought in from the range and domesticated. Almost as numerous were the elk and antelope. Hastings reported seeing “herds of five or six hundred elk”<sup>26</sup> in the valleys, feeding on the oats and clover. These animals were extremely useful for food and for leather and easy to catch for they appeared to have little fear of humans and appeared “extremely domestic”<sup>27</sup> in their interactions with people. So it was in California that the cows were wild and the antelope domestic – an Eden indeed!

Hastings’ readers would have found everything he claimed for California difficult to believe if it were not for the fact that such claims were already a commonplace in the literature of California. From the earliest American description, in 1808, California had been depicted as incredibly fertile. In 1832, Benjamin Morrell, who had visited California in the mid 1820s, published a description of California in his memoirs that turned on the same essential image of California’s superabundance. Describing the area around Monterey, Morrell noted, “Some of the plantations would eclipse our finest gardens - producing all kinds of grain, vegetables, garden herbs, and a variety of fruits

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 95.

common to the United States.”<sup>28</sup> For Morrell however, the true paradise was found in the area around San Francisco Bay. Here was a

Verdant, blooming country, pleasingly diversified with cultured fields and waving forests; meadows clothed with the richest verdure in the gift of bounteous may; pastures covered with grazing herds; hill and dale, mountain and valley, noble rivers and gurgling brooks.<sup>29</sup>

Such natural beauty was complemented by great agricultural promise, as demonstrated by what Morrell believed to be natural grasses and clover covering the hillsides.<sup>30</sup> Hastings’ observations on the incredible yields that California farmers could expect were supported by those of several other writers who realised that images of superabundance were bound to appeal to home audiences. In 1846, Rufus Sage described wild clover and oats taking over the hillsides, as well as the excellent returns on cultivated crops. Echoing Hastings, “The soil as well as the climate is well adapted to the cultivation of all kinds of grain and vegetables produced in the United States,” he noted,

And many of the varied fruits of the torrid and temperate zones can be successfully reared in one and the same latitude. Among the grains, grasses, and fruits indigenous to the country are wheat, rye, oats, flax, and clover, (white and red,) with a great variety of grapes, all of which are said to grow spontaneously. Wild oats frequently cover immense spreads of bottom and prairie land, sometimes to the extent of several thousand acres, which resemble in appearance the species common to the United States. They usually grow to a height of between two and three feet, though they often reach a height of seven feet.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Capt. Benjamin Morrell, *A Narrative of Four Voyages, to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean From the Years 1822 to 1831* (New York: J&J Harper, 1832), 208.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-211.

<sup>31</sup> Rufus Sage, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas and the Grand Prairies; or Notes by the way, during an excursion of three years, with a description of the countries passed through* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846), 193.

“Forty bushels per acre is said to be the average wheat crop,” Sage added, but “sixty and even one hundred bushels have been grown upon a like spot of ground.”<sup>32</sup> All this led him to conclude “Perhaps no country in the world is possessed of a richer or more fruitful soil, or one capable of yielding a greater variety of productions, than the valleys of the Sacramento and its tributaries.”<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, nothing that was written about California’s great natural abundance seemed too far-fetched, although one writer’s assertion that the wild birds in the interior were “so tame as to allow themselves to be captured with clubs”<sup>34</sup> did push at the bounds of credibility. Every detail provided by these writers reinforced the master image of the Earthly Paradise. Here nature seemed to offer everything in abundance, holding out the promise of great returns for a little labour. By focusing on tales of California’s superabundance, Hastings and his contemporaries created a landscape of perpetual plenty, where the very real threats of seasonal drought and agricultural failure went unmentioned.

However powerful the image of superabundance was in shaping the prospect of paradise in California, future success was predicated on the existence of another powerful factor that emerged in the pages on California travel writing. A benign climate quickly

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Clark, *Light and Shadows of Sailor Life, As Exemplified in Fifteen Years’ Experience, Including the More Thrilling Events of the U.S Exploring Expedition and Reminiscences of an Eventful Life on the “Mountain Wave”* (Boston: John Putnam 1847), 232.

became a defining feature of the California prospect in the early years of the nineteenth century, through the enthusiastic reports of Hastings and his contemporaries. In California, Hastings found a climate very much like that of the imagined Earthly Paradise, a land of “perpetual spring” and perpetual health. Along the coast and interior valleys the climate exhibited “no excess of heat or cold, it is the most uniform and delightful. The mean temperature, during the year, is about 61° Fahrenheit; that of the spring is 66°; that of the summer 70°; that of the autumn 67°; and of the winter is 61°.”<sup>35</sup> Such an even climate meant that the region was entirely free from the extreme temperature swings that were experienced by Hastings’ readers back in the United States.

The moderate climate was further demonstrated by the lack of winter snows. In an image calculated to appeal to his winter-weary readers in the Midwest or along the Atlantic coast, Hastings observed that “in the northern portion” of California,

Snow sometimes falls, but it very seldom lies more than two or three hours, always disappearing at the rising of the sun; but even here, running water never freezes, nor does standing water ever freeze thicker than window glass. In the southern portion, and even as far north as latitude 38° north, snow, frost and ice are unknown. An equability of temperature is found, in all portions of this section, which very few portions of the world afford, none perhaps, unless they be some portions of Italy. In many portions of this section, immediately upon the coast, it is warmer in the winter season, than in the summer.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Hastings, 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Hastings was not the first American to make the association between California and the Mediterranean, nor would he be the last.<sup>37</sup> Although the image has now passed into something of a cliché, comparison with Italy and the Mediterranean was an easy way for American travel writers to create the image of California as a veritable garden of Eden. This device, common in travel writing generally, allowed writers to avoid the necessity of detail by comparing the unknown thing with the known. To say that the soil is more fertile than that of the Nile Valley or that the climate is as good or better than Italy's is to draw upon the reader's own knowledge, real or imagined, of the familiar world. In a few words, the travel writer could accomplish what pages of descriptive detail could not.

