

MELTON II, HOWARD GENE, Ph.D. *Fellow Travelers: Mobility, Male Friendships, and the Whitening of U. S. National Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. (2016)

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This dissertation examines how literary depictions of a range of male friendships, set into motion within the fluctuating boundaries of U. S. jurisdiction (both before and after the Civil War), provide an excellent site for interrogating, across the nineteenth century, the fundamental assumptions, policies, and practices of “Manifest Destiny” as an in-process white, heteronormative, masculinist endeavor. The promises and problems inherent to Manifest Destiny, I assert, are particularly apparent in nineteenth-century non-fiction and fiction that depict significant male-male friendships as associated with the social, political, and geographical concerns that motivated—and challenged—the project of defining United States national space throughout the century. Such narratives of homosocial friendships—“romantic” and otherwise—between white men, between non-white men, and between men from both groups mobilize, in some cases, celebrations of white male nation-building and, in others, critiques or complications of those same ideals. What makes the period’s literary depictions of male homosocial relationships especially rich for interrogating Manifest Destiny as an ongoing process is that these friendships, like the fluctuating national space of the nineteenth-century United States, present an incompletely mapped terrain, an evolving social and political construct that allows, with significant consequences for the individual and the community, a traversing of various officially mandated boundaries. Moreover, like the developing nation, the male friendships depicted in the texts I examine in this dissertation cross politicized and

racialized geographic space; in doing so, I argue, they offer opportunities to consider how, through such movements within and beyond the shifting borders of the United States, principles of individualism and collaboration, as well as policies of racial, gender, and class superiority, figure into and also afford material for the critique of the construction of Manifest Destiny as both a national imperative and as a primary national narrative. My study thus demonstrates that, in nineteenth-century works that privilege the geographic and social mobility of male friendships, these mobile homosocial relationships come to embody many of the social, legal, economic, political, cultural, and cartographical phenomena that collectively constitute, yet also call into question, Manifest Destiny as a project of what I term *the whitening of U.S. national space*, especially as those homosocial relationships expose the multiplicities of whitenesses and masculinities with a stake in the evolving jurisdictions of the United States.

The set of works privileging male friendships that I analyze in this dissertation reflect two primary movements in geographic space: within areas of North American continental terrain that have come to be known as part of the contiguous United States but that, in the nineteenth century, were sites whose political and legal status was far more ambiguous in light of the sovereignties of Native peoples. The other is a movement outward still further from the continental space of the nation and into other sovereign locales, such as Cuba and Hawai‘i. The initial two chapters treat works from the antebellum period, first tracing—in *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (1814), a popular adaptation of the voluminous journals associated with the 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition—an early nineteenth-century

gesture toward representation of a paradigmatic mobile male friendship at the core of the process by which the national space of the United States was being whitened through the enslavement of African Americans and the systematic displacement of Native peoples; and second analyzing—in *Blake; or, the Huts of America* (1861-1862), the serial novel/manifesto of slave revolt by Martin Delany—a mid-century African American challenge to that agenda. As becomes evident in *South-Sea Idyls* (1873), the postbellum work by Charles Warren Stoddard that I treat in the final chapter, the whitening of national space extended, through interracial and intergenerational homosocial friendships, into territory outside the western boundary of the continental United States. Collectively, these movement patterns, and the male friendships with which they are narratively associated, trace key fluctuations in legal, political, and territorial jurisdiction attendant upon the whitening of U. S. national space during the span of the nineteenth century and beyond.

FELLOW TRAVELERS: MOBILITY, MALE FRIENDSHIPS, AND THE  
WHITENING OF U. S. NATIONAL SPACE IN NINETEENTH-  
CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

by

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Although the phrase “Manifest Destiny” as a label for the expansion of United States territorial jurisdiction across the North American continent would not appear in print until John O’Sullivan’s use of it in his 1845 essay “Annexation,” the idea that the United States could embark upon such a putatively manly project was evident in national policy much earlier.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, for the United States the nineteenth century was a time in which the nation was expanding its territorial jurisdiction across the Mississippi River, to the Pacific, and beyond. This meant that, at various times throughout the century, the space of the United States *per se* needed to be re-defined cartographically, legally, socially, culturally, politically, and economically. The establishment and subsequent revision of the nation’s boundaries coincided with multiple ideological aims generally associated with what, by mid-century, would come to be known as the manifest destiny of the white citizenry of the United States: among other things, exploration and exploitation of the continent from the East to the West Coast, local containment (or, eventually, in some areas of the country, removal) of Native peoples, maintenance of slavery in the Southern states (with its limited expansion into Western territories), and extension of economic and/or political influence into extraterritorial sites such as Hawai‘i and Cuba.<sup>2</sup> Over the course of the century, then, U. S. national space came to be.



conceptualized as a function of race, with whiteness, in particular, figured forth officially and in the dominant cultural imagination as primary and proprietary

While such an overview tends to suggest that Manifest Destiny was rather easily established in the cultural imaginary, it is important to recognize that, during the nineteenth century, this geopolitical project was *in process* and thus far from fully realized or even fundamentally coherent as national policy and practice. Indeed, the promises and problems inherent to Manifest Destiny are particularly apparent in nineteenth-century non-fiction and fiction that depict significant male-male friendships as associated with the social, political, and geographical concerns that motivated—and challenged—the project of defining United States national space throughout the century. Such narratives of homosocial friendships—“romantic” and otherwise—between white men, between non-white men, and between men from both groups mobilize, in some cases, celebrations of white male nation-building and, in others, critiques or complications of those same ideals. What makes the period’s literary depictions of male homosocial relationships especially rich for interrogating Manifest Destiny as an ongoing process is that these friendships, like the fluctuating national space of the nineteenth-century United States, present an incompletely mapped terrain, an evolving social and political construct that allows, with significant consequences for the individual and the community, a traversing of various officially mandated boundaries. Moreover, like the developing nation, the male friendships depicted in the texts I examine cross politicized and racialized geographic space; in doing so, I argue, they offer opportunities to consider how, through such movements within and beyond the shifting borders of the United

States, principles of individualism and collaboration, as well as policies of racial, gender, and class superiority, figure into and also afford material for the critique of the construction of Manifest Destiny as both a national imperative and as a primary national narrative.

### **Manifest Destiny, Male Homosociality, and Movement into U. S. Neo-National Space**

In his magisterial tome, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History*, Albert K. Weinberg presents a comprehensive survey of the historical, cultural, political, economic, and philosophical context in which the United States, as a national polity, embarked upon a mission of extending its jurisdiction across a continent and into other regions of the world. In considering the motivations for and outcomes of this national endeavor, however, Weinberg keeps his focus on the broader, sweeping issues that defined the collective vision of U. S. Manifest Destiny. In doing so, he does not address the potential role played by male homosociality in the process of U. S. expansionism.

Amy S. Greenberg, however, does draw our attention to the ways in which Manifest Destiny and U. S. expansionism can be explored as functions of masculine (and feminine) identity. In *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, for example, Greenberg argues that, by mid-century, U. S. expansionism might be understood through an examination of two “preeminent and dueling” forms of masculine

identity: “*restrained manhood* and *martial manhood*” (11, emphasis in original).

According to Greenberg, “[r]estrained manhood was practiced by men in the North and South who grounded their identities in their families, in the evangelical practice of their Protestant faith, and in success in the business world” (11). Martial manhood, in contrast, was characterized by a belief that “the masculine qualities of strength, aggression, and even violence, better defined a true man than did the firm and upright manliness of restrained men” (Greenberg 12). While Greenberg’s study of the gendered dynamics operating within the pursuit of U. S. Manifest Destiny during the nineteenth century does recognize the role of homosocial camaraderie in some of the practices associated with efforts to expand U. S. jurisdiction, she does not fully explore the potential of male friendships for interrogating this process.

Beginning, perhaps most notably, with Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, scholars have identified the significant presence of homosocial relationships in nineteenth-century United States culture in general, and—like Greenberg—some have begun to explore the importance of how these friendships intersect with matters of gender, class, and race in the development of national identity.<sup>3</sup> They have not, however, considered the relevance of mobility—in space and in society—to the way literary depictions of raced male-male friendships in particular function to interrogate the potential of Manifest Destiny as a process of (re-)mapping the space(s) that constituted the nineteenth-century United States, as well as the identity of its legitimate citizens. Federally tolerated and regionally championed in the South (eventually, too, in some Western territories), the institution of slavery, for example, served to define legitimately mobile citizenship as a function of

white manhood, variously construed across a range of class and regional affiliations, and to establish the geographical and social boundaries in which the movements of people of color were to be contained.

In addition, policies regarding the place of Native peoples within the fluctuating, but ultimately ever-increasing jurisdiction of the United States ranged from Jeffersonian assimilation to Jacksonian removal. Moreover, federally sponsored exploration of the continent west of the Mississippi River, especially after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, provided opportunities for white men to chart additional national space; those endeavors required not only the resources to mobilize men and materiel, but also the freedom to move with relative impunity into new territory. Such freedom of movement—geographically, socially, politically, economically—also extended U. S. influence and the process of whitening into sovereign spaces, like Cuba and Hawai‘i, outside the territorial and legal jurisdiction of the nation.

### **Manifesting Whiteness in U. S. Neo-National Space**

This dissertation demonstrates that, in nineteenth-century works that privilege the geographic and social mobility of male friendships, these mobile homosocial relationships come to embody many of the social, legal, economic, political, cultural, and cartographical phenomena that collectively constitute, yet also call into question, Manifest Destiny as a project of what I term *the whitening of U.S. national space*,

especially as those homosocial relationships expose the multiplicities of whitenesses and masculinities with a stake in the evolving jurisdictions of the United States.

By whitening of U. S. national space, I mean the process by which whitenesses comes to be identified with rights and privileges associated with U. S. citizenship. My thinking about this draws particularly from Cheryl I. Harris's analysis of "whiteness as property":

Whiteness is not simply and solely a legally recognized property interest. It is simultaneously an aspect of self-identity and of personhood, and its relation to the law of property is complex. Whiteness has functioned as self-identity in the domain of the intrinsic, personal, and psychological; as reputation in the interstices between internal and external identity; and, as property in the extrinsic, public, and legal realms. According whiteness actual legal status converted an aspect of identity into an external object of property, moving whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest. The law's construction of whiteness defined and affirmed critical aspects of identity (who is white); of privilege (what benefits accrue to that status); and, of property (what legal entitlements arise from that status). Whiteness at various times signifies and is deployed as identity, status, and property, sometimes singularly, sometimes in tandem. (1725)

For my purposes, then, the whitening of neo-national space involves the extension of the idea that property, personhood, and place accrue exclusively to those who represent whiteness into geographic spaces newly acquired by the United States or sovereign international spaces not (yet) officially under the jurisdiction of that nation.

In this respect, this process of whitening of neo-national space is very much in line with Valerie Babb's insight that "[t]o the different ethnicities and classes who left Europe to come to an unfamiliar wilderness where new structures had to be devised to meet new needs, whiteness furnished a social order that forged a nascent national identity

and minimized potential class warfare” (37). Furthermore, as Babb goes on to observe, whiteness “is larger than having the physical attribute of white skin; it is the ideology that was created around that attribute” (44).

This whitening of neo-national space is, of course, dependent upon mobility for its translation into new areas of the North American continent and beyond those confines. In conceptualizing the work of mobility in this process of whitening, I build upon Mark Simpson’s insight that, in the nineteenth-century United States, there existed a “politics of mobility” and that, as a consequence, mobility functioned “as a differential resource” with significant implications on “subjectivity’s manufacture” (xxix). To complicate the question of mobility’s function in the process, furthermore, I am also concerned with how texts depicting homosocial male friendships in motion within neo-national space demonstrate or challenge the transmission of whiteness geographically, politically, culturally, and socially.

### **Mobilizing Male Friendships in U. S. Neo-National Space**

When nineteenth-century texts place non-white characters (especially in male homosocial pairings) in motion within the fraught geographical, social, and ideological boundaries of the United States, or introduce female characters into these otherwise homosocial situations, these narratives re-map assumptions about the nature and function of same-sex friendships, calling into question the assumption of an essential coincidence of whiteness, masculinity, and national identity. Narratives that detail bonds between

non-white men or between men of different races and/or of different generations who travel together in geographic space or in terms of social mobility also raise challenges to generally accepted notions of same-sex male friendships and to otherwise unquestioned assumptions about national/community identity. Still another important dynamic to examine is the relationship between male friendships and matters of mobility-within-community in narratives where women are completely or largely absent or, conversely, where they play increasingly significant roles. Thus, instead of celebrating the whitening of U. S. national space, some depictions of mobile male friendships offered counternarratives to this agenda.

In its emphasis on homosocial friendships, my study engages with existing scholarship that has proven that such relationships were not only commonplace, but also crucial within the lives of nineteenth-century men and women, both in the United States and abroad. Prominent studies of same-sex companions in nineteenth-century American society and literature, such as those by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, E. Anthony Rotundo, Michael S. Kimmel, and Axel Nissen, have focused on describing and interrogating these homosocial relationships in terms of affective bonds that constitute a “romantic friendship.” Such relationships, these analyses generally suggest, function as a precursor to (or, in some cases, as an adjunct to or replacement for) the heterosexual marital bond that was considered to signify a mature, ideal social arrangement and, indeed, obligation—and which they, in many ways, emulated.

Other studies have further complicated our understanding of the nature and socio-political implications of same-sex friendships in the nineteenth century and of their

representation in the literature of the time. Karen V. Hansen, for instance, argues that “[t]he nineteenth-century culture did not force a mutually exclusive choice between intimate friendship and sociability” with respect to male homosocial relationships (54). Hansen goes on to conclude that “men’s visiting and intimate friendship forged important ties within the community that transcended mundane and personal interests” (54). Caleb Crain finds the affective bonds between celebrated white male writers of the period to be central both to the literature these men wrote and to the contributions those narratives made to the development of national identity within the United States. Approaching friendship not merely as an affective relation, but also as a function of a more complex system of “affiliation,” Ivy Schweitzer and Peter Coviello further confirm how homosocial companions became an integral part of national identity formation within the early to mid-nineteenth-century United States. Where Crain limits his study and thus his conclusions largely to matters of upper class, New England white masculinity, Schweitzer and Coviello engage with pluralities of class, gender, and race within the texts they have selected to analyze. In doing so, Schweitzer and Coviello, like Leslie Fiedler (especially in his reading of the relationship between Huck Finn and Jim in Mark Twain’s novel), suggest that neither masculinity nor whiteness is inherently stable within the development of the United States as a geographical, social, and ideological space.

What is particularly important about male homosocial friendship as an analytical category for the study of nineteenth-century American literature is its ability to transcend normative social, political, and economic boundaries. Same-sex friendships between men, for example, can be flexible in terms of the types of men who might consider



themselves friends. Put another way, men of various socio-economic classes and ethnic backgrounds could, under the right circumstances, develop and sustain substantive friendships that transcended standard social rules related to power dynamics. Freed of some of the social absolutes associated with other forms of relationships—such as those between employer and employee or between commanding officer and infantryman or even, in some cases, between master and slave—some male homosocial friendships could transgress various social hierarchies. Unlike the highly regulated social arrangement of marriage, too, male homosocial friendships allowed for relationships that negotiated matters of loyalty and intimacy outside the boundaries of the heteronorm and its instantiation within the established United States. Given that male homosocial friendships could challenge various nineteenth-century social structures and boundaries, analysis of their depiction in literature of the period that focused on U. S. expansionism offers important insights into the complexities of Manifest Destiny as a national agenda.

At stake here, I argue, is the potential threat that same-sex “romantic friendships” posed to social, political, and economic boundaries essential to the normalizing heteropatriarchal, whitened national ideal; especially among male friends, mobility both permitted the maintenance of homosocial bonds and contained them safely in often distant, isolated, exotic, and/or nationally inchoate spaces within and beyond the jurisdiction of the United States government. Indeed, texts privileging mobility and male friendships reveal, over the course of the century, the vital role that movement in geographic and social space played in the whitening of U. S. national space—and to critiques of that endeavor. Thus, I argue that literary depictions of a range of male

friendships, set into motion within the fluctuating boundaries of U. S. jurisdiction (both before and after the Civil War), provide an excellent site for interrogating the fundamental assumptions, policies, and practices of Manifest Destiny as a white, heteronormative, masculinist endeavor.

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The set of works privileging male friendships that I analyze reflect two primary movements in geographic space. One is circulation within areas of North American continental terrain that have come to be known as part of the contiguous United States but that, in the nineteenth century, were sites whose political and legal status was far more ambiguous in light of the sovereignties of Native peoples. The other is a movement outward still further from the continental space of the nation and into other sovereign locales, such as Cuba and Hawai‘i. Taken together, these movement patterns, and the male friendships with which they are narratively associated, trace key fluctuations in legal, political, and territorial jurisdiction attendant upon the whitening of U. S. national space during the span of the nineteenth century and beyond.

The initial two chapters treat works from the antebellum period, first tracing—in the voluminous texts associated with the 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition—an early nineteenth-century gesture toward representation of a paradigmatic mobile male friendship at the core of the process by which the national space of the United States was being whitened through the enslavement of African Americans and the systematic

displacement of Native peoples; and second analyzing—in the serial novel/manifesto of slave revolt by Martin Delany—a mid-century African American challenge to that agenda. As becomes evident in the work by Charles Warren Stoddard treated in the final chapter, the Civil War period ultimately de-railed neither the continually evolving project of Manifest Destiny, nor the homosocial relationships which so importantly represented it as promise and problems.

In my first chapter, I argue that, in the early nineteenth century, mobility, male friendship, and the process of whitening U. S. national space are crucially linked in the dominant cultural imaginary with the fundamental tenets of what will eventually be conceived of as the nation's and, in particular, its white citizens' "Manifest Destiny" to explore and exploit North American territory west of the Mississippi River. To trace the construction of this fundamental national narrative associating mobile male friendships with efforts to establish a racialized cartography of the United States, I analyze Nicholas Biddle's and Paul Allen's two-volume *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (1814), a popular work disseminated to various—if ultimately limited—nineteenth-century U. S. and international reading publics, as an adaptation of the *Journals of Lewis and Clark* (1804-1806), the latter an expansive collection of original materials that did not reach a broad reading public until the twentieth century.