Building on the central image of California's Mediterranean climate, Hastings informed his readers that no region of the United States could compare to California.

What was true on the east coast was not true on the Pacific. In fact,

Compared with the climate, in the same latitude, on the east side of the Rocky mountains, the difference is almost incredible. It is milder on the Pacific coast, in latitude 42° north, than it is in 32° north on the Atlantic coast, being a difference of more than ten degrees of temperature, in the same latitude.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> A year before Hastings' *Guide* was published, Thomas Farnham referred to California as the "Italy of America" (Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Travels in California With Map. With an introduction by Joseph A. Sullivan*, The California Centennial Editions, ed. Joseph A. Sullivan, no. 10 (Oakland: Biobooks, 1947), 54. The cultivation of the Mediterranean image in California, particularly southern California, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries built upon these early parallels. For more on the cultivation of the California Mediterranean, see Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850 to 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), chapter 12; Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 54 (Winter 1985): 22-33; Robert G. Waite, "Over the Ranges to the Golden Gate: Tourist Guides to the West, 1880-1920," *Journal of the West* 39 (April 1992): 103-113; Susan G. Davis, "Landscapes of Imagination: Tourism in Southern California," *Pacific Historical Review* 68 (May 1999): 173-191; Claire Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), chapter 5.

<sup>38</sup> Hastings, 83.

In California, Hastings insisted, the climate was so even and so mild that “No fires are required, at any season of the year, in parlors, offices or shops, hence fuel is never required, for any other than culinary purposes,”<sup>39</sup> and “Even in the months of December and January, vegetation is in full bloom, and all nature wears a most cheering and enlivening aspect. It may truly be said of this country, that ‘December is as pleasant as May.’”<sup>40</sup> However, Hastings was quick to qualify his remarks, adding that such claims could only be applied to the valleys and plains. In the mountains, an entirely different prospect presented itself, one of eternal winter. Such variation presented the reader with an interesting choice, according to Hastings, as “it is seen that you may here enjoy perennial spring, or perpetual winter at your option. You may in a very few days, at any season of the year, pass from regions of eternal verdure, to those of perpetual ice and snow, in doing which, you pass through almost every possible variety of climate, from that of the temperate, to that of the frigid zone.”<sup>41</sup>

Hastings was correct in his assertion that California’s climate had much in common with portions of Italy. California’s climate, marked by mild winters characterized by a lack of frost and snow, and hot, dry summers with little rainfall, is found in only four other places on earth – the Mediterranean, central Chile, southern and western Australia and the Cape region of South Africa.<sup>42</sup> But the parallel with the

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> M. Kat Anderson, *et. al.*, 18-19.

Mediterranean was problematic for Hastings because it raised the specter of aridity and low summer rainfalls. As Hubert Howe Bancroft has observed, Hastings visited during a severe drought year<sup>43</sup> but readers would have little sense of any ill effect from a shortage of rain. Hastings admitted that most of California's rain fell during "the rainy season, during the residue of the year, scarcely a drop of rain ever falls, but there have been a few instances of its falling as late as April and May, though this is very seldom."<sup>44</sup> Aware that an acknowledgment of the region's aridity might jeopardize his earlier claims regarding the region's great natural and agricultural abundance, Hastings was quick to reassure his readers:

It would seem that the inhabitants of a country watered only by the rains of three months, and the dews of the residue of the year, must suffer intensely, from the effects of such continued drought, but such is not the case in this country. The extraordinary mildness of the climate together with the falling of the rains, causes the vegetation to put forth early in the month of December, and to mature in the spring, or very early in the summer. So it is of wheat, and other grains, being sown in November and December, they are matured in the spring, or early in the summer before they are effected by the drought. In many portions of the country, the vegetation, So far from being injuriously affected by the drought, is seen at full bloom during every month of the year.<sup>45</sup>

In California, nature applied the remedy with mild winters allowing farmers to take full advantage of winter rains to mature their crops before drier weather could do damage.

---

<sup>43</sup> Bancroft, 397.

<sup>44</sup> Hastings, 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

Moreover, Hastings was quick to note that in California, “The crops even of a dry season, are much better... than they are at any time, in Oregon, or even in most of the States.”<sup>46</sup>

In his enthusiastic endorsement of California’s climate, Hastings echoed the sentiments of earlier writers while providing those who followed him with a fully realised image of the California Mediterranean.<sup>47</sup> James Ohio Pattie, whose difficulties in California, including his father’s jailhouse death in San Diego, failed to sour him on California’s many charms, had used much the same language as Hastings when he wrote in 1831 that

The climate is delightfully equal. The husbandman here does not think of his fields being moistened by the falling rain. He digs ditches around them, in which water is conveyed from a stream, sufficient to cover the ground, whenever moisture is required. Rains seldom fall in the summer or autumn. The rainy season commences in October; and continues until the last of December, and sometimes even through January; by which time the grass, clover and wild oats are knee high...<sup>48</sup>

Richard Henry Dana, who had arrived off Santa Barbara in the middle of winter, found it so warm that he “wore straw hats, duck trousers, and all the summer gear. As this was

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Some writers even went as far as to repeat Hastings’ endorsement verbatim. A year after *The Emigrants’ Guide* appeared, Rufus Sage repeated Hastings’ pleasing prospect word for word, when he told his readers that ““The climate is so mild that fires are needed at no season of the year for other than cooking purposes. By aid of irrigation, many kinds of vegetables are fresh-grown at any time, while two crops of some species of grain may be produced annually. Flowers are not unfrequently in full bloom in mid winter, and all nature bears a like smiling aspect. In this however, we refer only to the low-lands and valleys. The traveler at any season of the year ay visit at his option the frosts and snows of eternal winter, or feast his eyes upon the Verde and beauty of perennial spring, or glut his taste amid the luxuriant abundance and rich maturity of unending summer, or indulge his changeful fancy in the enjoyment of a magnificent variety of scenery as well as of climate, soil, and productions.” Sage, 194.

<sup>48</sup> James Ohio Pattie, *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie, of Kentucky*, edited by Timothy Flint (Cincinnati: Printed and Published by John H. Wood, 1831), 274.

midwinter, it spoke well for the climate; and we afterwards found that the thermometer never fell to the freezing-point throughout the winter, and there was very little difference between the seasons, except that during a long period of rainy and south-easterly weather thick clothes were not uncomfortable.”<sup>49</sup>

William Garner, whose letters began appearing in eastern newspapers the year after Hastings published *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California*, echoed his descriptions of perpetual spring, telling his eastern readership that

What in California is called winter, would in most parts of the United States be termed the middle of spring. Here are no snows, that is to say, none which lie twenty-four hours on the ground, unless it be on the summits of the mountains. In twenty-two years' residence in California, I have never seen on the plains or lowlands the snow last long enough for the boys to gather a snowball. What little snow does fall melts immediately upon reaching the earth. As another proof of the mildness of the winters in this country, I must inform you that such a thing as a chimney or a fireplace in houses was never known until within a few years.<sup>50</sup>

Even Edwin Bryant, who had vowed not to succumb to many of the extravagances written about California, could not resist saying, “It is scarcely possible to imagine a more delightful temperature, or climate which is more agreeable and uniform. The sky is cloudless, without the slightest film or vapor apparent in all the vast azure vault. In the middle of the day the sun shines with great power, but in the shade it is nowhere

---

<sup>49</sup> Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast Twenty-Four Years After*, ed. Richard Armstrong (London: J.M Dent & Sons Ltd, 1969), 46-47.

<sup>50</sup> Donald Munro Craig, *William Robert Garner: Letters from California 1846-1847* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 89.

uncomfortable.”<sup>51</sup> Bryant noted “It is rarely so cold in the settled portions of California as to congeal water. But twice only while here I saw ice; and then not thicker than window-glass. I saw no snow resting upon the ground...The thermometer, at any season of the year, rarely sinks below 50 or rises above 80...”<sup>52</sup>

Just as the image of superabundance rested on natural and agricultural plenty, praise for California’s climate turned on two concepts – its mildness and its healthfulness. Hastings knew that healthfulness would be of particular interest to readers residing in areas prone to malaria outbreaks. Just as California’s natural abundance spoke well of its potential for European and American agriculture, he stated, the mildness of its climate offered even more benign prospects: good health, the very essence of an earthly Eden:

From what has been said, in reference to the climate, very correct conclusions may be readily drawn in reference to the adaptation of this country, to the promotion of health. There are few portions of the world, if any, which are so entirely exempt from all febrifacient causes. There being no low, marshy regions, the noxious miasmatic effluvia, so common in such regions, is here, nowhere found. The purity of the atmosphere is most extraordinary, and almost incredible. So pure is it, in fact, that flesh of any kind may be hung for weeks together, in the open air, and that too, in the summer season, without undergoing putrefaction.”<sup>53</sup>

Disease was almost unknown in California, according to Hastings, except "bilious intermittent fevers...to a very small extent, in some portions of the interior, yet they are

---

<sup>51</sup> Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California: Being the Journal of a Tour by the Emigrant route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and Through California in the years 1846, 1847* (Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1967), 273.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>53</sup> Hastings, 85

so extremely mild a type, that is very seldom found necessary to resort to medical aid.”<sup>54</sup> On this point, Hastings was able to offer his own personal experiences as proof of his claims, noting that “Persons attacked with these fevers, seldom adopt any other remedy than of abstaining a short time, from food or going to the coast. The latter remedy is said to be infallible, and I am inclined to that opinion, from the fact that fevers are so seldom known anywhere on the coast, and from one or two cases, that came under my own observation.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Hastings informed his readers,

All foreigners, with whom I conversed upon this subject and who reside in that country, are unanimous and confident in the expression of the belief that it is one of the most healthy portions of the world. From my own experience and knowledge of the country, especially of its entire exemption from all the ordinary causes of disease and the extraordinary purity of its atmosphere, I am clearly of the opinion that there are very few portions of the world which are superior or even equal to this, in point of healthfulness or salubrity of climate.<sup>56</sup>

Hastings’ claims for the healthfulness of the California climate were shared by others. Earlier writers tended to comment on its healthfulness without providing specific details. Shaler’s initial report on the climate noted only that it was “remarkably healthy,”<sup>57</sup> while James Pattie in 1831 observed that in California the “advantages of healthfulness, a good soil, a temperate climate, and yet one of exceeding mildness, a

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> William Shaler, “Journal of a voyage between China and the Northwest Coast of America, made in 1804 by William Shaler,” *American Register* 3:1 ([1808]; reprint Claremont CA: Saunders Studio Press, 1935), 52.

happy mixture of level and elevated ground, and vicinity to the sea”<sup>58</sup> came together to excite “wonder and praise”<sup>59</sup> in those who traveled through the country. By the mid 1840s, other writers joined Hastings in elaborating on these passing observations.