My reading will focus on how this non-fiction narrative (along with its associated paratextual maps, tables, and sketches) presents a literary depiction of white male friendship at the heart of early nineteenth-century exploration of the evolving boundaries of the United States as a national space to be made available to legitimate (that is,

primarily white) citizens. These two volumes detail the systematic endeavors of white male friends, together with the other members of their “Corps of Discovery” (including Sacagawea, a pregnant Shoshone woman, and her French husband, Toussaint Charbonneau), as they move through part of the territory acquired in the Louisiana Purchase (1803), an area of the national space always already fraught with concerns about foreign threats and jurisdiction and whose acquisition was itself questionable under the tenets of the U. S. Constitution. In its adapted depiction of the achievements of these male friends in motion in the new territory, Biddle’s and Allen’s *History of the Expedition* distills the extensive (and scientific) records of Lewis and Clark for general readers, making of them a celebratory, foundational text that impresses upon the cultural imaginary, especially of the white citizenry located back East, a narrative of their nation’s inalienable right to exploit additional North American space; in the process, this text popularizes the association among mobility, male friendship, and the project of whitening implicit in what will become the guiding principles of the nascent national project of Manifest Destiny.

From the cartography of whiteness that emerges as paradigmatic through the writings associated with the expeditions of Lewis and Clark, I turn next to an analysis of how black intellectuals critiqued the whitening of U. S. national space, particularly through a counternarrative of male mobility and black male friendships within a society that permits slavery in at least some geographical regions under its jurisdiction. In my second chapter I read Martin Delany’s *Blake; or, the Huts of America* (1861-1862), a novel that follows the peregrinations of its enslaved black hero as he traverses Southern

U. S. states and western territories, and then travels on to Cuba. Along his journey, Blake establishes a network of homosocial friendships that become crucial to his plan for effecting a slave uprising in the United States. Delany's novel thus functions as an anti-slavery manifesto challenging the ideology of the United States as a proprietary space for whiteness and presents a revolutionary critique of the process of national whitening that Lewis and Clark so meticulously detail in the celebratory record of their government-sponsored explorations.

Throughout his travels, Blake forms a number of friendships with other enslaved people, especially with other black men, and, in the process of laying the foundation for a future slave revolt, creates an extensive community of homosocial bonds united in the commitment to a method of "standing still to see the salvation." This policy of immobility thus contrasts with Blake's own physical and psychological mobility and challenges the optional (im)mobility of white males who have, in other nineteenth-century narratives of homosocial relationships and in the very real homosociality characteristic of the slave-holding classes of the day, assumed control of the national spaces and against whose whitening the fugitive slave is fomenting domestic *and* international rebellion.

Writing in the aftermath of the Civil War, Charles Warren Stoddard, to whose work I turn in my final chapter, reported on his sojourns west in the *Overland Monthly* and other popular publications. In particular, I analyze Stoddard's *South-Sea Idyls* (1873), a collection published in response to continuing public interest in westward expansion and exotic travel, in which a number of the tales describe visits to the

Hawaiian Islands. These narratives thus depict geographical, as well as social, mobility and male friendship in a space *beyond* the continental United States's western frontier and allow for a consideration of the further evolution of the nation's jurisdictional ambitions. In the 1860s, the time of the travels recorded in *South-Sea Idyls*, Hawai'i was a sovereign space not yet annexed to or made a territory of the United States, but political and economic forces from the mainland had already begun to establish influential connections with the monarch and other members of the ruling classes. Stoddard's narratives raise questions about the transportation of whiteness from the U. S. and thereby demonstrate a recognition of the dangers such a trajectory might mean for Native Hawaiians.

In his tales of Hawai'i, Stoddard depicts his white male protagonists, like other visitors/settlers from the continental U. S., taking a number of imperialist liberties as a traveler and explorer. In the process, these narratives put a man in motion beyond the borders of U. S. national space and convey the essence of Stoddard's own adventures to the Islands, where he developed intense (and often sexually intimate) friendships with younger male Natives. These interracial and intergenerational homosocial and homosexual relationships, however, contribute more than just an expansion of whiteness into a sovereign territorial space; they also introduce another kind of potentially transgressive mobility: a movement geographically, socially, and emotionally that, the narratives suggest, anticipate the potential effects of their continuing legacy in the nation's future acquisitions.

Collectively, I argue, these representative texts suggest a trajectory of engagement with the notion of Manifest Destiny from foundation to critique and ambiguous extension of whiteness within and without U. S. national and neo-national space. In each text, the key element driving not only the narrative action, but also its response to U. S. expansionism is a sustained depiction of male homosocial friendships in motion across national and international spaces, both on the North American continent and beyond it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In his famous essay for *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, O'Sullivan defends the annexation of Texas as an appropriate means of serving notice to "other nations" that had made it their "avowed object [to thwart] our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (5). General studies of Manifest Destiny include Anne Baker; Kastor; McDonough; Rifkin; Slotkin; Vaugeois; Weinberg. On the characterization of Manifest Destiny as a particularly masculine endeavor, see Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood* and "Pirates." Lynnea Ruth Magnuson, in contrast, has traced an element of feminine "civilizing" prominent in the nineteenth-century enactment of and discourse about this project of national expansion.

<sup>2</sup> For good overviews of each of these aspects of Manifest Destiny, see Weinberg.

<sup>3</sup> See also, for example, Coviello; Crain; Fiedler; Hansen; Kimmel; Nissen; Rotundo; Schweitzer.



CHAPTER II  
A CARTOGRAPHY OF MOBILE WHITENESS(ES): MALE FRIENDSHIP,  
MANIFEST DESTINY, AND THE EXPEDITION OF MERIWETHER LEWIS  
AND WILLIAM CLARK

Soon after the substantial acquisition of land that constituted the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the government-funded expedition led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark tested the viability of the notion that the United States might successfully expand its jurisdiction west of the Mississippi River.<sup>1</sup> This 1804-1806 undertaking placed a group of primarily male adventurers—Lewis, Clark, and the Corps of Discovery, their band of fellow explorers—into motion across what I shall here call neo-national space, that is, territory not yet fully incorporated into the jurisdiction of the United States, in order to explore, catalogue, and map this recent addition to the national landscape. From its conception, a central goal of this mission was the maintenance of daily records by Lewis and Clark so that a history of the journey could be published. When an official adaptation of these records finally appeared in print in 1814, the resulting depiction of the Lewis and Clark adventure imagined a narrative of national expansion in which mobile male friendships charted new social and geographical territory for an increasingly racialized United States.<sup>2</sup>

Scholarly interest in the records of the Lewis and Clark expedition as the basis for creating this national narrative has a long and complex history. Spencer Snow has noted

that “the Lewis and Clark expedition remains the traditional touchstone of continental destiny and American identity, in part because it corresponds neatly with the general trajectory of American empire,” but he goes on to add that, in much post-nineteenth-century scholarship on the expedition, “the publication and reception histories of its original texts have been overlooked in the pursuit of more comprehensive narratives” (700). These “more comprehensive narratives” depend, largely, on meticulous attention to the original journals, in both manuscript as well as twentieth-century published editions, with their exhaustive catalogues of geographical, zoological, and botanical data, and their observations about the social dynamic among the members of the Corps of Discovery and between the explorers and Native peoples they encounter.

As much recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge, however, the original journals kept by Lewis, Clark, and their entourage would not have been available to nineteenth-century readers. For the purposes of this study, then, I turn to Nicholas Biddle’s two-volume *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (1814), which adapted and abridged the *Journals of Lewis and Clark* (1804-1806) and served as the only version of Lewis’s and Clark’s notes disseminated to contemporaneous U. S. and international reading publics.<sup>3</sup> An adapted depiction of the achievements of the Corps of Discovery moving through the new territory, Biddle’s *History of the Expedition* distills the leaders’ extensive records for general readers, making of them a celebratory, foundational text that impresses upon the cultural imaginary, especially of the white citizenry located back East, a narrative of their nation’s inalienable right to exploit additional North American space. In doing so, this text

envisions the process of whitening implicit in what will become the guiding principles of the nascent national project of Manifest Destiny as an endeavor dependent upon both mobility and male friendships.<sup>4</sup>

When scholars have examined the various narrative incarnations of the Lewis and Clark expedition, they have characteristically described how the story creates individualized heroes within U. S. literary and cultural tradition. Surveying how the press presented the story to a public hungry for news of the expedition, Betty Houchin Winfield argues that, in contrast to the noble-born heroes of earlier centuries, the participants in the Lewis and Clark expedition came to represent “the new nation’s hero” as “an independent citizen who served the country with ingenuity, perseverance, enterprise, bravery, and valor” and one who was “an exemplary citizen” (877). According to Winfield, though, only Lewis could lay claim to that title. Even when scholars turn their attention to the figure of York, as Darrell M. Millner and Robert B. Betts have done in their separate studies of the slave who joined the expedition with Clark, the impulse has been to valorize the individual figure and what he represents in terms of the ideal of American manhood. Studying Nicholas Biddle’s editorial work on the Lewis and Clark journals, Gunther Barth proposes that, at least in the *History of the Expedition*, what happens is just the opposite; he claims that Biddle “ignored the individual adventures in favor of *the* great adventure” (514, original emphasis). In other words, the journey—and not the people undertaking it—becomes the heroic element of the narrative.

While all of these readings offer compelling analyses, what needs further consideration is how this national narrative encodes not elevated social status or individual effort, but mobility and male-male friendships as essential to Biddle's depiction of the United States' early efforts to expand its jurisdiction across the continent. What a focus on male friends in motion outside the established jurisdiction of the United States allows us to see anew in this celebrated and often re-told story is that, even in Biddle's adaptation of the original notes, the expedition—like the nation-building of which it was a part—was a work in progress, and a work that depended greatly upon the relationships of those who undertook it. Far from creating a single, monolithic “new nation's hero,” Biddle's version of the *History of the Expedition* demonstrates just how much was in process for the new nation, how much was unfolding like the events of the narrative and the pages bearing its associated maps, how much was fraught with confusions and challenges. His depiction of the relationships between the men on the journey illustrates the potential for change and redefinition inherent in the narrative. Indeed, given the multiple whitenesses portrayed within *History of the Expedition*, whiteness itself comes to be revealed as a socio-economic, geopolitical, and racial category not only to be imposed, but also to be discovered, as the journey places these men in a situation where their own identities are not secure; as foreigners, as interlopers in this new territory, their nation's tentative jurisdiction and the documentation that nominates them citizens and public servants of the United States give them only so much genuine authority. The very real experience of being cut off from their nation, while at the mercy of an often harsh landscape and frequently dependent upon the foreign

hospitality of sovereign Native nations, places the members of the Corps of Discovery in unchartered territory where, through mobilized homosocial friendships, national, social, and even racial identities are open to negotiation.

Biddle's representation of the expedition thus offers readers—then and now—an opportunity to venture imaginatively into what was neo-national space not only as additional land for the United States to claim and to exploit on behalf of its (white) citizens, but also as territory within which new social landscapes could be explored as part of the process of whitening central to the overall endeavor. The territory west of the Mississippi through which Lewis, Clark, and the other members of the Corps of Discovery traveled on their three-year expedition thus functions in Biddle's narrative as a neo-national space in which mobility allows the homosocial friendships to operate not, as Dana Nelson argues, as "a temporarily comforting stabilization of identity through an assertion of hierarchizing order" (74), but as an opportunity for the collapsing of the vertical relationships which would have defined the men's interactions with each other and with Lewis and Clark back home in the established United States. In the *History of the Expedition*, I argue, Biddle presents the members of the Corps, including Lewis and Clark, as operating in a system of horizontal relationships that function essentially as friendships. Consequently, Lewis, Clark, and the members of the Corps increasingly relax the hierarchies that Nelson finds reinforced in Biddle's narrative. What allows such a flattening of the vertical relations into horizontal ones is the geographical and social mobility fundamental to the expedition and to the neo-national space in which it takes place. As Biddle's narrative demonstrates, the men on the expedition have both greater

opportunity to move through the landscape and greater opportunity to participate in what might be read as the “democratic functioning” of the community of which they are now a part outside the established United States. Thus, this mobility redefines a range of national possibilities within the newly acquired Louisiana territory, including in terms of economic and political relations with the Natives, and also offers a model for imagining social change within the already whitened established United States.

In this chapter, then, I examine homosocial male relationships that emerge from the narrative of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Collectively, they demonstrate a range of potential friendships available within this developing narrative of U. S. national expansion and Manifest Destiny and reveal, within these social interactions, the limits on and means of participating in democracy in the still young nation. To varying degrees, these homosocial male friendships (or what might be construed as at least symbolic and/or political friendships) illustrate how relationships between men on the move outside the fully domesticated jurisdiction of the United States represent, like the developing nation itself, an unmapped terrain in the process of being (re)charted by and for whiteness. As a vital part of this process, Biddle’s version of the Lewis and Clark story, along with its associated paratextual maps, tables, and sketches, presents a literary depiction of white male friendship at the heart of early nineteenth-century exploration of the evolving boundaries not only of the United States as a national space but also of whiteness itself.

## A President and His Secretary: Vertical Friendship

As a celebration of white male imperialism, *The History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* offers as its titular representatives of that endeavor two problematic figures. Meriwether Lewis, the officially appointed leader of the expedition, has, by the time of its publication, taken his own life under circumstances that have been read, over the years, along a spectrum of tragic to pathetic to suspicious.<sup>5</sup> To address this suicide in the context of Lewis's life and his service to the United States, Paul Allen enlisted none other than Lewis's friend and his nation's third President, Thomas Jefferson.<sup>6</sup> Jefferson's remarks serve to characterize a complex friendship between white men of similar economic status, but unequal political standing. The relationship between Lewis and Jefferson thus represents a vertical friendship between male friends within the existing social and jurisdictional boundaries of the United States; such a relationship stands in contrast to the horizontal relationships Biddle depicts in the main narrative of the expedition.

On first consideration, the friendship between Lewis and Jefferson presented in *History of the Expedition* seems to reproduce the late eighteenth-century social model that, as Peter Coviello has observed, defined eligibility for citizenship in the young United States in terms of access to real property and to property as a form of "self-relation" (31). Jefferson and Lewis, for example, illustrate a friendship between two men who were both granted the rights and privileges of citizenship based on their access to land and to the opportunities for education, government service, and other social

advancements associated with claims to property. Despite this similar access to citizenship, however, the relationship between Jefferson and Lewis is nevertheless marked by degrees of inequality. Considered this way, then, within the context of Biddle's adaptation of the narrative of the expedition, the friendships between Jefferson and Lewis demonstrates the beginnings of what Coviello argues is the evolving trajectory by which citizenship would come to be defined as "relational" in the United States over the course of the nineteenth century. In many ways, what emerges in the depiction of this homosocial friendship is something akin to "dreams of affiliation" based on whiteness that allow for "an affect or attachment, a feeling of mutual belonging that somehow transpires between strangers" (Coviello 4). This friendship ultimately confirms that, even in the early part of the nineteenth century, "autonomous proprietorship over the self is the condition for authority in republican civic life" (Coviello 33).

Given the imprecise, fluctuating conceptualization of race that Coviello argues characterizes the discourse in the early part of the century, this example of vertical friendship in *History of the Expedition* ultimately signifies the importance of self-possession in understanding the nature of individuals' identities in relation to self, other, and nation. From this perspective, within the borders of the established United States and within the framework of its established social relations, Jefferson's role as Commander-in-Chief and as the authority charging Lewis with the labor of the expedition makes him, technically, Lewis's employer; this arrangement, in turn, renders Lewis socially dependent upon Jefferson, and the affection with which the President speaks of Lewis in



the opening eulogy further suggests that Lewis is, to use Coviello's phrase, "insufficiently self-possessed" (33).

From the outset, the prefatory eulogy is remarkable for its negotiation of the public and the private, the political and the personal. Commencing his remarks with the unsentimental salutation "Sir," Jefferson thus respectfully directs his 1813 epistle from Monticello to a masculine reader. He means specifically to address Paul Allen, who oversaw final preparation of the manuscript and whose name appears as editor on the title pages of the two-volume edition of *History of the Expedition* published in 1814, but this greeting speaks equally well to the generic—and presumptively male—national citizen and likely reader of the record of Lewis's adventures with Clark and the Corps of Discovery. The by-now former President makes clear that he has composed this memorial to Lewis in order to fulfill a duty and that, in doing so, he found it necessary to draw on more than his own recollections, much as in producing *History of the Expedition* Biddle and Allen went beyond the strict record of Lewis's (and Clark's) individual journal entries detailing their travels. He writes: "In compliance with the request conveyed in your letter of May 22, I have endeavoured to obtain, from the relations and friends of the late governor Lewis, information of such incidents of his life as might be not unacceptable to those who may read the narrative of his western discoveries" (1:vi). Jefferson goes still further, granting the editors of the volume permission to augment even his own prefatory remarks: "The result of my inquiries and recollections shall now be offered, to be enlarged or abridged as you may think best; or otherwise to be used with the materials you may have collected from other sources" (1:vi). These recollections are

thus only partially personal, Jefferson makes clear, consisting as they do in some small respect of his own, private memories but more importantly of biographical details that he has obtained from others and that, because already known to “relations and friends,” have already been determined fit for publication. In this literary performance of his friendship with Lewis, then, Jefferson is careful to modulate the distance between himself and his subordinate. In doing so, he demonstrates the complex formality of vertical relationships between white men of differing social, economic, and political stature in the established United States. The citation of sources, in particular, emphasizes the limits of the former President’s degree of affiliation with his former secretary and, indeed, circumscribes their personal relationship largely within the sphere of their service to the nation.