David Coyner, writing in 1847, informed his readers that “I have known many who were completely broken down by the diseases of Missouri, that took trips...in search of health, and have always returned not only completely restored, but even more fleshy than they had been at any period of their lives.”<sup>60</sup> Coyner employed a bit of folk-wisdom in supporting his claims for California’s healthy climate, observing

That California is healthy, must be evident from the fact, that it is a country of vallies (sic) and mountains. For it is generally the case, that the face of a country determines its character, as it regards health. A country of vallies and very high mountains is always blessed with a pure elastic atmosphere, and an abundance of fine water, which every one knows, are essential to good health.<sup>61</sup>

Joseph Clark, writing in the same year, shared Coyner’s faith in California’s restorative powers, concluding that “I am of the opinion that this region of California is very healthy for invalids in pulmonary diseases. I have been informed by a long resident in this country that there is no one disease peculiar to it or any way common.”<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Pattie, 306.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> David H. Coyner, *The Lost Trappers; A Collection of Interesting Scenes and Events in the Rocky Mountains; Together With a Short Description of California* (Cincinnati: J.A & U.P James, 1847), 207.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>62</sup> Clark, 231.

Hastings' claim for the purity of the atmosphere was bolstered further by Rufus Sage, who noted that "The air is almost invariably pure and free from the noxious exhalations common to many other countries, which contributes greatly to render the climate uniformly healthy - a character which it has hitherto sustained by common report."<sup>63</sup> Edwin Bryant, who had mocked the stories of California's healthy climate while still camped in Missouri, now offered his own testimonial. No resurrection was experienced, to be sure, but California had drawn its protective arm around him, Bryant claimed, informing his readers that

I was in the country nearly a year, exposed much of the time to great hardships and privations, sleeping, for the most part, in the open air, and I never felt while there the first pang of disease, or the slightest indication of bad health... The atmosphere is so pure and preservative along the coast, that I never saw putrefied flesh, although I have seen, in midsummer, dead carcasses lying exposed to the sun and weather for months. They emitted no offensive smell. There is but little disease in the country arising from the climate.<sup>64</sup>

The purity of the atmosphere was evident for Bryant, not only in the physical health he enjoyed, but in the fact that "At night, so pure is the atmosphere, that the moon gives a light sufficiently powerful for the purposes of the reader or student who has good eyesight. There is no necessity of burning the 'midnight oil'. Nature here, lights the candle for the bookworm."<sup>65</sup>

Nature, it seemed did all the work in California. The hand of Providence appeared everywhere in the landscapes created by Hastings and his contemporaries.

---

<sup>63</sup> Sage, 195.

<sup>64</sup> Bryant, 451-452.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

From the abundance of what was perceived as native plant species and the admirable adaptation of domesticated animals and crops to the soil of California to the mild and even climate, California appeared as an earthly paradise, a Pacific Arcadia holding out hope for the realization of humanity's oldest dreams. In California, winter snows could not chill you, illness could not fell you, and crops and stock raised themselves; the slightest effort yielded amazing returns. Such imagery prompted many to conclude that something great was destined to rise on the shores of the Pacific.

This was certainly true of Lansford Hastings, whose *Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* contained a vision of California's American destiny that seems eerily prescient to modern readers. Inviting his reader to recall all that had been said of California's many charms, Hastings urged his audience to "anticipate their condition, in reference to the progressive future."<sup>66</sup> However, in case his readers were not moved to such imaginings without assistance, Hastings obliged with a fully realised image of California's likely future, imagining a time

When those wild forests, trackless plains, untrodden valleys and the unbounded ocean, will present one grand scene of continuous improvements, universal enterprise, and unparalleled commerce: when those vast forests shall have disappeared before the hardy pioneer; those extensive plains shall abound with innumerable herds of domestic animals; those fertile valleys shall groan under the immense weight of their abundant products: when those numerous rivers shall team [sic] with countless steamboats, steam-ships, ships, barques and brigs; when the entire country will be everywhere intersected with turnpike roads, rail-roads, and canals; and when, all the vastly numerous and rich resources of that now almost unknown region will be fully and advantageously developed.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Hastings, 151.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

The result of such “continuous improvements” would lead naturally to the establishment of civilization on the shores of the Pacific. Hastings enlarged his evocative picture of groaning, grain-filled valleys, trees falling beneath the axe and rivers teeming with steamships and all variety of maritime craft with an image of the great cities that would rise out of this prosperity, noting that

To complete this picture, we may fancy to ourselves, a Boston, a New York, a Philadelphia and a Baltimore, growing up in a day, as it were, both in Oregon and California; crowded with a vast population and affording all the enjoyments and luxuries of a civilized life. And to this we may add numerous churches, magnificent edifices, spacious colleges and stupendous monuments and observatories, all of Grecian architecture, rearing their majestic heads high in their aerial region, amid those towering pyramids of perpetual snow looking down upon all the busy, bustling scenes of tumultuous civilization, amid the eternal verdure of perennial spring.<sup>68</sup>

However, California’s future was not just one of agricultural, economic and architectural transformation. Fundamental to the idea of Manifest Destiny was a deep-seated faith in the strength and right of American political institutions. As already observed, a sense of mission underscored the language of Manifest Destiny and its attendant faith in progress. The spread of American political institutions and ideology was as much a part of American expansion in the nineteenth century as it was in the twentieth. American success on the Pacific frontier meant the fall of old ideas before the power of American democracy. Hastings’ seductive image of California’s republican future was couched in the language of darkness giving way to light, of the past being overturned for a glorious future. All that he had so far described was merely an inducement to

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 151-152.

Contemplate the time, as fast approaching when the supreme darkness of ignorance, superstition, and despotism, which now so entirely pervade many portions of those remote regions, which have fled forever before the march of civilization and the blazing light of civil and religious liberty; when genuine *republicanism* and unsophisticated *democracy* shall be reared up; and tower aloft, even upon the now wild shores of the great Pacific; where they shall forever stand forth, as enduring monuments to the increasing wisdom of *man* and the infinite kindness and protection of an all-wise and overruling *providence*.<sup>69</sup>

Such sentiment was the very stuff of Manifest Destiny.<sup>70</sup>

In praising California's prospect, Hastings anticipated the certain future of a country so well "stored with many blessings fit for the use of man."<sup>71</sup> Events in California<sup>72</sup> had assured America's role in shaping California's future and seemed to herald a time when the future Hastings had imagined in *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* would be realized. Yet as certain as that future now seemed, the tradition of the California prospect, with its focus on agrarianism and commercial trade was about

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>70</sup> See Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865* (Washington: Smithsonian University Press, 1991) for a very good examination of how the sentiments espoused by Hastings and his contemporaries were translated into extremely powerful visual images. Also see William Truettner, ed., *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986) and Nancy K. Anderson, et.al., *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Francis Drake, *Drake's World Encompassed* (London, 1628), 131-2; quoted in Hubert Howe Bancroft *History of California* Vol. I 1542-1800, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1963), 84.

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed account of the Bear Flag Revolt and the course of the Mexican War in California see Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* Vol. V 1846-1846, The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1970). As Lisbeth Haas has observed in "War in California, 1846-1848" in *Contested Eden*, 336; there has been little scholarship on the Mexican War in California since Bancroft. Some notable exceptions include Neal Harlow, *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) and Donald C. Biggs, *Conquer and Colonize: Stevenson's Regiment and California*. San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1977.

to be challenged, and ultimately subsumed, by an opposing but equally seductive California prospect – El Dorado.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

California was possessed imaginatively before it was possessed in fact. The prospect that Hastings and his contemporaries created in their travel narratives spoke to Americans on many levels, encompassing both the ancient longing for an opportunity to return to the garden -- to a "haven from the harsh demands of the social order and nature and an existence which without toil or trouble satisfies desires of every fundamental kind"<sup>1</sup> -- and deeply held beliefs about America's role in the world, its mission to spread the gospel of democratic thought and civil liberty, and its divinely-sanctioned right to expand its borders to realize its "manifest destiny." The figure of paradise in California, with its attendant images of superabundance and mild and healthy climate worked to create a seductive landscape where the future possibilities were writ large on the land itself. Giving shape to those future possibilities, American visitors to California appealed to the rhetoric of anticipation and Manifest Destiny. Informed by the rhetorical *topoi* of anticipation and paradise, these prospects tell us less about the true nature of California's pre-Gold Rush landscape than they do about the values of the culture that produced them.

In California, as on earlier frontiers, travel writers looked to the facts and details that allowed them access to existing aesthetic responses to *terra incognita*. This propensity for the known in the face of the unknown resulted in a body of work marked

---

<sup>1</sup> Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963, 31.

by little innovation or deviation over time from the original American California prospect, first articulated in 1808. To read these works together is to see the awareness of both existing narratives and a larger narrative of westward expansion. To read one in depth is to truly appreciate how persistent these rhetorical devices were in shaping that landscape.

By 1848, the cardinal image of California had emerged as a continuation of this larger narrative, a fact that would have deep consequences for California's subsequent development. With the discovery of gold in January 1848, however, this image of California was subverted by a competing image of California not as a paradise but as *El Dorado*. Although rooted in many of the same traditions, the image of California that emerged in travel writing published after 1848 was in many ways the inverse of the pre-Gold Rush prospect. While the earlier prospect shared the values of the national narrative, as Claire Perry has observed, California after 1848 "came to represent cultural values at odds with the values...on which the nation had been founded."<sup>2</sup> Tales of great riches, while complementary to the existing image of California as paradise, quickly eclipsed the cardinal image of California as a place of great agricultural promise and the anticipation of economic growth based on agrarianism and trans-oceanic commerce. It would not be until later in the nineteenth century that the image of California as arcadia would be reclaimed as *the* cardinal image of California. As Californians looked to overcome the profound dislocation of the rapid increase in population and the resulting

---

<sup>2</sup> Claire Perry, *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xii.

rush to statehood, they returned to the image of California as an earthly paradise and looked to the pre-gold Rush era to provide a sense of history and continuity.<sup>3</sup>

To be aware of the role of inherited conventions and precedent in shaping the American landscape is to open these landscapes up to closer examination. Rather than simply criticize their creators for failing to realize new aesthetic responses to the natural world, we need a comprehensive deconstruction of these narratives to uncover why the *topoi* of anticipation and paradise persisted over time and how they functioned across the wider literature of American exploration and discovery. I would also argue that a greater understanding of the public life of these landscapes is needed in order to uncover the uses and abuses of these frontier prospects and their effect on the subsequent development of the West. Informed by these conventions and precedents, Lansford Hastings' *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* made California seem at once familiar and desirable as a place for American activity. Using Lansford Hastings as my guide, I believe I have made a first step towards that goal. In opening a line of inquiry into the tradition of the California prospect in the pre-Gold Rush literature, it is my hope that others may in turn use my work as a guide to a greater understanding of the role of these *topoi*, not only in the literature of California, but of other American frontiers.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) and Perry for more on the cultivation of the old image of California later in the century.