Among the details that Jefferson finds “not unacceptable” to readers of *History of the Expedition* are biographical facts that place Virginia-born Lewis within a “distinguished” patriarchal lineage that made significant contributions during the nation’s colonial past and during the war from which it emerged a victorious, sovereign power. Politically well-connected men, Jefferson records, were prominent in the Lewis line: one paternal great-uncle, John Lewis, served—before the Revolutionary War—in an advisory capacity to England’s King George III, while another, Fielding Lewis, wed a sister of none other than George Washington. Furthermore, he adds, Lewis’s father was brother to two “early patriots” in the Revolutionary War: one, Charles Lewis, was destined to become an early fallen hero of that war, while the other, Nicholas Lewis, would go on not only to foster-parent the eventually orphaned future leader of the expedition to the Pacific, but also to foster a relationship between the Cherokee and the nascent United

States that, Jefferson asserts, “prepared [the Cherokee] for receiving the elements of civilization” and “rendered them an industrious, peaceable, and happy people” (1:viii-ix). The genealogy of this one man thus becomes, Jefferson’s memorial preface strongly implies, coincident with the formation of the nation and its evolving domestic and foreign policy, all of which depend upon a notion of hierarchical relations within whiteness.

Just as this biographical sketch equates Lewis with the nation’s history and potential future of expansionism, so too does the inclusion—for over half the preface—of a copy of Jefferson’s letter to Lewis detailing the official parameters of the nation-building task which was to define both Lewis’s career and the new nation. By no means a casual expression of personal sentiment, Jefferson’s letter opens with a rigidly formal and ceremonial salutation that emphasizes not only Lewis’s social position and his military rank, but also his national affiliation: “To Meriwether Lewis, esquire, captain of the first regiment of infantry of the United States of America” (1:xiii). Jefferson then invokes Lewis’s further “situation as secretary of the president of the United States” to introduce and contextualize the business to which he immediately devotes the entire text of his epistle. Indeed, each paragraph of the letter focuses matter-of-factly on some instruction or other for undertaking the mission into the newly acquired territory west of the Mississippi: among a myriad of details, Jefferson describes at length what instruments to take, what observations to record, what negotiations to pursue with Native peoples and other foreign nationals encountered during the journey. If there are moments where the formality gives way to expressions that suggest more than a professional involvement in the mission, they might be glimpsed in Jefferson’s enthusiasm for the scientific and

sociological observations the expedition would afford. Consider, for example, the following passage, in which Jefferson sets forth his vision for conducting the mission:

Beginning at the mouth of the Missouri, you will take observations of latitude and longitude, at all remarkable points on the river, and especially at the mouths of rivers, at rapids, at islands, and other places and objects distinguished by such natural marks and characters, of a durable kind, as that they may with certainty be recognised hereafter. The courses of the river between these points of observation may be supplied by the compass, the log-line, and by time, corrected by the observations themselves. The variations of the needle, too, in different places, should be noticed. (1:xiv)

Despite their eloquence and richly imagined detail regarding exploratory opportunities, however, such passages remain couched in directives from President to civil servant. Key to the memorial, and apparently to Jefferson's memory of Lewis, this official correspondence from the early stages of the expedition's approval suggests that their relationship was thus a carefully modulated homosocial friendship governed by hierarchal boundaries centered on whiteness, as revealed in the two men's shared status as citizens of the United States.

Despite the initial dependence on other sources and the extended delineation of the instructions for the mission, this prefatory eulogy does acknowledge a significant professional friendship between the Commander-in-Chief and a subordinate member of the United States military. As Jefferson writes, "Captain Lewis, who had then been near two years with me as private secretary, immediately renewed his solicitations to have the direction of the party. I had now had opportunities of knowing him intimately" (xi). Having admitted to a relatively established friendship with Lewis, Jefferson proceeds to

enumerate a lengthy catalogue of personal qualities that he believes makes the Captain ideally suited to lead the proposed mission to the Pacific:

Of courage undaunted; possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert from its direction; careful as a father of those committed to his charge, yet steady in the maintenance of order and discipline; intimate with the Indian character, customs, and principles; habituated to the hunting life; guarded, by exact observation of the vegetables and animals of his own country, against losing time in the description of objects already possessed; honest, disinterested, liberal, of sound understanding, and a fidelity to truth so scrupulous, that whatever he should report would be as certain as if seen by ourselves; with all these qualifications, as if selected and implanted by nature in one body for this express purpose, I could have no hesitation in confiding the enterprise to him. (1:xi-xii)

Jefferson's endorsement of Lewis's qualifications for the mission could not be stronger.

This description of Lewis reads like a catalogue of ideal masculine virtues: courage, commitment, authoritativeness, self-reliance, political and intellectual acuity, honesty.

Put another way, Lewis is the ideal American man, someone any other man would welcome as a leader on a long-term journey across the newly acquired territory west of the Mississippi, to be sure, but, perhaps even more importantly, as a friend. At this moment, Jefferson comes closest to anticipating the transcendent possibilities of mobile male friendship that will pervade Biddle's narrative.

Indeed, in a passage that goes beyond mere enumeration of qualifications, Jefferson reveals sincere affection for Lewis in his delicate depiction of the celebrated explorer's final days: "Governor Lewis had, from early life, been subject to hypochondriac affections. . . . While he lived with me in Washington I observed at times sensible depressions of mind: but knowing their constitutional source, I estimated their

course by what I had seen in the family” (1:xxi). Although there is in this memorial a sense of a genuine affinity between Jefferson and Lewis, that friendship is ultimately tempered by their relative social positions. Jefferson was, after all, Lewis’s Commander-in-Chief, and the explorer was, in many ways, fulfilling his duty as public servant. Within the geographical, social, political jurisdiction of the United States, such a hierarchal distinction would have established significant boundaries within which the friendship between these two men operated. Jefferson’s extended—almost overwhelming—attention to the letter detailing the government’s official instructions to Lewis suggests that, under the circumstances, the political relationship took precedence over the personal connection between these men.

### **Captains Lewis and Clark and *Their* Corps: Horizontal Homosociality**

Within the neo-national space of the territory to be explored, the relationship between Lewis and Clark, itself officially one that inscribed traditional hierarchies—Lewis in command, with Clark deemed a secondary leader—serves as a homosocial relationship important for considering how Biddle’s narrative deploys mobile male friendships to demonstrate the potential for mapping new social terrain, especially in spaces outside the established jurisdiction of the United States. As presented in Biddle’s text, Lewis, Clark, and all the other members of the Corps of Discovery were entrusted with the work of the mission, and each man was able to voice his opinion in major decisions. Biddle thus depicts the white male members of the Corps of Discovery,

including Lewis and Clark, as operating within horizontal, not vertical, paradigms of friendship once they embark upon the journey west of the Mississippi and offers a literary depiction of something like the universal white male suffrage that would come into being in the established United States in the 1820s, less than a decade after the two-volume *History of the Expedition* was published. In the process, Biddle's narrative (re)imagines and traverses, through its representation of mobile male friendships, the boundaries of whiteness in neo-national space.

The April 1803 letter which consumes much of the space devoted to Jefferson's memorial to Lewis in the preface to *History of the Expedition* is greatly concerned with the government's efforts to provide Lewis with a coherent plan for successfully managing the expedition's "proceedings after your departure from the United States" (1:xiii). The carefully enumerated instructions in this letter make clear that Lewis and the other members of the expedition will be embarking upon a mission into a part of the continent over which the United States, up until just before the commencement of the first leg of the journey, had no legal claim. Even after the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, the territory was very much still a space in which Native peoples and other foreign nationals had already established their own functional systems of community and governance outside U. S. jurisdiction. Arrangements for the honoring of passports and for the provision of "friendly aid" (1:xiii), Jefferson assures Lewis, had been made between the United States and the governments of France, Spain, and Great Britain, all colonial powers with citizens of one sort or another residing in the territory through which the expedition would travel. Additional care had been taken to ensure that the expedition would have

access to “the credit of the United States” by means of “open letters of credit . . . authorizing you to draw on the executive of the United States, or any of its officers, in any part of the world, on which draughts can be disposed of” (1:xix).

That the members of the expedition will be leaving the security of the financial, legal, and social jurisdiction of the United States also becomes clear in the recognition that, until the members of the expedition cross back into the established boundaries of the United States, they are physically and fiscally vulnerable. “On reentering the United States and reaching a place of safety,” Jefferson instructs Lewis,

discharge any of your attendants who may desire and deserve it, procuring for them immediate payment of all arrears of pay and clothing which may have incurred since their departure, and assure them that they shall be recommended to the liberality of the legislature for the grant of a soldier’s portion of land each. . . . (1:xix)

As this provision makes clear, Jefferson and through him the United States government acknowledge that the members of the Corps of Discovery will be functioning as a quasi-military company, with all its associated hazards, in a space that the nation has not yet fully incorporated and domesticated. The expectation also appears to be that, individually and collectively, the members of the group will perform their duties with distinction and with the expectation that their efforts on behalf of this federally sponsored expedition will merit the rewards attendant upon successful military service.

There was an officially mandated hierarchical inequality between Lewis and Clark: Lewis had a commission as a captain in the armed services of the United States, but Clark did not receive his commission until after the expedition was completed.



Within the space of the newly acquired territory, however, Lewis and Clark, as well as the other members of the Corps of Discovery, accepted the multivalent fiction not only that both Lewis and Clark were in command, but also that both men were—regardless of official proclamations from governmental institutions back home—*captains*. This fiction of Lewis’s and Clark’s shared authority confronts readers from the title page of the *History of the Expedition*, where the two men are seemingly identified, in a phrase that yokes their surnames together under one plural designation of military rank, as a single unit: “Captains Lewis and Clark.” In many ways, this formulation suggests that they are one—and, what is more, that they are, together, a metonym for the expedition. In adapting their separate journals, Biddle in fact consistently conflates Lewis and Clark as a narrating “We,” often further obscuring which of the two men was in charge in a given situation and who was responsible for particular observations or heroic feats of expeditionary valor (or who was responsible for foolhardy risks).<sup>7</sup>

While not as narratively striking as in its attribution to Lewis and Clark of a shared rank and common identity as commander of the mission, *History of the Expedition* nevertheless also explores the potential for suspension of military rank among the other members of the Corps of Discovery. “Besides ourselves,” the narrator observes, exemplifying in the first-person plural reflexive the book’s typical insistence on a combined Lewis and Clark for the focal consciousness of the text,

were *serjeants* John Ordway, Nathaniel Pryor, and Patrick Gass, the *privates* were William Bratton, John Colter, John Collins, Peter Cruzatte, Robert Frazier, Reuben Fields, Joseph Fields, George Gibson, Silas Goodrich, Hugh Hall, Thomas P. Howard, Baptiste Lapage, Francis Labiche, Hugh McNeal, John Potts,

John Shields, George Shannon, John B. Thompson, William Werner, Alexander Willard, Richard Windsor, Joseph Whitehouse, Peter Wise, and *captain* Clarke's *black servant* York. (1:178, emphasis added)<sup>8</sup>

Here, the members of the entourage (including, one should note, Clark as well) are identified by their military rank or, as in the case of York, social status. While the nature of the expedition required that there be a system of order and discipline among the men, these military ranks were not always strictly maintained. Individual soldiers could, and on occasion did, find themselves—on the basis of their particular actions—shifting in their relative positions within the social structure of the group. Two days after Charles Floyd died from “bilious cholic,” for example, his replacement was determined not by decree of Lewis or Clark, but by nomination and election of the collective: “In order to supply the place of sergeant Floyd, we permitted the men to name three persons, and Patrick Gass having the greatest number of votes was made a sergeant” (1:48; 1:50). Thus, in the case of Patrick Gass, even the earning of a military rank became part of a democratic process that would have been unheard of within the workings of the U. S. armed forces elsewhere in the established space of the nation.

As the *History of the Expedition* unfolds, the narrating “we” collapses still further, not only eliding Lewis and Clark, but also failing to distinguish the other members of the Corps from their Captains. In the description of the events of 23 June 1805, for example, Biddle's narrative demonstrates this slippage:

After we had brought up the canoe and baggage captain Clarke went down to the camp at Portage creek, where four of the men had been left with the Indian woman [Sacajawea]. Captain Lewis during the morning prepared the camp, and

in the afternoon went down in a canoe to Medicine river to look after the three men who had been sent thither to hunt on the 19th, and from whom nothing had as yet been heard. (1:279)

Here, the “we” clearly comprehends the group, as well as Lewis and Clark, and then the narrative goes further to separate the two Captains as they attend to tasks that take them away from the Corps of Discovery.

This potential for increasing horizontal relationships among the men on the expedition seems to have been anticipated by Jefferson, especially regarding how that social dynamic might have an effect on the scientific work of the Corps. Perhaps revealing the government’s anxieties about the shared responsibilities for data collection, the scientific observations made and recorded by the members of the Corps were, according to the instructions Jefferson cites, considered suspect, with all reports of observations, measurements, and coordinates taken in this space to be subject, eventually, to verification by “proper persons within the United States” (1:xiv). Furthermore, throughout the *History of the Expedition*, whenever the Corps encounters a new species of animal or plant, the narrative inevitably compares it to a comparable specimen found in the geographical space the explorers currently think of as the United States. On 21 June 1805, for example, the Corps comes across “a species of fishing duck, the body of which is brown and white, the wings white, and the head and upper part of the neck of a brick red, with a narrow beak, which seems to be of the same kind common in the Susquehanna, Potomac and James’ river” (1:278). The fauna of the United States also serves other comparative purposes in the record of what the explorers experience and

catalogue: “We have not seen either that species of goatsucker or nighthawk called the whippoorwill, which is commonly confounded in the United States with the large goatsucker which we observe here” (1:288). A particularly telling observation appears in the entry for 11 July of that year, when the group “also saw several very large gray eagles, much larger than those of the United States, and most probably a distinct species, though the bald eagle of this country is not quite so large as that of the United States” (1:296-297). The language here verifies the still imprecise geo-political link between the established United States and “this country,” the space through which Lewis, Clark, and the Corps of Discovery are traveling: not only are the two majestic birds, one of them emboldened with well-established national symbolism, considered by the expedition to be “most probably. . . distinct species,” but so too, it seems, are the new territory and the United States considered by them to be two distinct political entities.

Perhaps the clearest acknowledgment that the expedition will be traveling into unchartered, exotic neo-national space, however, appears in the provisions made for Lewis to nominate according to his best judgment who should succeed him should he be killed on the mission: “you are hereby authorized, by any instrument signed and written in your own hand, to name the person among them who shall succeed to the command on your decease, and by like instruments to change the nomination, from time to time, as further experience of the characters accompanying you shall point out superior fitness” (1:xix). Thus, in this newly acquired, jurisdictionally ambiguous territory, the usual privileges of rank and social standing need not apply in the selection of a commanding officer. As Jefferson makes clear, the circumstances of the mission call for a different

assessment of “superior fitness” for command, one based on performance, not on relative position in the standard military or other social hierarchies. This charge, indeed, motivates social mobility within male friendships in neo-national space and, furthermore, allows for the (re)imagining of the boundaries not only of the United States but also of whitenesses.

Throughout the expedition, a number of the men besides Lewis and Clark take on leadership roles for various smaller missions. In doing so, some demonstrate their ability to manage the members of the group, while others comport themselves less successfully in such endeavors. Sergeants John Ordway, Nathaniel Pryor, and Patrick Gass, for example, often excelled in the missions on which they were sent. Private George Shannon, in contrast, often managed to get himself lost, and the group several times spent hours and even days “uneasy” about his “safety” until he made his way back to where they were camped (1:349). What is important to note here, though, is that, despite Lewis’s and Clark’s titular status as “official” leaders of the group, and the nominal assignment of additional ranks to the other members of the group, in this neo-national space, the homosocial dynamic among the members of the Corps does not function as a hierarchy of vertical relations, but allows for friendships between men that recast interactions within the community in terms of a series of horizontal relations.

Evidence of this sort of community dynamic of horizontal relations, with its opportunities for challenging and transforming notions of homosocial relations among the members of the group, appears throughout the *History of the Expedition*. On 9 June 1805, for instance, the Corps reaches a split in the Missouri River and must decide which

route to take. Although Lewis and Clark decide upon taking the southern route based on information from various Natives and from the reports of a Mr. Fidler, a private explorer who had traveled the area before it was acquired in the Louisiana Purchase, they present their plan to the group for a spirited discussion, since “every one of them were of a contrary opinion” (1:255). Instead of merely dictating the route, as might have been done on a similar military operation elsewhere in the United States, in this neo-national space, Lewis and Clark opt to involve the community in the process, and to good results. The other members of the Corps assert that “they would most *cheerfully* follow us [Lewis and Clark] wherever we should direct” (1:256, emphasis added). This characterization of the social dynamic Lewis and Clark fostered on the expedition captures the men’s enthusiasm for the work they would be asked to do and their pleasure in working with Lewis and Clark and suggests the culture of camaraderie emerging among the members of the Corps. In addition to their “cheerful” following of Lewis’s and Clark’s directives, the men also freely voice their concerns about the dangers of the chosen route, and their observations lead to alterations and refinements in the ultimate plan for the next stage of the journey (1:256). This consultation with the other members of the Corps is typical of the horizontal relations that Biddle shows Lewis and Clark fostering among the group throughout the expedition.

That the members of the Corps become increasingly comfortable as a group of equals over the course of the journey and that they increasingly find opportunities to engage more freely with one another can be seen during leisure moments as well. Consider, for example, the celebrations the Corps holds on their second Fourth of July on

the journey (in 1805). Unlike their first Independence Day in the neo-national space, when they “celebrate[d] only by an evening gun, and an additional gill of whiskey to the men” (1:21), this time they create an elaborate festival:

We contrived however to spread not a very sumptuous but a comfortable table in honour of the day, and in the evening gave the men a drink of spirits, which was the last of our stock. Some of them appeared sensible to the effects of even so small a quantity, and as is usual among them on all festivals, the fiddle was produced and a dance begun, which lasted till nine o’clock, when it was interrupted by a heavy shower of rain. They continued however their merriment till a late hour. (1:292)

The robust participation in the 1805 Independence Day festivities suggests as well an increasing level of intimacy and familiarity among the men. As this group is almost entirely all male (except for Sacajawea), much of the dancing performed as part of this celebration almost certainly involved some form of same-sex partnering, an option that would likely not have been exercised publicly in the established United States. Given the great contrast in the first and second celebrations, Biddle’s narrative suggests that, over the span of the first year on the expedition, and at this location well within the interior of the neo-national space, the members of the Corps of Discovery had developed a vibrant identity as a community that they felt free to express.