## WORKS CITED

## BOOKS

Primary Sources

- Barclay, Donald A., James A. Maguire and Peter Wild, ed. *Into the Wilderness Dream: Exploration Narratives of the American West, 1500-1805*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994.
- Beverly, Robert. *The History and Present State of Virginia*. Edited by Louis B. Wright. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947.
- Bryant, Edwin. *What I Saw in California: Being the Journal of a Tour by the Emigrant Route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and Through California in the years 1846, 1847*. Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1967.
- Clark, Joseph G. *Light and Shadows of Sailor Life, As Exemplified in Fifteen Years' Experience, Including the More Thrilling Events of the U.S Exploring Expedition and Reminiscences of an Eventful Life on the "Mountain Wave."* Boston: John Putnam, 1847.
- Coyner, David H. *The Lost Trappers; A Collection of Interesting Scenes and Events in the Rocky Mountains; Together With a Short Description of California*. Cincinnati: J.A & U.P James, 1847.
- Craig, Donald Munro, ed. *William Robert Garner: Letters from California 1846-1847*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.
- Dana, Richard Henry. *Two Years Before the Mast Twenty-Four Years After*. Edited by Richard Armstrong. London: J.M Dent & Sons Ltd, 1969.
- de la Perouse, J.F.G. *A Voyage Around the World. Performed in the years 1784,1786,1787 and 1788, Vol. 1*. Bibliotheca Australania, no. 27. London: A. Hamilton, 1799. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1968.
- Farnham, Thomas Jefferson. *Travels in California With Map. With an introduction by Joseph A. Sullivan*. The California Centennial Editions, ed. Joseph A. Sullivan, no. 10. Oakland: Biobooks, 1947.
- Filson, John. *The Discovery and Settlement of Kentucky*. March of America Facsimilie Series, no. 50. Wilmington: James Adams, 1784. Reprint, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966.

- Fremont, John Charles. *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44*. March of America Facsimile Series, no. 79. Washington: Gales and Seaton, Publishers, 1845. Reprint, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966.
- Gilliam, Albert M. *Travels Over the Table-Lands and Cordilleras of Mexico During the Years 1843 and 44; Including a Description of California, the Principal Cities and Mining Districts of that Republic and the Biographies of Iturbide and Santa Ana*. Philadelphia: J.W Moore, 1846.
- Greenhow, Robert. *The Geography of Oregon and California, and the Other Territories of the North-West Coast of North America; Illustrated By A New and Beautiful Map of Those Countries*. New York: Mark H. Newman, 1845.
- Gunn, Giles, ed. *Early American Writing*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994
- Hastings, Lansford W. *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*. Edited by Charles Henry Carey. Narratives of the Trans-Mississippi Frontier, ed. Carl L. Cannon. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932.
- Hennepin, Father Louis. *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*. Edited by Ruben Gold Thwaites. London: M. Bentley, 1698. Reprint, Toronto: Coles Publishing Company Limited, 1974.
- Imlay, Gibert. *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*. Series in American Studies, ed. Joseph J. Kwait. New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1968.
- Lehner, Ernst and Johanna Lehner. *How They Saw the New World*. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1966.
- Leonard, Zenas. *Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard, A Native of Clearfield County, P.A Who Spent Five Years in Trapping for Furs, Trading with the Indians, &c., &c. of the Rocky Mountains*. Clearfield PA: D.W Moore, 1839.
- Morgan, Dale, ed. *Overland in 1846: Diaries and Letters of the California and Oregon Trail*. Georgetown CA: The Talisman Press, 1963.
- Morrell, Captain Benjamin. *A Narrative of Four Voyages, to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean From the Year 1822 to 1831*. New York: J & J Harper, 1832.
- Pattie, James Ohio. *The Hunters of Kentucky; or the Trials and Toils of Trappers and Traders, During an Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, New Mexico and California*. New York: William H. Graham, 1847.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie, of Kentucky* edited by Timothy Flint. Cincinnati: Printed and Published by John H. Wood, 1831.
- Purchas, Samuel. *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*. 20 vols. Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906.
- Robinson, Alfred. *Life In California: During a Residence of Several Years in That Territory, Comprising a Description of the Country and the Missionary Establishments, with Incidents, Observations, Etc., Etc., Illustrated with Numerous Engravings*. New York: Wiley & Putnam 1846.
- Sage, Rufus. *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas and the Grand Prairies; or Notes by the Way, During an Excursion of Three Years, with a Description of the Countries Passed Through*. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846.
- Shaler, William. *Journal of a Voyage Between China and the Northwestern Coast of America Made in 1804 by William Shaler*. Reprint, Claremont CA: Saunders Studio Press, 1935.
- Vancouver, George. *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World 1791-1795*. Edited by W. Kaye Lamb. 4 Vols. Works Issued By the Hakluyt Society Second Series, no. 165 London: The Hakluyt Society, 1984.
- Wood, William. *New England's Prospect*. Edited by Alden T. Vaughn. The Commonwealth Series, ed. Winfred E.A. Bernhard. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1977.
- Wright, Lousi B., ed. *The Elizabethans' America: A Collection of Early Reports by Englishmen on the New World* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Wright, Louis B. and Elaine Fowler, ed. *The Moving Frontier: North America Seen Through the Eyes of its Pioneer Discoverers*. Delacorte Press, 1972.

### Secondary Sources

- Anderson, Nancy K., William Cronon, Brian W. Dippie, Howard L. Lamar, Jules David Prown, Martha A. Sandweiss, Susan P. Schoelwer. *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Bancroft, Hubert Howe. *The History of California*, 7 vols. The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft. San Francisco: The History Company, 1886. Reprint, Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebbard, 1970.