Starkly contrasting with the second-year celebration, on 4 July 1806, during the expedition’s final months, with the Corps nearly back to St. Louis, Missouri, their starting point in the established United States, the Corps “halted at an early hour for the purpose of doing honour to the birth-day of our country’s independence,” but the group barely marked the occasion at all: “The festival was not very splendid, for it consisted of

a mush made of cows and a saddle of venison, nor had we any thing to tempt us to prolong it” (2:367). “Nor had we any thing to tempt us to prolong it”: clearly not the expression of revelry and unbridled joy of the previous Independence Day! While this remark no doubt reflects some of the exhaustion the Corps felt as they neared the end of their three-year journey, might it also register a sense of all that would change once the group crossed back into the more restrictive homosocial relations operating in the established national space?

York’s status as a slave, while muted by Biddle’s narrative of his participation on and contributions to the expedition, nevertheless also informs his presence in the neo-national space and, suggests that, like its continued presence in the established United States, the institution of slavery threatens to accompany the process of whitening that has begun in the newly acquired territory. In an equally compelling way, this model of (white) citizenship that takes as its defining characteristic the ability of the individual to maintain “sole proprietorship” over himself figures into the relationship between Clark and his slave York. Unlike the friendship between Jefferson and Lewis, which plays out only in post-mortem as preface and postscript to the expedition, the vertical relationship between Clark and York is on display throughout the narrative of the journey itself. The Clark and York dynamic thus demonstrates the carryover from the established United States into the territory covered by the expedition of a vertical relationship that, back East, embodies absolute distinctions between the man eligible for citizenship and the man ineligible for those rights and privileges. Symbolically, of course, one way to read the inclusion of York on the journey is as an introduction of the institution of slavery into the



neo-national space, but such a reading ignores how York's presence on the expedition and his integration into the community of the Corps of Discovery also challenge the established hierarchy of relations between free and enslaved men back in the United States.

Indeed, in Biddle's depiction of the relations between York and Clark in the territory West of the Mississippi, York's role as a slave and therefore, again to use Coviello's term, as a dependent of Clark, often becomes muted. Although York is frequently identified in *History of the Expedition* by his status as Clark's "servant" (notably, he is never labeled a "slave"), he generally functions like any other self-directed member of the Corps of Discovery, all of whom are technically employed as civil "servants." In fact, York first appears on the pages of the *History of the Expedition* in an entry dated 9 October 1804 that describes an encounter between the Corps and several representatives from the Ricaras. The Natives, we are told, find the "remarkable stout strong negro" York to be of great interest (1:101). Biddle tells us that York then proceeds to take control of his own performance as a "monster" on display to the crowd: "By way of amusement he told them that he had once been a wild animal, and caught and tamed by his master, and to convince them, showed them feats of strength which added to his looks made him more terrible than we wished him to be" (1:102). Here, then, the *History of the Expedition* shows York taking the opportunity to reconceptualize the narrative of his enslavement to and relationship with Clark, making himself in the process both subject and object of the narrative. While certainly acknowledging his role as a man

with a master, York nevertheless demonstrates here, as elsewhere, a willingness to act beyond the bounds of what the leaders of the expedition considered proper.

During the course of the three-year journey through the neo-national space, then, the members of the Corps of Discovery, including their Captains, experienced a social dynamic that operated on principles of horizontal relations among the men. In this newly acquired territory, the various members of the entourage were able to transcend many of the social barriers that defined and, in many cases, limited their upward mobility in the established United States. While each man still bore a military rank or, in the case of York, hierarchizing social designation, those distinctions diminished on the journey. Within this vast neo-national space, Biddle suggests, homosocial male friendships achieve a geographical and social mobility that has the potential to renegotiate and redeploy the democratic principles of the established United States, especially as part of an agenda of essential whitening of territory that was already home to various sovereign nations of Native peoples.

### **Sovereign Natives, New “Friends”**

The importance of friendship and mobility as a function of whitening the neo-national space is perhaps most evident in Biddle’s depiction of the times when Lewis, Clark, and the other members of the Corps of Discovery interact with Native peoples. These encounters are, however, complicated by a number of social factors. Demonstrating the prejudices of his day and drawing on relatively limited information,

Lewis notes in an essay detailing his “Observations and reflections on the present and future state of Upper Louisiana,” which Biddle appends in its incomplete form to the second volume of the *History of the Expedition*, that “the great body of [Native] people are roving bands, who have no villages, or stationary residence” (2:453). Contrary to Lewis’s declaration, the various groups of Natives the Corps encountered exhibited distinct identities and forms of social and political coherence. As sovereign political entities, the Native peoples also engaged in warfare with each other.<sup>9</sup> As the *History of the Expedition* frequently details, they traded with each other as well, and many of the Native groups also had already established business relationships with traders from Spain, England, Canada, and the United States. The neo-national space across which Lewis, Clark, and the Corps of Discovery made their way was thus already a territory populated with people who existed within complex political identities, and one that was already in the process of developing complex domestic and international trading relationships. As Biddle’s narrative suggests, Lewis and Clark and their men whitened the notion of international and individual friendship made possible by the geographical and social mobility the new territory afforded. In doing so, Biddle’s *History of the Expedition* imagines how the boundaries of whiteness itself might also be recharted along with those of the neo-national space.

Among the instructions that the government was most insistent about in the letter Jefferson incorporates in his memorial to Lewis were those related to the expedition’s responsibilities in dealing with Native peoples living in the territory the Corps of Discovery was charged with exploring. Instead of couching his instructions in the

language of negotiations between representatives of nation-states or members of their armed forces (which the Corps of Discovery fundamentally were), Jefferson explains that the official United States policy regarding encounters with Natives was to extend them political and cultural *friendship*:

In all your intercourse with the natives, treat them in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit; allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey; satisfy them of its innocence; make them acquainted with the position, extent, character, peaceable and commercial dispositions of the United States; of our wish to be neighbourly, friendly, and useful to them; confer with them on the points most convenient as mutual emporiums, and the articles of most desirable interchange for them and us. (1:xvii)

Casting the “intercourse with the natives” in terms of developing friendships between those sovereign nations and the United States disguises the potential political and cultural threat the United States might have been perceived as posing, especially at the time the mission was being planned, when the United States had not yet purchased the Louisiana territory and was technically about to embark upon an invasion of space belonging to multiple foreign powers.

As Lewis notes in “Observations and reflections on the present and future state of Upper Louisiana,” the Natives and various groups of white traders representing Spanish, British, Canadian, and United States settlement in the territory had already developed complex business relationships. The Spaniards, in particular, he says, had established a “rapacious policy” with respect to trade that had led to the perception among several Native nations “*that the white men are like dogs, the more you beat them and plunder them, the more goods they will bring you, and the cheaper they will sell them*” (2:439,

emphasis in original). The trading practices of the Spanish, which ultimately also included providing the Natives with “arms, ammunition, and all other articles they might require” without concern for “the public good,” Lewis adds, have established a troubling social dynamic for the United States within its neo-national space:

The Indian, thus independent, acknowledging no authority but his own, will proceed without compunction of conscience or fear of punishment, to wage war on the defenceless inhabitants of the frontier, whose lives and property, in many instances, were thus sacrificed at the shrine of an *inordinate thirst for wealth* in their governors, which in reality occasioned all those evils. (2:440, emphasis in original)

Given the history of negative trading relations between the Spanish and the Natives, and equally in light of the more positive practices developed by the British in their business with the Natives, Lewis concludes, “the first principle of governing the Indians is to govern the whites” (2:461). As part of that process of whitening the neo-national space, the establishment of friendly relations between the United States and the Natives is especially important “as a just regard to the protection of the lives and property of our citizens; and with the further view also of securing to the people of the United States, exclusively, the advantages which ought of right to accrue to them from the possession of Louisiana” (2:445). Thus, the whitening of the neo-national space in terms of commerce comprehends both governing the white foreign nationals already trading in the territory as well as establishing and, in some cases, redefining political and economic *friendships* with the Natives, many of whom had already developed ideas about whites from their history of trade with the Spanish and the British.

What is more, the trope of friendship implies affiliation and reciprocation between the bonded parties, in terms both of vertical, hierarchal relations and of horizontal, egalitarian relations. In the trade proposals Lewis was developing for the territory, for example, the notion of friendship between the citizens of the United States and the Natives was certainly set forth to privilege and to protect the U. S. merchants' economic interests. Within the plans he had worked out, however, Lewis also made quite clear that the interests of the Natives and the interests of the United States did in key ways coincide. Indeed, he declared three "crimes" that should result in the loss of a United States citizen's right to trade with the Natives in Louisiana:

First, That of holding conversations with the Indians, tending to bring our government into disrepute among them, and to alienate their affections from the same.

Second, That of practising any means to induce the Indians to maltreat or plunder other merchants.

Third, That of stimulating or exciting by bribes or otherwise, any nations or bands of Indians, to wage war against other nations or bands; or against the citizens of the United States, or against citizens or subjects of any power at peace with the same. (2:454-455)

Thus, in protecting friendly relations with the Natives with respect to trading practices, Lewis argues, the government would also be protecting the interests of its own (white) citizens, not to mention establishing guidelines for governing the trading practices of other foreign nationals already operating in the territory. The process of developing political friendships with the Natives thus always already implies an agenda of whitening

the neo-national space in readiness for future settlement by the citizens of the United States.<sup>10</sup>

To further establish such mutually beneficial friendships, and to extend their potential influence to future generations of Native peoples, the government also authorized Lewis to invite chiefs to visit the United States—at taxpayer expense—and to propose opportunities for younger Natives to travel to the United States for education—again, at taxpayer expense (1:xvii). By the time the mission commenced, of course, the Louisiana Purchase had taken place, and that added another component to the previously stated policy; to wit, the travelers were charged with informing Native peoples of “the recent change in the government” in addition to conveying “the wish of the United States to cultivate their friendship” (1:31).

At the time the Corps of Discovery crossed into the neo-national space across the Mississippi, the Native nations in the regions explored by the expedition had long established their own political and economic systems. As Gregory Smoak points out in his study of the Newe nation in particular, the Corps encountered “a complex and dynamic native world created by the ancestors of the modern Shoshone-Bannock people” (13). According to Smoak, the Native nations engaged in sophisticated trading relations with each other, as well as with various European traders who had taken up residence in the region. Moreover, he notes, the Native societies had also adapted to the introduction of the horse and the gun, and had also experienced the impact of new diseases brought to North America by various waves of European colonization (15, 27). The Native nations also fought amongst themselves, and Smoak notes that, at the time of the Lewis and

Clark expedition, a war with the Blackfeet had significantly shaped the social structure, trading, and hunting practices of the Newe (25-27).

Given the complexities of the political, social, and economic systems in place among the various Native nations the Corps expected to encounter, and in light of the delicate and somewhat tenuous nature of U. S. claims to the physical space of the region, it comes as no surprise that they were instructed to negotiate relations with groups of sovereign peoples in terms that invoked the idea of friendship. Such a strategy deferred the more complex elements of international diplomacy that would eventually need to be addressed between the United States and the various Native nations. Especially avoiding the particulars of what U. S. ownership of the territory might mean for long-term governance of the region and its native residents, metaphors of friendship in these initial negotiations suggested a rather egalitarian relationship between political entities. These negotiations designed “to cultivate friendship” also served the practical purpose of encouraging the Native nations to perceive the expedition as less of a threat and to increase the likelihood of their offering assistance to the Corps. As James P. Ronda has noted about the encounters between the Corps and the Native peoples during the course of the expedition, “Travelers on both sides of the cultural divide struggled to fit new faces, new words, new objects, and new ways of being into familiar patterns of meaning” (115). Beginning from a standpoint of friendship, whether genuine or political sleight of hand, thus made a good deal of diplomatic sense for all parties concerned.

Indeed, throughout *History of the Expedition*, the relationships between the white members of the Corps of Discovery and Native peoples they encounter are often depicted



in terms of displays or metaphors of friendship. They “wanted to make friends,” the narrator tells us, or “they were friendly” (1:92, 93). As tokens of friendship with Native peoples, Lewis and Clark often present gifts to the chiefs and other dignitaries, generally with respect to the hierarchies established by the Natives themselves. In a meeting with the Tetons, for example, the gifts distributed were as follows: “to the grand chief a medal, a flag of the United States, a laced uniform coat, a cocked hat and feather; to the two other chiefs a medal and some small presents; and to two warriors of consideration certificates” (1:82). What is important to notice about the gifts themselves is that, as in the case of this meeting, they usually consist of materials that pass on the national identity of the United States as part of the exchange. In essence, then, such exchanges come to signify in the *History of the Expedition* that whiteness as a cultural production of the United States has particular material value, especially as a marker of friendship.

This practice of materializing friendship reappears throughout Biddle’s narrative as the expedition moves ever westward. When the Corps finally encounter members of the Newe nation, people identified in the *History of the Expedition* as Shoshones, in the summer of 1805, Biddle’s description of the rituals and gift exchanges takes up increasing space in the record, spanning the final five chapters of the first volume; in the process, these international relations take on an importance for the expedition not seen in earlier encounters between the Corps and Native peoples.<sup>11</sup> Because of the time of year and the treacherous lay of the terrain ahead of them, Biddle records, the Corps found that their “chief dependence is on meeting some tribe from whom we may procure horses” (1:327), so that they would be able to continue on land to the Pacific instead of taking

what appeared to be a seemingly impassable river route through the mountains. Upon reaching the location where the Shoshone were residing for the summer, Lewis found himself immediately sharing with the chief, Cameahwait, and other warriors of the tribe both a “fraternal embrace” and such additional “mark[s] of friendship” as a moccasin-removal ritual and the smoking of a communal pipe (1:364). As in the meetings with the Minnetarees, Mandans, Ricaras, Tetons, and other Native peoples, Lewis presented Cameahwait with “the flag, which he informed him was among white men the emblem of peace, and now that he had received it was to be in future the bond of union between them” (1:365).

Still later, Clark receives from Cameahwait another kind of “mark of friendship,” one that equals in symbolic import the ritual shared with Lewis: the chief bestowed upon the captain his own name. As Biddle notes in his presentation of this incident, among the Shoshone, “to give to a friend his own name is an act of high courtesy, and a pledge like that of pulling off the moccasin of sincerity and hospitality” (1:433). These ritual gestures between the captains and Cameahwait suggest a productive mobility founded on friendship, a relation between the men as representatives of their separate nations that implies a complex affiliation. On the one hand, in the neo-national space, Lewis and Clark have been welcomed into community with the Shoshone and they have, in turn, welcomed the Shoshone into friendly relations with the United States. On the other hand, as Lewis’s proposed economic agenda for the region makes clear, the friendship gestured toward here was a means to an altogether different set of ends: the economic whitening

of the region, and the protection of that neo-national space for eventual large-scale settlement and exploitation by citizens of the established United States.

As Biddle's account of the Corps' encounter with the Shoshones develops, the significance of a friendly alliance between the United States and this group of Native peoples and the larger nation of which they were a part becomes evident. The Shoshone, the narrative informs us, are in conflict with the Minnetarees, who steal their horses when they travel south later in the season to hunt buffalo. A "union" between the Shoshones (and the entire subset of Newe peoples of which they are a part, a group Biddle calls the "Snake nation") and the United States, the narrative suggests, would be "mutually advantageous":

we explained to them in a long harangue the purposes of our visit, making themselves one conspicuous object of the good wishes of our government, on whose strength as well as its friendly disposition we expatiated. We told them of their dependance on the will of our government for all future supplies of whatever was necessary either for their comfort or defence; that as we were sent to discover the best route by which merchandize could be conveyed to them, and no trade would be begun before our return, it was mutually advantageous that we should proceed with as little delay as possible. . . . (1:383)

Although the language here suggests something of a contract of equal, informed exchange between citizens of sovereign nations, it also already encodes assertions of "dependance" by the Shoshones (and, by implication, all the other Native groups who had also accepted such terms earlier) on the dictates of a foreign power with whose representatives they were, in a sense, negotiating the initial stages of an economic, political, and military surrender.<sup>12</sup> For readers of Biddle's text, of course, such language

asserts yet another promise of capitalist enterprise in the new territory and further confirms the process by which the United States might realize and mobilize such mercenary mercantilism.

Despite the many descriptions of the political friendships they established with various Native peoples during the transcontinental mission, the *History of the Expedition* nevertheless makes clear that, throughout their travels, the members of the Corps of Discovery are engaged in a literal and a literary whitening of the neo-national space. Among the relatively few phrases in a Native language that Biddle quotes as having been uttered by Lewis is the expression “tabba bone” (1:355), which is Shoshone for “white man,” and which the Captain cries out in conjunction with an overt baring of his arm to call particular attention to “the colour of his skin” (1:356) and to “convince [an approaching Shoshone] that he was a white man” (1:355). Biddle’s narrative thus imagines for its readers that whiteness—and in particular white maleness—is already present in the neo-national space—and, more than that, that it is already prized as remarkable and valuable among Native peoples in a way that might be exploited as part of the United States’ political and economic agenda with respect to negotiations with the various sovereign nations in the newly acquired territory west of the Mississippi.

Other forms of literary whitening appear in the frequent mention of how a Native designation for a feature of the landscape was dismissed in favor of a name that associated that feature with a member of the entourage or even a common household item like a teapot. In keeping with the camaraderie established among the men on the expedition, throughout the journey, each member of the Corps of Discovery has at least

one geographical feature named in his honor by his peers. Lewis and Clark, for example, each lend their names to rivers, and Ordway gives his to a stream. As the expedition moves further westward, the names they assign to the geographical features of the new territory become increasingly political as they are derived from officials of the United States government. On 27 July 1805, for instance, the Corps declares that the “southeast fork” of the Missouri River would be renamed Gallatin’s River “in honour of the secretary of the treasury” (1:325). The next day, the narrative reports, the explorers made further changes to the naming of the other two branches of the Missouri River; they “gave to the southwest branch the name of Jefferson in honour of the president of the United States, and the projector of the enterprise: and called the middle branch Madison, after James Madison secretary of state” (1:328).