- Berens, John F. *Providence and Patriotism in Early America, 1640-1815*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978.
- Biggs, Donald C. *Conquer and Colonize: Stevenson's Regiment and California*. San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1977.
- Birney, Hoffman. *Grim Journey*. New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1934.
- Black, David W., Donald Kunze and, John Pickles, ed. *Commonplaces: Essays on the Nature of Place*. Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1989.
- Boies, Jack J. *The Lost Domain: Avatars of the Earthly Paradise in Western Literature*. Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1983.
- Boime, Albert. *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865*. Washington: Smithsonian University Press, 1991.
- Bruman, Henry J. and Clement C. Meighan. *Early California: Perception and Reality*. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981.
- Catton, Bruce and William B. Catton. *The Bold And Magnificent Dream: America's Founding Years, 1492 To 1815*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978.
- Cleland, Robert Glass. *From Wilderness to Empire: A History of California*. Edited by Glenn S. Dumke. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959.
- Conron, John. *The American Landscape: A Critical Anthology of Prose and Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Cooper, James Fennimore. *The Pioneers*. Edited by James D. Wallace. London: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Cosgrove, Denis and Stephen Daniels, ed. *Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983.
- DeVoto, Bernard. *The Year of Decision: 1846*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943.
- Downs, Roger M. and David Stea. *Maps In Minds: Reflections On Cognitive Mapping*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- Dufour, Clarence John, E.O Essig and Adele Ogden. *Fort Ross: California Outpost of*

- Russian Alaska, 1812-1841*. Alaska History, ed. Richard A. Pierce, no. 39. Kingston ON: Limestone Press, 1991.
- Farrar-Hyde, Anne. *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920*. New York: New York University Press, 1990.
- Franchot, Jenny. *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*. The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, no. 28. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.
- Gibson, Charles, ed. *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.
- Gidley, Mick and Robert Lawson-Peebles, ed. *Views of American Landscapes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Goetzmann, William H. *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer And The Scientist In The Winning Of The American West*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.
- Goetzmann William H. and William N. Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986.
- Gohdes, Clarence, ed. *Essays on American Literature, in Honor of Jay B. Hubbell*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1967.
- Goodwin, Cardinal. *The Trans-Mississippi West (1803-1853): A History of Its Acquisition and Settlement*. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1922.
- Graebner, Norman A. *Empire on the Pacific: A Study In American Continental Expansion*, 2d ed. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, Inc., 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Manifest Destiny*. The American Heritage Series, Leonard W. Levy and Alfred Young, eds Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968.
- Grafton, Anthony, April Shelford and Nancy Siraisi. *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Greene, Jack P. *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity, 1492-1800*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Gutiérrez, Ramon A. and Richard J. Orsi. *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

- Harlow, Neal. *California Conquered: War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Hart, James. *American Images of Spanish California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
- Hayes, Sam W. and Christopher Morris, ed. *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansion*. Arlington: University of Texas Press, 1997.
- Hietala, Thomas R. *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: the Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Hyde, Anne Farrar. *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920*. New York: New York University Press, 1990.
- Johnson, David Alan. *Founding the Far West: California, Oregon, and Nevada, 1840 – 1890*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Jones, Howard Mumford. *O Strange New World: American Culture The Formative Years*, 3d ed. New York: The Viking Press, 1964.
- Joyce, Barry Alan. *The Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Kirsch, Robert and William S. Murphy. *West of the West: Witness to the California Experience*. New York: E.P Dutton & Co., Inc., 1967.
- Kolodny, Annette. *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontier, 1630-1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the pastoral ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- McCann, Franklin T. *English Discovery of America to 1585*. New York: King's Crown Press, 1952.
- McGlashan, C.F. *History of the Donner Party: A Tragedy of the Sierra*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Sacramento: H.S Crocker and Company, 1890.
- Merk, Frederick. *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism, 1843-1849*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.
- Moore, Arthur K. *The Frontier Mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.,

1963.

- Nash, Gerald. *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991.
- Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982 3rd Edition.
- Nichols, Roger L., ed. *American Frontier Issues: A historiographical review*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Ogden, Adele. *The California Sea-otter Trade, 1784-1848*. University of California Publications in History, Vol. 26 Berkley: University of California Press, 1941.
- Perry, Claire. *Pacific Arcadia: Images of California, 1600-1915*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Polk, Dora Beale. *The Island of California: A History of the Myth*. Spokane: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1991.
- Powell, Phillip Wayne. *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World*. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Rabasa, Jose. *Inventing America: Spanish Histopriography and the Formation of Eurocentricism*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.
- Robbins, William G. *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story 1800-1940*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.
- Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995.
- Scheese, Don. *Nature Writing: The Pastoral Impulse In America*. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996.
- Short, John Rennie. *Imagined Country: Society, Culture and Environment*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Simpson, John Warfield. *Visions of Paradise: Glimpses of Our Landscape's Legacy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.
- Starr, Kevin. *Americans and the California Dream, 1850 to 1915*. New York: Oxford

- University Press, 1973.
- Stewart, George R. *Ordeal By Hunger: The Story of the Donner Party*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960.
- Stilgoe, John R. *Common Landscapes of America, 1580 to 1845*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Thompson, George F., ed. *Landscape in America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Truettner, William H., ed. *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*. Smithsonian Institution, 1991.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Topophilia: A Study Of Environmental Perception, Attitudes And Values*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974.
- Turner, Frederick. *Spirit of Place: The Making Of An American Literary Landscape*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1989.
- Van Every, Dale. *The Final Challenge: The American Frontier 1804-1844*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964.
- Webb, Walter Prescott. *The Great Plains*, 2d ed. Ginn and Company, 1959.
- Weber, David J., ed. *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979.
- Welter, Rush. *The Mind of America 1820-1860*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Wright, Louis B. *The Dream of Prosperity in Colonial America*. New York: New York University Press, 1965.
- Wyatt, David. *The Fall Into Eden: Landscape and Imagination in California*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Wyckoff, William. *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape 1860-1940*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Terra Cognita: The Mental Discovery of America*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