In addition to naming places after themselves and celebrated politicians from the United States, the Corps also named two bodies of water after concepts closely identified with the founding of their home nation; on 4 July 1804, their first celebration of the holiday while on the expedition, they called one unnamed creek “Fourth of July creek” and a second “Independence” creek, both “in honour of the day” (1:21). Thus, with each newly minted place name that Biddle includes in his adaptation of Lewis’s and Clark’s journals, the developing map of the territory recently acquired by the United States becomes ever more domesticated and thus re-imagined in terms of whiteness. When Biddle’s report of those place names also include geographical coordinates, this new official cartography takes on yet additional legitimacy beyond the merely imagined neo-national space the expedition was charged with traversing.

In Biddle's depiction of the expedition's encounters with Native peoples, however, whiteness is often destabilized, that is, shown as not inherently superior to or of more interest than other categories of identity. This is particularly the case in the descriptions of how York was received by various Native peoples. Among one group of Ricaras, for example, the "civilities" turned to sexual encounters: "The black man York participated largely in these favours; for instead of inspiring any prejudice, his colour seemed to procure him additional advantages from the Indians, who desired to preserve among them some memorial of this wonderful stranger" (1:105). When the expedition visited a different encampment of Ricaras, "York was here again an object of astonishment; the children would follow him constantly, and if he chanced to turn towards them, run with great terror" (1:109). In these two encounters, then, York—as a non-white man—is presented both as willing to engage in sexual activity with the Native women and as willing to play the part of a frightening exotic other.

In a meeting with another group of Native people known to Lewis and Clark as the Minnetarees, Biddle tells us, their "grand chief," Le Borgne, also asked to meet the black man he had heard was part of the expedition. When York presented himself to the chief, Biddle records, "the Borgne was very much surprised at this appearance, examined him closely, and spit on his finger and rubbed the skin in order to wash off the paint; nor was it until the negro uncovered his head, and showed his short hair, that the Borgne could be persuaded that he was not a painted white man" (1:168). What is worth noting here is the way whiteness is both taken for granted and rendered false—and that such a

disruption of the fundamental power of whiteness is born out upon the body of an African slave, himself a commodified metonym for the imperialist endeavors of the United States.

Despite the emphasis on the whitening of the neo-national space that otherwise pervades the *History of the Expedition* and attends its depiction of mobile male friendships in that landscape outside the established jurisdiction of the United States, these scenes focused on York imply room for further negotiation of notions of national identity and citizenship. The centrality of York's blackness in these (and other) moments in the narrative would have equated his non-white body with those of the Natives, and his participation in sexual intercourse with Native women would have suggested to polite readers of Biddle's *History of the Expedition* something of the prurient and socially suspect. That the white men on the journey were present for this event and that they also on occasion availed themselves of the opportunities to partake in sexual relations with the Native women might perhaps be disguised by Biddle's (and Lewis's) Latin transcription of such a moment, but the narrative nevertheless encodes the potential for the neo-national space to offer not only new forms of homosocial friendships between men, but also new forms of heterosexual, interracial relationships.

These metaphors of friendship and whiteness, and the ways they are troubled—especially by the presence of the African American slave York and by the travelers' encounters with Native peoples—thus figure prominently in Biddle's adaptation of the journals kept by Lewis and Clark—but, more than that, the practices they represent are shown in *History of the Expedition* to complicate the commencement of imperialist

expansionism by the United States and the imagined whitenesses on which they depend and which they ultimately purport to serve.

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In an essay on the relationship between Lewis and Clark included in *Comrades: Brothers, Fathers, Heroes, Sons, Pals*, his study of homosocial friendships throughout American history, Stephen E. Ambrose deems the pair “Faithful Friends,” who “gave to each other everything that can be drawn from a friendship” and who “gave to their country its epic poem while introducing the American people to the American West” (107). With respect to Biddle’s *History of the Expedition*, however, additional friendships are part of the foundational national narrative that emerged from the journey of the Corps of Discovery. The relationships between Lewis and Thomas Jefferson and between Clark and York, his African-American slave, predate (and extend beyond) the time of the expedition and illustrate relationships between men that might be considered friendships, but that also, due to restrictions based on social status imposed by the official culture of the nation, demonstrate the limits of male friendships to transcend established hierarchies of whiteness. Similarly, the relationship between Lewis and Clark was marked by distinctions in military rank that imposed an official hierarchy between the two white men.

Once underway across the Mississippi, however, the story of their relationship gestures toward a collapse of the distinction in their ranks and their adoption of a shared



responsibility for the mission and the other men who joined them on the journey. The slippage of the distinctions between the rank and, indeed, even individual identities of Lewis and Clark illustrates how male friendships function as sites of dynamic interaction that might not otherwise take place within the confines of the established United States. This dynamic develops further in Biddle's depiction of the relationships between Lewis and Clark and the men who serve under them in the Corps of Discovery, as well as in the relationships among the men in the Corps. Indeed, from the start of its narrative of the mission to its conclusion, *History of the Expedition* never lets readers forget that, for many of the members of the Corps of Discovery (not just Lewis and Clark), the tasks of information-gathering and record-keeping were as vital as the work of protecting precious supplies and ensuring forward progress: "we dried our provisions, made new oars, and prepared our despatches and maps of the country we had passed, for the president of the United States, to whom we intend to send them by a periogue from this place" (1:32). In Biddle's depiction of the efforts of the Corps, then, the men also modeled a democracy of horizontal relationships in which friendship and not hierarchy established the social order.

In a more complex way, a similar emphasis on friendship figures into the rhetoric Biddle records in the negotiations Lewis and Clark made with the representatives of various nations of Native peoples. Thus, as the Corps made its way across the newly acquired territory, it collectively charted on paper the actual geographical space into which the United States, and its representative white citizens, could and would eventually expand—but more importantly imagined an alternative social trajectory for the nation

and its various whitenesses as well. What is more, the political alliances negotiated between the leaders of the expedition (as duly appointed representatives of the United States) and the leaders of the various nations of Native peoples, such as the Minnetarees, Shoshones, Tetons, and Ricaras, are also characterized as forms of male friendships contingent upon the cartography of mobile whitenesses the Corps of Discovery has been mandated to record and transmit back to Washington, DC.

In the process, this celebrated expedition across the newly established nation endeavored to map the terrain of the United States both as a spatial phenomenon and as a legal and social entity. *History of the Expedition*, like the expedition itself, capitalized on the idea of mobile male friendships as a means to achieving the early expansionist goals of the United States, goals that will, by mid-century, have evolved into a popular notion of the nation's Manifest Destiny. And male homosocial friendships, like the jurisdiction of the nation itself, are shown throughout the undertaking to be in flux and open to expansive possibilities. Even within the bounds of privileged whiteness, the borders of friendship are fluid and dynamic, as men such as Lewis, Clark, and their diverse associates attempt both to account for and circumscribe the nation not only as a space to be whitened, but also as a space inhabited by non-white others who themselves are striving, individually and collectively, to manifest their own negotiated destinies in response to the expanding jurisdiction of the United States and of the cartography of its imagined whiteness.

Even among such mundane paratextual material as its twice-repeated copyright notice (once for each volume), the *History of the Expedition* declares its fundamental

agenda of documenting the neo-national space afforded by the newly acquired Louisiana territory. “BE IT REMEMBERED,” the extended copyright notice announces, dating the publishers’ “claim as proprietors” of the title and text of this depiction of Lewis’s and Clark’s mission to the “thirty-eighth year of the independence of the United States of America,” and thus placing this book in relation to the birth of the nation’s public declaration of its intentions to free itself of a colonial identity and subjection to another sovereign state (n. p.). This proprietary claim, the notice goes on to explain, arises from not one, but two acts of Congress, both concerned with securing intellectual property rights and providing financial incentives for authors, artists, and publishers to produce “maps, charts, and books,” as well as “historical and other prints” that could attempt to disseminate further the idea of the United States as a coherent, representable national body, one with itself legitimate proprietary claims to both territorial and temporal reality (n. p.). Like the narrative contained in the two volumes of the *History of the Expedition*, this legal notice asserts a nascent doctrine of Manifest Destiny as an act of cultural imagination dependent upon the labor of male friends mobilized—and thus empowered—to become the “authors and proprietors” of neo-national space. Here, that process is conceived as a narrative of whiteness and whitening, but, as we shall see in the next chapter, Martin Delany re-imagines the nation’s Manifest Destiny, and the function of mobile male friendships within and beyond the borders of the United States, from the perspective of an enslaved man.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On Manifest Destiny as it specifically relates to the Lewis and Clark expedition, see Miller.

<sup>2</sup> My notion of the nation as a space to be imaginatively charted derives, in many ways, from the work of Benedict Anderson.

<sup>3</sup> Although Paul Allen, not Nicholas Biddle, is credited on the title page of the 1814 edition of *History of the Expedition*, it is generally acknowledged that the bulk of this adaptation of the original journals was drafted by Biddle. On the complexities attendant upon the preparation of *History of the Expedition* from the manuscript journals of Lewis and Clark and for a sense of its publication history, see Barth; Beckham et al.; Cappon; Coues; Danisi and Wood; Snow; Trofanenko; Winfield.

The full *Journals of Lewis and Clark*, an expansive printing of original manuscript materials, including much scientific data that Biddle omitted, did not reach a broad reading public until the twentieth century. An annotated digital edition of the complete *Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* is available at [lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu](http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu).

<sup>4</sup> Several of the men serving under Lewis and Clark also published their own records from the journey. Patrick Gass's *Journal of the Voyages and Travels of a Corps of Discovery* (1811), for example, was rushed into print three years before even Biddle's *History of the Expedition* went to press, and—like the seven other journals of its ilk—this diary offers further perspective on the transcontinental exploration and the homosocial

relationships central to it. As Snow observes, given “a market saturated with seemingly indistinguishable accounts of the expedition and an eager, but largely nondiscriminating reading public who consumed the expedition in whatever form was materially available,” nineteenth-century readers would not have troubled themselves with the sort of scholarly insistence on an authoritative narrative—based on meticulously accurate re-presentations of the original journals kept by Lewis, Clark, and the other members of their entourage—that has characterized twentieth-century studies of the expedition (675).

<sup>5</sup> The circumstances surrounding Lewis’s death have been the subject of some debate. Most historians and biographers accept the official determination that Lewis committed suicide (see, for example, Dillon; Jenkinson; Morris; Wilson). Indeed, in his book-length study of Lewis’s “character,” Clay S. Jenkinson offers a particularly eloquent reading of the explorer as a man whose personality and life experiences could very well have led him to commit suicide. Some students of Lewis’s life, however, have questioned the official narrative of how he died. Vardis Fisher entertains the possibility that Lewis was murdered, as do the contributors to John D. W. Guice’s collection of essays exploring the matter. David Leon Chandler presents perhaps the most novel interpretation of the circumstances surrounding Lewis’s death, offering a complex set of “proofs” for Jefferson’s involvement in a conspiracy to have his friend assassinated.

<sup>6</sup> Jefferson served as President from 1801-1809.

<sup>7</sup> This literary (and, to an extent, historical) merger of Lewis and Clark has, of course, been noted before. See, for example, Dillon xiii; Nelson 74-77.

<sup>8</sup> See Clarke, *The Men* and “The Roster”; Morris.

<sup>9</sup> See Smoak, particularly Chapters 1 and 2. See also the essays collected by Laura L. Scheiber, Mark D. Mitchell, and K. G. Tregonning in *Across a Great Divide: Continuity and Change in Native North American Societies, 1400-1900*.

<sup>10</sup> In *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, and Manifest Destiny*, Robert J. Miller presents a comprehensive review of the legal issues that emerged from United States expansionism in the nineteenth century and a critique of their continuing effects on Native people in the twentieth century. See also the essays collected by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. and Marc Jaffe in *Lewis and Clark Through Indian Eyes* and those collected by Frederick E. Hoxie and Jay T. Nelson in *Lewis and Clark and the Indian Country: The Native American Perspective*.

<sup>11</sup> See Smoak, Chapter 1 (especially 25ff).

<sup>12</sup> My thinking here borrows from ideas about Native self-determination set forth in Mark Rifkin's *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U. S. National Space*. Smoak offers a detailed examination of the development of ethnic identity among the members of the Newe nation. See also Ronda.

### CHAPTER III

#### FUGITIVE FRIENDS: MARTIN R. DELANY'S REWRITING OF MANIFEST DESTINY IN *BLAKE; OR, THE HUTS OF AMERICA*

Although a work of fiction, Martin R. Delany's *Blake; or, the Huts of America* (1859 and 1861-1862), a novel that follows the peregrinations of its enslaved black hero as he traverses southern U. S. states and western territories and then travels on to Cuba, raises significant questions about the nature of liberty, equality, and expansionism within a society that permits slavery in at least some geographical regions under its jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> Along his journey, Henry Blake establishes a network of homosocial friendships that become crucial to his plan for effecting a slave uprising in the United States—and one with international aspirations as well. Delany's novel therefore functions as a mid-nineteenth-century anti-slavery manifesto challenging the ideology of the United States as a proprietary space for whiteness and the nation's correlated imperialist endgame of extending beyond its current jurisdiction, and the text presents a radical critique of the process of national whitening that Biddle presents in his celebratory version of Lewis and Clark's government-sponsored explorations of neo-national space at the beginning of the century.

*Blake* thus offers a revolutionary, if fictional, response to Biddle's depiction of mobile white male homosociality as central to the earlier government-sponsored military

and scientific expedition of Lewis and Clark. As we have seen, Biddle's narrative offered readers a comforting depiction of the whitening of neo-national space through its celebratory account of white men surveying, cataloguing, and charting territory recently acquired by the United States. Central to Biddle's narrative, and the vision of national expansion which it disseminated, was the potential of neo-national space to afford ever-increasing opportunities for the full realization of democratic principles among white men. In Biddle's treatment of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the mobile male friendships emphasize greater horizontal relationships between the men of the Corps of Discovery and, especially, between the men of the Corps and their two Captains. Movement into this neo-national space thus implies a reduction of the hierarchical distinctions that, in the established United States, limits their social, economic, and political advancement. Importantly, even in the cautions Jefferson enumerated prior to the Louisiana Purchase, Biddle's narrative makes clear that the Corps of Discovery moves through this neo-national space with the approval and legal authority of the United States.

As in the *History of the Narrative of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark*, geographic mobility in *Blake* is intimately connected to a series of homosocial male friendships. In Delany's novel, however, black male mobility—in light of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 and, more immediately contemporary to the publication of the novel, legislation enacted as part of the Compromise of 1850—is an illegal, fugitive action, not a government-sanctioned endeavor. Also criminalized by the Fugitive Slave Act are the very friendships that Blake



creates during his sojourn through the United States and beyond its borders. Delany's novel, like Biddle's *History of the Expedition*, deploys tropes of mobility and homosocial friendships, but this time between black men. Far from presenting a comforting narrative that furthers the whitening of national (and international) space, *Blake* instead challenges the fundamental assumptions of slavery—that is, that matters of personhood, property, and place are inherently a function of whiteness—and the role of the peculiar institution in the expansionist goals of the United States, both within existing national space and, especially for the time in which the novel was serialized, in international spaces such as Cuba, which proslavery factions wanted to annex.

Published serially twice, first in the *Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859 (twenty-six chapters only) and then again in the *Weekly Anglo-African* in 1861 to 1862 (the complete text), Delany's novel sets forth the narrative of a black male who refuses to accept enslavement by a white patriarchal society.<sup>2</sup> In effecting his resistance, Blake—like Lewis and Clark—traverses national space, both within the established United States and in its developing trans-Mississippi territories. In addition, though, he leaves the continent to take his mission to Cuba, where he encounters the activities of filibusterers, still more troubling evidence of the extension of U. S. territorial ambition (along with its consequent project of whitening) into another sovereign space.<sup>3</sup> For Blake, the further expansion by whites from the United States into Cuba serves as both a threat and an opportunity. According to Ifeoma C. K. Nwankwo, the move to annex Cuba championed by proslavery groups in the United States, along with the support of elite creoles in Cuba, offered a means by which the enslavement of Africans could be maintained in the island

nation; at the same time, annexation efforts also sparked international backlash, such as Spain's proposal to emancipate the slaves in Cuba. That response provided a climate of fear and uncertainty that Delany could exploit in his novel "to unsettle the nerves of proslavery advocates everywhere" (Nwankwo 586). In developing his fictional vision of a plan for subverting the expansion of slavery throughout Cuba (and other newly acquired territories of the United States), Delany presents a black male hero who seizes for himself the opportunity afforded by mobility to found a transnational network of homosocial friendships with other black men that, at least within the fictional world of the novel, enables slave resistance to take the form of collective, transnational action.

In positing such a black male hero and such a transnational network of black male homosocial friendships as the ideal means for redressing the injustices of slavery, Delany thus sets forth in his novel a new way of perceiving—and then challenging—whiteness as a fundamental assumption in conceptions of the United States as a political and geographical entity. During the course of his hero's journey within and without the jurisdiction of the United States (and within and without slave and free territories), Delany illustrates how notions of personhood, property, and place, so intimately and legally aligned with whiteness and so essentially denied to the enslaved, can be understood as racialized legal fictions subject to critique and to reconceptualization. In the process of questioning the presumed whiteness of these foundational (but not in practice "inalienable") U. S. rights and privileges, Delany (re)imagines and redirects the possibilities of manifest destiny, despite its implicit encoding as the purview of mobile

white male friends, as an endeavor that could also be undertaken as a function of well-organized, capably led fugitive slaves.

This mobility of the hero, the transnational character of his travels and plans for slave revolt, and the implications of all those matters for understanding Delany's vision of racial and ethnic identity among enslaved blacks in the United States and elsewhere in the world have intrigued most scholars who have turned their attention to *Blake*.<sup>4</sup> Of particular critical interest has been the novel's engagement with movement beyond national boundaries. Paul Gilroy, for example, argues that "the version of black solidarity Blake advances is explicitly anti-ethnic and opposes narrow African-American exceptionalism in the name of a truly pan-African, diaspora sensibility" (27). Eric J. Sundquist likewise finds the novel's consideration of slave revolt as a transnational concern to be among its most significant contributions to the record of slavery in the New World.<sup>5</sup>

More recently, critics have built upon Gilroy's and Sundquist's appreciation for *Blake*'s vision of "black solidarity" and its connection to transnationalism. Jeffery A. Clymer, for example, argues that the novel depicts and interrogates the essential economic relations that bound nations to the business of the slave trade.<sup>6</sup> Considering the structure of *Blake* as well as its political and economic implications, Andy Doolen argues that "the national framework is a trap, and the novel form enabled Delany to free the black historical experience from it" (156). Like Gilroy and Sundquist, then, Clymer and Doolen focus attention on the inter- and transnational aspects of *Blake*'s depiction of the

United States's involvement in the "peculiar institution" of slavery and on how the mobility of the novel's protagonist makes such a critical account possible.

This vision of the potential expansiveness of slave fugitivity is of particular import in understanding the scope of the imagined, mobile community Delany presents in the novel as a response to the potential extension of slavery further into neo-national U. S. space and into sovereign international territories as well. In *Black Atlas: Geography and Flow in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature*, Judith Madera analyzes how, in the narrative's depiction of Blake's movements in national and international spaces, Delany crafts a "novelistic counter-map" that "is actually a cogent rewiring of the American axis established in dominant maps" of the United States and its potential acquisition of Cuba as a future slaveholding territory (145). While Madera's reading of the novel's remapping of these spaces certainly interrogates the mobility of the novel's main character and his developing sense of how to unite the various people he meets, she does not investigate the way friendship functions as part of Blake's activities on either the local or the international level.

In particular, the network of black male friends that Blake develops serves as the foundation of Delany's vision for radical reform of the global system that permits slavery to continue to exist. In *Blake*, Delany figures forth the current, corrupt system as an unchecked whitening of international spaces. His critique focuses primary attention on the effects of this whitening on the national and neo-national territory of the United States, a political entity with designs on extending its jurisdiction—and, in the process,

the institution of slavery—beyond its current borders and into such sovereign locales as Cuba and lands belonging to Native Americans.

Crucially, the range of black male friendships that Delany envisions situate the novel's imagined nonwhite community in various whitened and increasingly whitening spaces within the geographical and political domain of the United States and beyond its jurisdiction. These mobile friendships, furthermore, accumulate in the novel as evidence to support Delaney's argument for the ability and imperative of enslaved people of color to effect organized rebellion against whiteness and its policies of nation-building founded on a slave economy. Indeed, it is through the depiction of these mobile black male friendships that Delany explores most dramatically and effectively what he will call the "White Gap," a metaphor for naming white fears of mobile black male homosociality and an analytical category for exposing the vulnerabilities and limits of property, personhood, and place as they are understood to be identified with whiteness. At the same time, an examination of how the mobilized figure of Blake and the networks of black male friendships he sets in motion also reveals not only a re-envisioning of "manifest destiny" for the enslaved, but also—in his treatment of Native American sovereignty and in his representation of patriarchal dominance in marital relationships—a complex synonymy between Blake's fictional agenda and the one playing out in the dominant white cultural imaginary.

### **“The White Gap”: Fear of Mobile Black Male Homosociality**

Late in the novel, Delany has Henry Blake declare, in a speech delivered in Cuba, that “[t]he whites accept of nothing but that which promotes their interests and happiness, socially, politically and religiously. They would discard a religion, tear down a church, overthrow a government, or desert a country, which did not enhance their freedom” (258). Having uttered this powerful, seemingly damning critique, Blake nevertheless goes on to ask the assembled members of his “Grand Council”: “In God’s great and righteous name, are we not willing to do the same?” (258). For Delany, *Blake* affords a creative space in which to re-imagine what Theodore David Goldberg calls “the racial state” from a non-white perspective. Through the narrative of Blake’s national and international adventures, I argue, Delany interrogates whiteness as a system founded on self-interest and on the self-evidence of its identity with property, personhood, and place; the novel presents mobile black male homosociality as capable of overthrowing and redirecting that system by means of organized revolt.

In its analysis of whiteness as a system, the novel recognizes a version of what Cheryl I. Harris has termed “whiteness as property” (1725). In *Blake*, Delany establishes quite clearly his understanding of whiteness as an identity of personhood, property, and place as figured in relation to the system of slavery. Indeed, throughout the wide-ranging tour of the United States that Delany imagines in narrating the adventures of his fugitive slave hero, white male characters consistently take for granted that they are self-evidently persons and not property, that their whiteness in fact makes them eligible to own various

forms of property (including other human beings), and that they have unfettered privilege to move about the space of the nation (or not to move in that space). Of particular import in the novel, as in Harris's theoretical analysis, whiteness appears as a system that defines itself in relation to others who are denied identities of personhood, property, and place.

Throughout each geographic region of the country, Delany demonstrates, this privileging of whiteness, and its dependence on the perception of African Americans as subject to enslavement and thus incapable of legitimate citizenship, is a consistent feature of the whitening of U. S. domestic national space. A discussion between Judge Ballard (a Northerner and a representative of that region's legal authority) and Major Armsted (a business partner of Franks, the man who owns Blake) makes explicit this function of whiteness. Despite being from a free state, Judge Ballard concludes that slave trading crucially underwrites his privilege as a white man in a capitalist economy:

It is plain that the right to buy implies the right to hold, also to sell; and if there be right in the one, there is in the other; the premise being right, the conclusion follows as a matter of course. I have therefore determined, not only to buy and hold, but buy and sell also. As I have heretofore been interested for the trade I will become interested in it. (60)

Through Judge Ballard's declaration of his (d)evolution from merely having "been interested *for*" the buying and selling of slaves to his future "becom[ing] interested *in*" such commerce, Delany emphasizes the insidious nature of the self-interest inherent in whiteness and the essential function of the slave trade as a means to reinforce and maintain this system. Blake's adventures will eventually reveal it to be incoherent and potentially subverted by black male friends inspired by the empowerment of mobility.

Indeed, this same scene with Judge Ballard—nominated an “Interchange of Opinion” in Delany’s chapter title—also dramatizes the national awareness of slave mobility as a fundamental threat to the system by which whiteness establishes its self-interest and preserves its monopoly on personhood, property, and place. Asked about his position on “the Compromise measures” (that is, the Compromise of 1850), the Judge asserts that whites have a legal claim to such identities and that enslaved and free African Americans do not: “I hold as a just construction of the law, that not only has the slaveholder a right to reclaim his slave when and wherever found, but by its provision every free black in the country, North and South, are liable to enslavement by any white person” (61). Among the legislation enacted by the Compromise of 1850 that so delights the Judge were “measures” that increased obligations on law enforcement to apprehend and return fugitive slaves, increased protections for slave owners making claims for the return of runaway slaves, and reduced protections for people suspected as runaway slaves to challenge their extradition.<sup>7</sup> The Judge goes on to conclude, citing yet another case, that “It was a just decision of the Supreme Court . . . that persons of African descent have no rights that white men are bound to respect!” (61). Here, the Judge champions the 1857 decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, a ruling that Lea Vandervelde notes is “the archetypal case that symbolizes injustice” (263). As Vandervelde explains, a key holding of this decision was “that, as a black person, Dred Scott was precluded from utilizing the federal courts to assert his freedom, regardless of the validity of his claim” (263). As a black person, the Court ruled, Scott could not be a citizen of the United States (Vandervelde 263). In this dialogue between a gathering of white men from the judicial,



business, and land-owning ranks of U. S. society, Delany summarizes for his readers the recent history of unjust court rulings and, like Harris, establishes a vision of whiteness as a systemic identity grounded in legal and political fictions of its self-evident access to personhood, property, and place.

As this conversation among elite white men from various regions of the United States makes clear, the contemporary legal maneuvering related to concerns about slave fugitivity are very much coincident with efforts to contain and curtail black individuals' access to basic human rights, let alone the rights and privileges of U. S. citizenship. Indeed, as H. Robert Baker has observed, "by the time the Fugitive Slave Act came before the Supreme Court in 1842, the Court and the federal government were firmly in the hands of slaveholders who insisted upon a proslavery construction to the Constitution" (1134). Given this legal and political environment, the claims of an enslaved man such as Blake to ownership of himself or any other property would have been untenable to the elite whites who considered themselves in possession of inalienable rights to both their own personhood and their pursuit of property. What is more, the mid-century legislation governing slave fugitivity further confirmed the enslaved individual's lack of freedom to move about the space of the nation or, indeed, beyond its boundaries.

In the novel, Delany has his hero, Blake, having come to understand the racialized politics of whiteness as an identity in the United States, endeavor to effect a means to subvert not only that essential legal and social construction, but also its equally essential and legally and socially constructed corollary, which is property ownership. As Harris goes on to explain, "When the law recognizes, either implicitly or explicitly, the settled

expectations of whites built on the privileges and benefits produced by white supremacy, it acknowledges and reinforces a property interest in whiteness that reproduces Black subordination” (1731). Thus, in terms of their relationships to the whites who own them, Blake insists, black men in particular need to see anew not only their own possession by their owners, but also their owners’ dependence upon their possessions for identity and power as free and autonomous citizens.

This dependence of whiteness on capitalized property further equates racialized personhood and social, legal, and political autonomy with emplacement within the corrupted space of the plantation and its economy. Radically challenging this relationship between identity and property as the exclusive right of whiteness, Blake thus advises his co-conspirators of the need to teach other slaves of the absolute necessity and moral imperative of acquiring money, even if it means stealing it from their owners:

Keep this studiously in mind and impress it as an important part of the scheme of organization, that they must have money, if they want to get free. Money will obtain them everything necessary by which to obtain their liberty. The money is within all of their reach if they only knew it was right to take it. (43)

Blake goes on to add, conclusively, that—for the slaves he is recruiting to revolt—money “is your certain passport through the white gap, as I term it” (43), and he reminds his friends that he has “by littles”—and with no moral misgivings—appropriated two thousand dollars for himself from Colonel Franks, which he reckoned constituted a fraction “of the earnings due [him] for more than eighteen years’ service” (31). Through this advice, and through his depiction of Blake’s taking money from his owner, Delany

presents yet another threat to whiteness posed by his hero's mobility and the opportunity to educate other slaves that it affords: once they comprehend their access to capital and the potential for freedom that money grants them, the slaves will have taken further steps toward their own definition of themselves as human beings and not as the property (and capital investment) of someone else. More important, the acquisition of capital for the slave is here figured as a means to personhood founded not on landedness or on the ownership of others, but on a collective affiliation and endeavor associated chiefly with the liberation of mobility.

Given his personal moral code, and in keeping with his depiction as an "intelligent slave," Blake expresses an understanding of religion that is far more nuanced and complex than that of the other slaves, and this insight makes him particularly challenging and dangerous to a system of whiteness that depends, in many ways, upon Christian teachings as a means of justifying and maintaining a slave economy. Indeed, Blake finds the other slaves' easy acceptance of Christianity to be both problematic (it is, essentially, the gospel of those who have enslaved him and his people) and expedient for his radical, revolutionary purposes (he will adopt as his main tenet and slogan the Biblical direction of "standing still, to see the salvation" [29]): "You must make your religion subserve your interests, as your oppressors do theirs!" (41). This insight also allows Blake to interrogate the means by which whites use Christianity to bolster their claims on other human beings as forms of property.

He goes on to explain that whites demonstrate how to achieve this goal: "They use the Scriptures to make you submit, by preaching to you the texts of 'obedience to

your masters' and 'standing still to see the salvation,' and we must now begin to understand the Bible so as to make it of interest to us" (41). While Mammy Judy can, with genuine devotion, lead the other slaves in raising their voices in song to praise Christ as their friend ("Oh! Jesus, Jesus is my friend, / He'll be my helper to the end" [35]), the real friend and savior in their midst is Blake, and he will develop his radical plans and inspire others to follow his revolutionary lead by forging friendships wherever he goes on his local, national, and international travels. Indeed, this nuanced understanding of the way religion both sustains and undermines the slaves greatly enhances Blake's ability to communicate his plan to the lieutenants he recruits and befriends along his journey. In the process, he imparts to his followers, at home and abroad, the fundamental ethical core of his mission. Delany's novel presents the idea of slave revolt as all the more viable because conceived of as developing from and dependent upon an ever-increasing community of black male friends inspired by and answering to a morally justified, mobile leader from within their own ranks who understands the insidious nature of whiteness and who has devised a systematic means of turning that system of privilege against itself.

As an individual black man and as a representative of enslaved people of color, Blake challenges the coherence of multiple racialized social constructs: personal identities, slave economies, national jurisdictions, among others. "Through *Blake*," Rebecca Skidmore Biggio observes, "Delany exploits white fear of black conspiracy to promote his vision of a unified black community" (440). In addition, Jean Lee Cole argues, "The means by which Delany figures Henry Blake, and by extension black men, as a force is first through his irresistible charisma, and second, through his sheer

mobility” (165). I would go further to argue that Delany’s observations about and critique of social and economic whiteness and whites’ attendant fear of the black community develop not secondarily, but most emphatically through the novel’s portrayal of its titular protagonist’s mobility and his formation of a complex network of friendships, especially with other men of color, throughout his travels in the United States and beyond its jurisdictional boundaries. Thus, *Blake*, as a fictional depiction of black male mobility and networking, exposes anxieties about non-white masculinity that are suppressed in non-fiction texts, such as Biddle’s *History of the Narrative of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark*, that champion white male superiority and its relationship to the United States’s policies of expansion.

Given its unapologetic vision of the means by which a slave revolt might be set in motion within the United States and, further, in territories outside the national space on which some citizens had set their expansionist ambitions, *Blake* re-imagines fugitivity as a potent challenge to the whitening of national and international space. In this regard, Delany invokes in *Blake* (the novel) and Blake (the character) a “figure of black fugitive thought” not unlike that Barnor Hesse has traced in the work of David Walker and Aimé Césaire. This figure, Hesse explains, embodies the “escapology” central to radical critique of white imperialism:

First, as *escape from complicity* it refuses the unspeakability of the depredations, distortions, and violations made possible by the colonial-racial foreclosures of Western hegemony. Second, as *escape to critique* it is oriented as the black political other to the race governance that makes Western hegemony possible. . . . Always racially profiled by but never racially assimilated to Western hegemony, black fugitivity obliges radically escapist pathways. (307-308, original emphasis)

The formidable figure of Blake certainly finds a way to “escape from complicity,” both psychologically and physically, within and beyond the United States, a nation with evolving geographical borders that—in light of the 1857 decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*—denied him, as an African American, the right of citizenship within those borders. Crucially, Blake conceives of himself as an autonomous self who need not accept the circumscribed terms for black male identity established by slave-holding whites. Having left the plantation without Franks’s permission, Blake has, under the laws of the United States, technically stolen himself. In doing so, he achieves a sense of his ownership of himself, and thereby embodies, demonstrates, and mobilizes the potential for a black male to assume the privileges of personhood, property, and place.

That Blake is a vital and formidable figure within the slave community of which he is a part is evident from his delayed arrival in the action of the novel. Given his conspicuous absence, Blake appears unique among the slaves by not being contained by the plantation. Beginning the novel with his hero’s initial absence, the result of Blake’s having been sent on a mission by his owner, allows Delany to characterize Blake immediately as mobile, and a man who is practiced in negotiating territory beyond the carefully circumscribed environs of his owner’s proprietary space. Indeed, we soon learn that Blake’s travels from the plantation to the nearest town, where Franks owns another home, involve at least some passage upon the steamboat *Sultana*, which means that Blake has practice negotiating river transport (14-15). Further, he does so with the full knowledge of Franks, who finds Blake’s performance on such trips to be satisfactory. What is more, very soon after returning to the plantation, Blake once again receives

orders to go to town from Franks, who has just separated Blake from Maggie, his wife: “Early on Tuesday morning, in obedience to his master’s orders, Henry was on his way to the city to get the house in readiness for the reception of his mistress, Mrs. Franks having improved in three or four days” (17). While these opportunities to move about not only on land but also on the river suggest that Blake has earned the trust of Franks, they also imply that he is potentially a threat to a system of white supremacy that assumes he is incapable of theorizing, organizing, and leading a far-ranging collective action involving slaves across the United States and into international spaces like Cuba.

When Blake finally arrives, six chapters into the novel, Delany shows him to be an extraordinary man, truly the epitome of the “intelligent slave”:

Henry was a black—a pure Negro—handsome, manly and intelligent, in size comparing well with his master, but neither so fleshy nor heavy built in person. A man of good literary attainments—unknown to Colonel Franks, though he was aware he could read and write—having been educated in the West Indies, and decoyed away when young. His affection for wife and child was not excelled by Colonel Franks’s for his. He was bold, determined and courageous, but always mild, gentle and courteous, though impulsive when an occasion demanded his opposition. (16-17)

This description makes clear, Blake is an imposing man. He is, as Bob Batchelor and Josef Benson have argued, every bit the ideal hero for a narrative of radical ideas about slave revolt, and every bit the physical, intellectual, and emotional equal—if not superior—of the whites for whom he was forced to labor as a slave (105-106). Indeed, this brief portrait of the main character reveals the underlying rationale, motivation, and logic for the plan Blake devises and works to realize throughout the rest of the novel. His

West Indian heritage and literary accomplishments point toward the Cuban setting and cultural context that have inspired his plans and to which they will ultimately lead him, and his desire to reassert his humanity against the system of slavery that denies him of it emerges most directly in his quest to reunite with his wife and child under conditions where enslaved people have effected their own liberty.

Not surprisingly, given this characterization of personal exceptionalism, Blake maintains a stoic resolve in the face of great personal loss, as when he goes straight to work despite being told that his wife, Maggie, has been sold and sent away to Cuba. What is more, he does not inquire about Maggie, but carefully bides his time for a better opportunity to challenge his master: “Much conversation ensued concerning business which had been entrusted to his charge, all of which was satisfactorily transacted, and full explanations concerning the horses, but not a word was uttered concerning the fate of Maggie, the Colonel barely remarking ‘your mistress is unwell’” (17). The characteristic patience Blake demonstrates here is central to his overall plan for revolution: it may take him up to two years, he predicts, to make a tour of the slave-holding states and to create the network of associates his plot requires (42). Throughout the novel as well this patience is essential to his success in negotiating a number of challenges that disrupt and threaten to undermine his expedition.