## ARTICLES

- Andrews, Thomas F. "Lansford W. Hastings and the promotion of the Salt Lake Desert Cut-off: A Reappraisal." *Western Historical Quarterly* 4 (April 1973): 133-150.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ambitions of Lansford W. Hastings: A Study in Western Myth-Making." *Pacific Historical Quarterly* 39 (1970): 473-491.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Controversial Hastings Overland Guide: A Reassessment." *Pacific Historical Review* 37 (1968): 21-34.
- Baltensperger, B.H. "Plains Boomers and the Creation of the Great American Desert Myth." *Journal of Historical Geography* 18 (January 1992): 59-73.
- Baritz, Loren. "The Idea of the West." *American Historical Review* 66, no. 3 (April 1961): 618-640.
- Boag, Peter G. "Overlanders and the Snake River Region: A Case Study of Popular Landscape Perception in the Early West." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (October 1993): 122-129.
- Bredeson, Robert. "Landscape Description in Nineteenth Century American Travel Literature." *American Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1968): 86-94.
- Churchill, Charles B. "Thomas Jefferson Farnham: An Exponent of American Empire in Mexican California." *Pacific Historical Quarterly* 60 (November 1991): 517-537.
- Davis, Susan G. "Landscapes of Imagination: Tourism in Southern California." *Pacific Historical Review* 68 (May 1999): 173-191.
- Dillon, Richard H. "Czarist California." *American History* 31, no. 2 (1996): 36-41.
- Earle, Carville. "Pioneers of Providence: the Anglo-American Experience, 1492-1792." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (1992): 478-99.
- Gutiérrez, David G. "Significant to Whom? Mexican-Americans and the History of the American West." *Western Historical Quarterly* 24 (November 1993): 519-540.
- Hawgood, John A. "The Pattern of Yankee Infiltration in Mexican AltaCalifornia, 1821-1846." *Pacific Historical Review* 28 (1959): 27-37.
- Hoxie, Frederick E. "Discovering America: An Introduction." *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 835-840.
- Kelsey, Harry. "Did Francis Drake Really Visit California?" *Western Historical*

- Quarterly* 21 (November 1990): 444-462.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mapping the California Coast: The Voyages of Discovery 1533-154." *Arizona & the West* 26, no. 4 (1984): 307-324.
- Kessell, John L. "Spanish Exploration in the Western Borderlands." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 41, no. 4 (1991): 68-75.
- Kirk, Anthony. "In a Golden Land So Far: the Rise of Art in Early California." *California History* 71, no. 1 (1992): 2-23.
- Langum, David J. "Californios and the Image of Indolence." *Western Historical Quarterly* 9 (April 1978): 181-196.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "From Condemnation to Praise: Shifting Perspectives on Hispanic California." *California History* 61 (Winter 1983): 282-291.
- Martin, N.B. "*Portus Novae Albionis*: Site of Drake's California Sojourn." *Pacific Historical Quarterly* 48 no. 3 (1979): 319-334.
- Marvin, Anne M. "Irrigation and Boosterism in Southwest Kansas, 1880-1890." *Kansas History* 19 no. 1 (1996): 36-51.
- Mathes, W. Michael. "Apocryphal Tales of the Island of California and Strait of Anian." *California History* 62 no. 1 (1983): 52-59.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Mythological Geography of California: Origins, Development, Confirmation and Disappearance." *The Americas* 45 (January 1989): 517-37.
- Meyer, Doris L. "Early Mexican-American Responses to Negative Stereotyping." *New Mexico Historical Review* 53 no. 1 (1978): 75-91.
- Ogden, Adele. "Alfred Robinson, New England Merchant in Mexican California. California." *Historical Society Quarterly* 23 no. 3 (1944): 193-218.
- Pomeroy, Earl. "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41 (March 1955): 579-600.
- Schein, Richard H. "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87 (December 1997): 660-680.
- Schwantes, Carlos A. "Landscapes of Opportunity: Phases of Railroad Promotion of the Pacific Northwest." *Montana* 43 (Spring 1993): 38-51.
- Schwartz, Harvey. "Fort Ross, California: Imperial Russian Outpost on America's

- Western Frontier, 1812-1841." *Journal of the West* 15 no. 2 (April 1979): 35-48.
- Smith, Gene A. "Thomas O. Larkin's Paradise Lost." *Journal of the West* 33, no. 3 (July 1994): 96-105.
- Sweet, Timothy. "Economy, Ecology and Utopia in Early Colonial Promotional Literature." *American Literature* 71 (September 1999): 399-428.
- Troen, S. Ilan. "Frontier Myths and Their Applications in American and Israel: A Transnational Approach." *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1209-1230.
- White, Richard. "Discovering Nature in North America." *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 874-891.
- Wright, John K. "Terra Incognita: The Place of Imagination in Geography." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 37 (March 1947): 1-15.
- Zimmerman, Tom. "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce." *California History* 64 (Winter 1985): 22-33.

## VITA

Surname: Peddle

Given Names: Kirsty Joanne

Place of Birth: Plymouth, UK

### Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria

1991 to 2002

### Degrees Awarded:

B.A (with distinction)

University of Victoria

1996


UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain by the University of Victoria shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis:

“This delightful country:” Lansford W. Hastings’ *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* and the tradition of the California Prospect in pre-Gold Rush Travel Literature

Author

  
Kirsty Joanne Peddle

May 30, 2002