More than fostering and demonstrating his own personal patience, however, Blake makes the act of being patient central to the teachings he shares with the network of black male friends that he creates on his travels. Their ability to remain patient, he argues, their waiting until the time is right for rebellion, will make this network of black male friends



an increasing threat as his plan to undermine the stability of whiteness further unfolds. As the whites, in particular the white male slave owners, become ever more suspicious not only of the actions of their slaves, but also of the behaviors and motives of other whites, Blake intuitively, whiteness as a system will be increasingly easy to undermine.

For Blake, this assault on whiteness as a system requires acting upon a new concept of the potential uses for friendship among black men. As Sergio Lussana has argued, “Friendship offered enslaved men a vital emotional landscape through which to frame, shape, and give meaning to their homosocial relationships” (“‘No Band’ 874). As Lussana goes on to note, these relationships were often founded on the worlds of work and the worlds of leisure (although, for enslaved people, these two spheres of activity often coincident) (“‘No Band’ 874-879). Often, too, the favored leisure activities that organized gatherings of enslaved men were those of wrestling, gambling, and drinking, activities that facilitated additional white control over these men.<sup>8</sup> Aspects of the friendships developed through these leisure pursuits, Lussana observes, did however foster a spirit of fugitivity (“‘No Band’ 882-887).

It is by tapping into that potential radicalism in black male friendships, along with his particular understanding of the role played by religion in the lives of these men, that Blake hopes to effect his revolutionary scheme. Building upon both existing friendships and upon his sophisticated understanding of religion to confirm the allegiance of other men to his plan, Blake recruits his first lieutenants from members of his local community in the neighborhood of the Franks plantation. As he tells Andy and Charles, a pair of trusted fellow slaves, the black men who will become his first followers and the first with

whom he will share his revolutionary plan, “I now impart to you the secret, it is this: I have laid a scheme, and matured a plan for a general insurrection of the slaves in every state, and the successful overthrow of slavery!” (39). Henry makes absolutely clear that manly friendship and the virtuous trust borne of it are essential to the functioning of this plan: “I am now about to approach an important subject and as I have always found you true to me—and you can only be true to me by being true to yourselves—I shall not hesitate to impart it!” (38). Andy and Charles confirm their trustworthiness by swearing oaths of allegiance and declaring their willingness to “die by our principles” rather than betray Blake and his plan, most of the details of which they have not yet been told (38). Andy further gives voice to the strength of the trio’s commitment as friends and as fellow travelers in Blake’s far-ranging mission by singing a short “anthem”:

About our future destiny,  
There need be none debate—  
Whilst we ride on the tide,  
With our Captain and his mate. (39)

Casting their enterprise in terms of a sea voyage and in terms of idealized homosocial relations, this ditty not only confers a kind of military order and legitimacy to their plan, reminiscent of the identifying titles borne by Lewis and Clark on their expedition, but also foreshadows the later action in the novel when the refit *Merchantman* of the opening chapter’s “project” puts out to sea as the *Vulture* and becomes another element in Blake’s transnational revolutionary agenda.

As Blake elaborates on the specifics of his plan in this initial meeting with Andy and Charles, the danger to whiteness and the slave economy of his vision of self-sustaining community organizing and collective action becomes evident. He does not mince words in spelling out what his friends are to do in his absence:

All you have to do, is to find one good man or woman—I don't care which, so that they prove to be the right person—on a single plantation, and hold a seclusion and impart the secret to them, and make them the organizers for their own plantation, and they in like manner impart it to some other next to them, and so on. In this way it will spread like smallpox among them. (41)

For the success of this plan of uniting the slaves against the larger system by which whiteness and the slave economy function, Blake thus implies, friendship and trust are essential. Although Blake does not exclude women from participating in the activities necessary to lay the foundation for the revolt he envisions and, in spelling out the theoretical logic of his plan, encourages their involvement, his general practice throughout the novel is to develop friendships with other males and to groom them as co-conspirators. The key is discretion based on astute knowledge of the members of the community and faith in the system of communication between friendly co-conspirators among the other slaves. That Blake has chosen Andy and Charles to be his first co-conspirators implies the degree to which he trusts these men and how close they now are to him as friends on whose loyalty the success of his plan and, indeed, the continuation of his life very much depend.

While patience and “standing still” play a key role in the mission he has prescribed for these first lieutenants, wide-ranging national and international mobility

will define Blake's own performance as leader in the scheme he has devised. Thus, having established practical guidelines, confirmed his friendship with Andy and Charles, and set up the extension of that network of trusted co-conspirators throughout the local community, Blake takes the next step in his plan: he becomes a fugitive, leaving the plantation to deliver his message throughout the slave states and new territories and, eventually, to move beyond the boundaries of the United States in pursuit of his political goals (the slave revolt) and personal agenda (rescuing Maggie):

From plantation to plantation did he go, sowing the seeds of future devastation and ruin to the master and redemption to the slave, an antecedent more terrible in its anticipation than the warning voice of the destroying Angel in commanding the slaughter of the firstborn of Egypt. Himself careworn, distressed and hungry, who just being supplied with nourishment for the system, Henry went forth a welcome messenger, casting his bread upon the turbid waters of oppression, in hopes of finding it after many days. (83)

Invoking Biblical tropes related to the story of Moses, Delany implies that Blake, and through him, the network of black male friendships he will create, represents for whiteness in the United States, especially regarding its system of slavery, a divine retribution not unlike that visited upon the Egyptians who refused to release their Hebrew slaves. Of particular significance here is the emphasis on the power embodied by the "anticipation" of the rebellion. Delany suggests that the fear of mobilized black homosociality and the threat of organized revolt that it presented is a vital part of Blake's plan to undermine whiteness itself as "the turbid waters of oppression" on which he would be "casting his bread." In following this plan and—like a good prophet—disseminating his message, Blake establishes an extensive network of friendships,

particularly with other black men, that allows Delany to set before the sympathetic readers of the *Anglo-African Magazine* and *Weekly Anglo-African* the vision of the potential of such a network for fomenting rebellion among those enslaved in the United States and Cuba. In doing so, Delany suggests that black male homosociality, especially in conjunction with fugitive mobility within and without national space, could function as a significant challenge to the coherence of whiteness as a systemic construct.

Through the range of friendships made possible by Blake's expedition from Mississippi and throughout the slave-holding states and on into Canada, Delany suggests the potential resources of such a network within the space of the North American continent. In Texas, for example, Blake meets Sampson, the body servant to Richardson, the owner of cotton plantations. Because Richardson takes Sampson with him when he travels across the country to pursue his interest in sport hunting, the friendship Blake strikes up with this slave means that word of the plan will spread even more widely and quickly. In Arkansas, Blake confers with the Chief of the United Nation of Chickasaws and Choctaws, Native Americans who, he discovers, hold black slaves. The two men discuss the differences between the way whites treat their slaves and the way the Native Americans treat their slaves, and they enter into an alliance of sorts united by their peoples' common mistreatment in the face of white imperialist aggression (85-87).<sup>9</sup> In South Carolina, Blake befriends slaves who find themselves contending with a system that not only privileges whites but also elevates the inter-racial offspring of the slave owners over them (110-111). In North Carolina, he meets a group of conjurers in the Dismal Swamp and allows himself to be initiated into their homosocial society (112-

115). With this last group of converts to Blake's plan, Delany further suggests the potency of his fictional hero's goals by interpellating into the scenes in the Dismal Swamp references to Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey, individuals associated with actual slave uprisings (112-113).<sup>10</sup> Thus, as Blake's sojourn unfolds, Delany imagines how effective such a network of mobile black men, working in concert, could be in communicating and carrying out the components of his plan. What is more, he suggests that, in the process, such a "secret organization" or "secretion" (to use the phrases Blake prefers for the community of friends he creates) could challenge the fundamental ideology on which the institution of slavery and the system of white privilege were based.

Indeed, Delany's novel makes explicitly clear that one of the primary threats posed by the network of black male friends is that the formation of such a community made possible their recognition of a personal identity developed from a chosen and not an imposed affiliation. As Blake tells Mammy Judy when he first decides to revolt against Franks and the system that white man represents,

Even was I to take the advice of the old people here, and become reconciled to drag out a miserable life of degradation and bondage under them, I would not be permitted to do so by this man, who seeks every opportunity to crush out my lingering manhood, and reduce my free spirit to the submission of a slave. He cannot do it, I will not submit to it, and I defy his power to make me submit. (29)

What is particularly important to note here is Blake's equation of his "lingering manhood" with his "free spirit." In contrast to the will of the system which seeks to "crush out" the former and "reduce" the latter, Blake asserts a defiance grounded in a "manhood" that ultimately takes the form of an embodied mobility and the fostering of

friendships with other black men whom he likewise inspires to mobility. And later, after a meeting with slaves in New Orleans goes badly, Delany's narration reminds us of this attempt by white society to erase the manhood of the black male slave: "Taking fresh alarm at this incident, the municipal regulations have been most rigid in a system of restriction and espionage toward Negroes and mulattoes, almost destroying their self-respect and manhood, and certainly impairing their usefulness" (108).

In its depiction of Blake's successful efforts to develop a network of black male friendships, all working in concert across the United States and, in some cases, beyond its borders, Delany's novel thus imagines a method by which black men could, through mobility and homosocial friendships, restore their sense of themselves as men instead of as someone else's property and by which they could, as Biggio asserts, exploit white fears of their "black unity" (440). For the black men in the novel, moreover, both mobility and homosocial friendships function as vital components in motivating viable resistance to the overall institution of slavery and the system of white supremacy that thrives upon and defines itself in relation to that "peculiar institution" and the notions of racialized human capital that developed from it.<sup>11</sup>

### **Exploiting the "Gaps": Whiteness in the "Newnited States uv the South"**

Despite the novel's missing ending, and thus any overt depiction of the final rebellion itself, by its conclusion *Blake* does in fact present whiteness—as a social, political, and economic identity—as incoherent and powerless within the space of Cuba.

Equating “the life of the white inhabitants of Cuba” to “those of the South now comprising the ‘Southern Confederacy of America,’” Delany notes that whiteness in both political realms comprises

a dreamy existence of the most fearful apprehensions, of dread, horror and dismay; suspicion and distrust, jealousy and envy continually pervade the community; and Havana, New Orleans, Charleston or Richmond may be thrown into consternation by an idle expression of the most trifling or ordinary ignorant black. A sleeping wake or waking sleep, a living death or tormented life is that of the Cuban and American slaveholder. For them there is no safety. (305)

Delany thus seems to suggest, as the novel draws to a close, that both national spaces operate under similar assumptions of white supremacy that have been exposed as vulnerable in light of fears of slave revolt.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lewis and Clark traversed neo-national space with government funding and government blessings, whereas Blake embarks on his fictional expedition across the slave states and territories carved out by the Compromise of 1850 as a fugitive from the United States, a nation on the verge of Civil War. As Blake is in the process of mobilizing other slaves, the narrative suggests, the stability of the system of whiteness and the security of its various representatives reveal themselves as increasingly exposed to challenge within the slave economy on which much of United States and global commerce depends. Thus, I argue, in the face of Blake’s challenge to a global system of white racism, including the legal fictions related to property, personhood, and place that arise from that system, Delany suggests that whiteness can be shown as a fragile system that has “everything to fear and nothing to



hope for” (305) and that, despite its accumulated power, can be rendered fundamentally vulnerable in the slave-trading world of which it considers itself master.

While *Blake* locates in its interrogation of whiteness as a systemic construct some motivation for the radical, revolutionary action its hero is proposing that slaves take, the novel does not always find in white behavior such a model. As Delany notes, in describing white responses to increasing unrest among the slaves in Cuba: “To accomplish their designs, no act however derogatory to manhood and justice, equity and honor, was too atrocious for them to perpetuate” (302). Here, as throughout the novel, Delany reveals through the behavior of his white characters the essential ways in which whiteness depends on the transformation of the racial state into the racist state. As Goldberg observes:

[States] are racial, in short, in virtue of their modes of population definition, determination, and structuration. And they are racist to the extent such definition, determination, and structuration operate to exclude or privilege in or on racial terms, and in so far as they circulate in and reproduce a world whose meanings and effects are racist. (104)

The nuances of this racial versus racist logic Delany explores in another scene set in Cuba, where Placido explains to Madame Cordora that his privileging of pure African blood is not ultimately a declaration that mixed-race individuals are inferior: “The instant that an equality of the blacks with the whites is admitted, we being the descendants of the two, must be acknowledged the equals of both” (261). In this formulation, clearly, whiteness holds no purchase on superiority.

The vulnerability of whiteness originates partly from this dynamic, as Blake's grand scheme ultimately interrogates, challenges, and endeavors to recast the racial state. As Goldberg argues,

. . . the racial state is racial not merely or reductively because of the racial composition of its personnel or the racial implications of its policies—though clearly both play a part. States are racial more deeply because the structural position they occupy in producing and reproducing, constituting and effecting racially shaped spaces and places, groups and events, life worlds and possibilities, accesses and restrictions, inclusions and exclusions, conceptions and modes of representation. (104)

In *Blake*, an expedition across the United States, especially in its slave-holding territories, is not—as it was for Lewis, Clark, and the other members of the Corps of Discovery—an experience of unfettered exploration, although in many ways it is for Henry Blake an expression of a manifest destiny: toward liberty and freedom. Blake thus conceives of himself as mobile, unbounded by plantation or national borders, and thus free, in Hesse's phrasing, to “escape to critique” the existing legal, economic, political, and social policies and practices whereby whiteness simultaneously both privileged and undermined itself in relation to concepts of the individual and the nation as racialized properties.

Indeed, as readers, we hear about Blake from other characters well before he comes on the scene, and their observations make clear that Blake commands a degree of respect from other slaves *and* from the whites who number him among their possessions. This respect for the man well known in the local black and white communities as an “intelligent slave”—be it genuine, begrudging, or otherwise—at once marks Blake as a figure who challenges in his very being the coherence of white supremacy and, thus, of

the system of slavery predicated upon that racialized and racist conception of human personhood. When Colonel Franks insists that Mrs. Franks sell Maggie, Blake's wife, to Mrs. Ballard, a relative going to Cuba, Mrs. Franks objects that she has made a promise to Blake that she is reluctant to break: "You know, Colonel, that I gave my word to Henry, her husband, your most worthy servant, that his wife should be here on his return. . . . How can I bear to meet this poor creature, who places every confidence in what we tell him? He'll surely be frantic" (8). Colonel Franks's reply—"I'll soon settle the matter with him, should he dare show any feelings about it!" (9)—is uttered as a response to Mrs. Ballard's sneering implication that his wife "speak[s] of your Negro slaves as if speaking of equals" (8), suggesting something of his own anxiety about his tenuous control over the slaves he owns. He is eager to sell Maggie, for example, because she has told his wife about his sexual improprieties. In this exchange, even before Blake appears on the scene, Delany demonstrates, through the Frankses' disparate concerns about their slave's potential reaction to the sale of Maggie—Mrs. Franks wishing to honor a commitment to a man her husband perceives as merely a valuable commodity—Blake's disruptive influence on the stability of the white power structure. The disruption Blake poses is especially acute in terms of its locus in the male master of the plantation who, in this case, exhibits great anxiety in the face of actual and imagined challenges to his authority—both from white women and from his slaves—and responds cruelly to reassert his power over what he considers to be his property.

Delany constantly presents scenes in which such fundamental assumptions about the coherence of whiteness play out so that Blake and the narrative of his travels can

demonstrate the tenuous claims whiteness has to priority in and identity with the space of the United States. In Part I of Delany's novel, for instance, the United States appears as a space to be experienced largely by starlight (especially "the North Star, the slave's great Guide to Freedom!" [132]), a space to be traversed with careful attention to the surveillance of community patrols, a space governed by legislation—such as the Fugitive Slave Act—designed to limit instead of expanding one's rights. Despite these legal and logistical constraints on his travel, Blake, like Lewis and Clark, makes scientific observations of both the landscape and the sky. In having Blake demonstrate his own empirical methodology and his own interpretations of his findings related to "astronomy, natural history, and the speculative practices of New World conjuring," as Britt Rusert has argued, Delany posits a "fugitive science" that calls into question the assumptions on which standard (that is, white) nineteenth-century science founded its understanding not only of the workings of the physical world, but also of membership in the human race (815). In passing along these scientific insights to his ever-increasing network of friends, Blake is thus exposing whiteness as a system founded on delusions of self-importance designed to obscure the immobilizing impact of the institution of slavery and the efforts to maintain and extend its presence in existing and newly acquired U. S. territories.

Just as *Blake* renders the science of the white world subject to interrogation and re-interpretation by its hero and his protégés, so too does the novel recast the United States's national monuments and symbols as suspect in the eyes of the fugitive slave (and, by extension, the novel's readers). Instead of displaying monuments representing the ideals of democracy, freedom, and equality in America, Washington, DC, the nation's

capital, is in *Blake* a city defined by a “slave prison” that “conspicuously stood among the edifices” and from which “floated defiantly the National Colors, stars as the pride of the white man, and stripes as the emblem of power over the blacks” (117). In this novel, too, the eagle, grand symbol of the nation’s sense of its democratic principles and virtues, equates patriotism with mercenary capitalism, as when, en route to Canada, Blake and other fugitive slaves secure passage across the Wabash River by exploiting the white world’s obsession with ready money:

Still doubting their right to pass he asked for their papers, but having by this time become so conversant with the patriotism and fidelity of these men to their country, Charles handing the Indianan a five dollar piece, who on seeing the outstretched wings of the eagle, desired no further evidence of their right to pass, conveying them into the state, contrary to the statutes of the Commonwealth. (142)

Thus, when presented in the context of a narrative that focuses not on a presumption of white superiority, but on the perspective of the slave, the space of the nation, as well as its iconography and its currency, come to signify not the expansive political and economic power, democratic ideals, and manifest destiny of whiteness, but the “gaps” in that sociopolitical construct that must be filled by the enslavement of African Americans.

*Blake* imagines how legal mandates intended to consolidate whiteness across class divides, especially those specifying citizens’ obligations with respect to the capture and return of fugitive slaves, can undermine, rather than bolster, the authority of white property claims on those they have enslaved. To demonstrate this important insight, Delany places his fugitive slave characters into contact with a number of working-class

whites, such as the boatman in Indiana whom the group bribed to overlook his legal obligations to the nation; other white laborers likewise ignore their legal obligations to detain and report the fugitive slaves in exchange for cold hard cash. In conversation with one of these working-class whites, Blake directly explains the social dynamic operating to oppress both enslaved black men and poor white men:

“My friend,” said Henry, “are you willing to make yourself a watch dog for slaveholders, and do for them that which they would not do for themselves, catch runaway slaves? Don’t you know that this is the work which they boast on having the poor white men at the North do for them?” (140)

In scenes such as these, working-class whites find themselves obligated to police and to protect the property of wealthy slaveholders who live in another part of the United States and who are complete strangers to them. These interactions between the fugitive slaves and working-class whites thus allow Delany to dramatize his analysis of yet another “gap” that could potentially undermine the entire system of classed whiteness and be exploited as part of the rebellion he is attempting to organize across the geographic and social space of the United States and beyond its borders.

In addition to these meetings with working-class whites, Delany crafts scenes in which the slaves encounter European immigrants and, again, the outcomes illustrate the inconsistency with which whiteness maintains its own system of control. During his solo circuit of the national space, for example, Blake comes upon a Dutchman working in a field; the Dutchman immediately accosts Blake, speaking in heavily accented English, demanding to know the black man’s destination. When Blake offers the vague reply that

he is “on business” (118), the Dutchman concludes that Blake is “von zaucy nagher, andt . . . one runaway!” and declares that he “vill take [him] pack!” (119). Blake easily evades this threat by brandishing a gun and frightening the Dutchman so much that he falls to the ground without following through on his attempt to apprehend the fugitive slave.

A later encounter, this time when Blake and a group of fugitives are on their way to Canada, depicts both the group of slaves and a white immigrant from Germany, Slusher, being mistreated by patrolling whites: the captured slaves are temporarily detained in the stable connected to Slusher’s tavern, while their captors take advantage of Slusher’s hospitality. Despite his initial plan of putting the slaves up for the night in the inn, Slusher goes along with the white men’s insistence that the black men not be allowed shelter in the same accommodations as themselves. Although he, too, is being disrespected by the patrollers, Slusher nevertheless sees himself as due more courtesy: “‘Tare ish mine staple—you may pud tem vare you blease,’ replied the old man, ‘budt you shandt puse me!’” (149). In both of these encounters, as in the meeting between Blake and the Choctaw and the interactions between the fugitive slaves and the working-class whites they so easily bribe to break the law, Delany demonstrates that whiteness in the United States contains within itself the basis for its own disruption as a system of control across the expanse of the national space and over the diverse peoples who populate it.

Although this system of drawing multiple levels of the national community into conformity with the aims of whiteness operates throughout the novel, one sign in particular of the vulnerability of the slaveholding white community emerges directly

from Blake's plan and the astute way in which it turns whiteness in on itself. Before he leaves the Franks plantation, Blake asks Andy and Charles to create the illusion that he is still "lurking about in the thickets, swamps and caves" to disguise the fact that his mission will take him farther afield than a typical runaway might have attempted: they are to steal foodstuff from their owners' stores and to dispose of it, but in the process to make the theft look like his handiwork (41). Such subterfuge, designed to misdirect the search for Blake, would stymie the whites' ability to discover and undermine his true aims and keep them focused on finding him within the local area. In tricking the whites into thinking Blake has remained local, the slaves disguise the wide-ranging mobility that is vital to his goal of spreading his plan for rebellion throughout the slave-holding states and beyond the borders of the nation. This action, which shows the slaves exploiting the whites' system of control against their owners, thus allows Delany to satirize assumptions of white superiority and further reveals how whiteness itself can be destabilized and its assumptions of inter-class racial solidarity rendered suspect, if not entirely incoherent.

The slaves' misdirection of the "purse-proud" (55) members of the white community emerges particularly well in their dissemination of gossip. Through a carefully crafted series of half-truths and outright lies, several slaves cover for the escape of other slaves by providing information that turns the whites against each other. In one case, for example, the slaves play on their owners' assumptions about their inability or unwillingness to lie to them and concoct a narrative that implies that Mrs. Van Winter, the local abolitionist sympathizer, might be responsible for the disappearance of Little Joe, Blake's son. In a later case involving the disappearance of four adult slaves, the



remaining slaves offer such misleading answers to their masters' inquisition that the slaveholders decide that other whites must be perpetrating the theft of their human capital. "Well, 'squire," Colonel Franks concludes, at his wits' end after questioning the slaves, "hanged if this thing mus'nt be stopped! Four slaves in less than that many days gone from under our very eyes, and we unable to detect them! It's insufferable, and I believe whites to be at the head of it! I have my suspicions on a party who stands high in the community, and—" (54).

Even when confronted with clear evidence not only that slaves are capable of organizing against their owners, but also that they are in the process of doing so, whites in Delany's novel refuse to comprehend the situation in terms other than those which reinforce their own sense of racial superiority. During his time in New Orleans, for example, Blake's meeting with local slaves falls apart, as Tib, an over-eager would-be revolutionary, confronts the authorities prematurely—but even with Tib captured, the whites undermine their own security:

The inquisition held in the case of the betrayer Tib developed fearful antecedents of extensive arrangements for the destruction of the city by fire and water, thereby compelling the white inhabitants to take refuge in the swamps, whilst the blacks marched up the coast, sweeping the plantations as they went. (108)

What is more, the whites once again try to find a white person on whom to blame the unrest, preferring, it seems, to believe that the motivation for slave insurrection could not originate from within the slave community itself:

Suspicious were fixed upon many, among whom was an unfortunate English schoolteacher, who was arrested and imprisoned, when he died, to the last protesting his innocence. Mr. Farland was a good and bravehearted man, disdaining to appeal for redress to his country, lest it might be regarded as the result of cowardice. (108)

These local efforts by the slaves thus manage to stymie the whites, creating paranoia and suspicion within the white community. Instead of looking to the slaves as the source of this disruption to the system, the whites assume the threat must be coming from other whites, especially those whose politics lead them to favor the abolition of slavery.

As Delany will note toward the end of the novel, in a comparison of the relations between whites and blacks in Cuba and those in the Southern United States, there is indeed much for the whites to fear:

Of the two classes of these communities, the master and the slave, the blacks have everything to hope for and nothing to fear, since let what may take place their redemption from bondage is inevitable. They must and will be free; whilst the whites have everything to fear and nothing to hope for. . . .(305)

Of particular note here is the increasing lack of unity within the white community. As Delany's novel so vividly dramatizes, a significant part of the motivation for what the whites have to fear is the threat of a slave revolt, and as we have seen, Delany's novel places, at the heart of such a rebellion, mobilized black male friends.

In the scene in which Blake enters the sovereign space of the "United Nation of Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians" (88), Delany illustrates the degree to which the United States—as a fundamental consequence of its presumptive privileging of whiteness—demands complicity in the oppression of the black slave even from those who might not

be fully welcomed into a local community themselves. As we have seen, in “the only instance in which his seclusions were held with the master instead of the slave,” Blake meets with Mr. Culver, the Choctaw chief who unapologetically acknowledges that he and his people own black slaves (87). Mr. Culver, however, insists that the relationship between slaveholder and slave in his nation differs fundamentally from its parallel in the United States: “Indian work side by side with black man, eat with him, drink with him, rest with him and both lay down in shade together; white man even won’t let you talk!” (86). In this exchange, then, Delany depicts a scene between the Choctaw and the fugitive slave that demonstrates, as Jesse Turner Schreier observes in her study of slavery among the Choctaws, how “American encroachment and then incorporation brought a new set of choices for Indians about slavery, freedom, and race” (9).

As the scene continues, Blake asks directly where Mr. Culver and his people would stand were there to be a slave revolt: ““What I now most wish to learn is, whether in case that the blacks should rise, they may have hope or fear from the Indian?”” (87). He receives from Mr. Culver a welcome reply, an extended speech indicating the chief’s recognition of a history of cooperation between Native Americans and enslaved African Americans and the shared threat whiteness posed to both:

I’m an old mouthpiece, been puffing out smoke and talk many seasons for the entertainment of the young and benefit of all who come among us. The squaws of the great men among the Indians in Florida were black women, and the squaws of the black men were Indian women. You see the vine that winds around and holds us together. Don’t cut it, but let it grow till bimeby, it git so stout and strong, with many, very many little branches attached, that you can’t separate them. I now reach to you the pipe of peace and hold out the olive-branch of hope! Go on young man, go on. If you want white man to love you, you must fight im! (87)

In developing the scene so that it concludes with Blake and Mr. Culver establishing a common ground on which to unite in pursuit of Blake's long-term plan for revolt against the whites, Delany suggests that whiteness can be and in many ways already is being subverted in its efforts to export wholesale its particular slaveholding values to Native American nations such as the Choctaws.

At the same time, however, the allegiance Blake forms with the Choctaws is a carefully qualified one. Given Blake's long-term goals for the slave rebellion he is fomenting, Native American slaveholders will eventually be treated by the revolutionaries as any other slaveholders would; consequently, they will be subject to the same reprisals visited upon the whites. Perhaps even more important, though, is that Blake's vision for inter- and transnational slave revolt implies a kind of slave manifest destiny, whereby the newly liberated slaves will claim and occupy territory in which they were formerly denied the rights of personhood, property, and place. Although Delany does not address the issue, such an agenda contains within it the potential for further seizure of Native American lands, but this time by African Americans and not by whites. In conceptualizing a large-scale slave revolt, Delany, it seems, implicitly appropriates for blackness—but with a definite redirection—some of the same self-interested principles related to personhood, property, and place that he otherwise resists as troubling in whiteness.

This sort of resistance to and potential redirection of the values of whiteness within the space of the United States pervades Delany's depiction of the longstanding maroon culture in the Great Dismal Swamp and motivates Blake's integration of himself

into a complex society where, as Ted Maris-Wolf's historical inquiries have revealed, the members lived variously in exile and in relation to the surrounding settlements.<sup>12</sup> As Delany describes the community Blake encounters in the Great Dismal Swamp, he makes clear that this society is a complex congregation of still-serving slaves and fugitive, rebellious slaves alike:

Many of these are still long-suffering, hard-laboring slaves on the plantations; and some bold, courageous, and fearless adventurers, denizens of the mystical, antiquated, and almost fabulous Dismal Swamp, where for many years they have defied the approach of their pursuers. (112)

In this fugitive community, with its history of harboring leaders of slave revolts, Delany tells us, Blake “found himself surrounded by a different atmosphere, an entirely new element”—one, to borrow from the agricultural metaphors Blake uses in conceiving of his relationship particularly to the “denizens” of the Dismal Swamp, in which he could “[sow] the seeds of a future crop” that would one day “be grown in devastation and reaped in a whirlwind of ruin” (112). Indeed, Blake finds here a highly structured, clearly hierarchized community of slaves and fugitive slaves, a community founded on and funded by the creation and maintenance of High and Low Conjurors. The “organized existence in this much-dreaded morass” (114) of such a self-sustaining, autonomous diasporic community of African Americans thus inspires Blake's hopes for the continued spread of his great plan and demonstrates, in the context of Delany's counter-narrative to white manifest destiny, that whiteness has failed to penetrate fully even into the space purportedly already claimed and controlled by the United States and, further, that the

coherence of whiteness itself remains very much in question at this crucial juncture in the continuing formation of the nation.

What emerges from the efforts of Blake and his network of black male friends throughout the slave-holding states and beyond the borders of the United States is a vivid portrait of the slaves, not the whites, as the enlightened arbiters of civilization, reason, and justice. In his expedition through the slave-holding states, for example, Blake kills another human being only once, and that is in self-defense. When he shoots horses to prevent their use in transporting the pursuing patrollers across a river, he first pays their owner more than they are worth so as not to render that working-class man without the ability to replace them. As Blake observes, regarding his philosophy of action:

A slave has no just conception of his own wrongs. Had I dealt with Franks [Blake's former master] as he deserved, for doing that for which he would have taken the life of any man had it been his case—tearing my wife from my bosom!—the most I could take courage directly to do was to leave him, and take as many from him as I could induce to go. But maturer reflection drove me to the expedient of avenging the general wrongs of our people, by inducing the slave, in his might, to scatter red ruin throughout the region of the South. But still, I cannot find it in my heart to injure an individual, except in personal conflict. (128)

What is more, Blake's plan for "a general insurrection of the slaves in every state, and the successful overthrow of slavery" is "so simple" that it is visible in the basic workings of nature itself (39). Indeed, he explains, "such is the character of this organization, that punishment and misery are made the instruments for its propagation" (40). In other words, the moral impetus driving his communal plan derives its strength from its perfectly attuned, natural, and justified response to the system of oppression that

necessitates it: Blake predicates his plan not on a desire to exact revenge, but on a quest to liberate his fellow slaves. Although Blake's grand plan is to foment national and international rebellion that will require violence, bloodshed, and property destruction, he nevertheless observes a personal moral code far more "Christian" and humane than any of the principles and practices subscribed to by the whites portrayed in the novel, and he passes along this philosophy to the network of black male friends he establishes during his national and international travels.

### **Re-imagining and Re-directing Manifest Destiny**

According to Blake, as he describes his revolutionary plan to Placido, the celebrated poet and friend whose aid he enlists in Cuba,

we know enough now, and all that remains to be done, is to make ourselves free, and then put what we know into practice. We know much more than we dare attempt to do. We want space for action—elbow room; and in order to obtain it, we must shove our oppressors out of the way. (197)

Blake here presents the revolution in terms that echo the language of manifest destiny but also reimagine the mission not as the endeavor of greedy white imperialists to claim and exploit property, but as a quest of enslaved people to achieve the kind of mobility that, combined with a network of homosocial friendships (the knowing, wanting, shoving, empowered "we" of the quoted passage), would allow them to fight for their liberty and for justice. Indeed, four key spaces in *Blake* allow Delany to conceptualize and

dramatize just such a re-vision of what Katy Chiles calls the “racialized nationstate” (347) as a function of a network of mobile black male friends: the Choctaw village, the maroon community in the Dismal Swamp, the *Vulture*, and the marital relationship/domestic sphere. Building upon a diffusion between “the U. S. nation-state and . . . black transnationalism” (347) that Chiles has noted in *Blake*, I would like to argue that the novel’s treatment of these spaces reveals how great the potential of the network of mobile black male friends is for radically rethinking the trajectory—and potential of exploitation—of U. S. expansionism as a means of (re)imagining the plight of the enslaved and, at the same time, the place of whiteness within that process.

That *Blake* will engage with, raise questions about, and potentially redirect agendas of national and international expansionism is evident from the first page of the novel. The narrative opens with a short chapter entitled “The Project” that details an international plan between entrepreneurs from America and Cuba to refit an “old ship,” a slave-trading vessel, named the *Merchantman* that the “company” hopes to put into service as part of an eventual trading scheme between the two nations (3). The great irony of the novel, however, is that this conspiracy of moneyed free white Americans and their Cuban counterparts will ultimately lay the foundation for the narrative’s critique of such endeavors and its interrogation of the slave economy operating in both nations. For, indeed, the slave ship with which the novel opens and in which much of the narrative’s second part takes place offers Delany a complex space in which to depict black homosociality becoming powerfully mobilized. What makes this ship particularly important as a space is that it functions as a surrogate for the various nations with a stake



in its operations. Indeed, with a change of the flag flying from its mast, this ship legally (or, illegally, as the case may be) can change its national affiliation. Similarly, the slaver's original designation—*Merchantman*, with its relatively value-neutral representation of consumer capitalism—evolves during the ship's refit into the *Vulture*, with its negative, death-laden connotations for the same endeavor. In essence, given the dynamic of the relations between the white and black members of the crew, this ship illustrates the novel's configuration of mobile black male friendships as a threat to the whitening of neo-national space and thus as a critique of United States expansionism.

The increasingly coherent system of black male friends that Blake mobilizes on his travels contrasts with Delany's depiction of the interactions between white male friends on board the *Vulture*. This treatment of white male friends thus serves as a key element in the novel's overall critique of United States policies and practices related to expansionism, especially involving the continuance of the slave economy by means of the potential annexation of Cuba as another slaveholding state. In stark contrast to Blake and his band of fugitive slaves, who embark upon the criminal action of running away as a form of self-defense and in the service of the noble cause of liberating themselves and others from legally sanctioned bondage in the United States, the whites who have refitted the *Merchantman* as the *Vulture* break their own laws in order to profit from an illegal extension of slave trading. Indeed, Delany makes clear that the United States remains the most profitable place for the trade in African slaves, despite existing restrictions:<sup>13</sup>

The United States is now decidedly the best market, because the supply is inadequate to the demand of the new territory continually opening up, without a

heavy loss to the old states. Indeed the disciplined slave is preferred for the new states from their experience in labor, while the native African will do better in the old cultivated grounds. An American agency in Cuba is all you require to make the trade a most lucrative one. (213-214)

Further evidence of the awareness of the illegality of the ship's business appears early in its voyage, when the *Vulture* evades a pursuing British ship, the *Sea Gull*, and three white friends—Paul, Garcia, and Spencer—revel in their escape. Delany makes clear from their dialogue about this incident that they have avoided punishment for the crime with which the British, who have abolished slavery in their Empire at this time, would have no doubt charged them:

“If she could catch us every man would be hung,” said Spencer with fright.

“All except the Negroes, you mean. These they'd take to the colonies, and put them in office to rule the whites,” sarcastically replied Paul. (205)

Shortly after this incident, and troubled by the reactions of the black sailors on board, both Paul and Spencer declare to one another their plans to withdraw from the slave trading business. Both men attribute the abrupt reduction in their enthusiasm for a formerly profitable endeavor to a desire for either divine forgiveness (Paul) or that of a beloved back home (Spencer). Delany's narrative suggests, however, that their change has more to do with the two men's growing sense of their own precarious position within the mobile (and malleable) national and international space of the slave ship, where Blake clearly has the respect and admiration of the black sailors on the crew. Giving voice to a more overt expression of this anxiety, George Royer, “the American mate” (207), asserts

“that the only place where a white man was safe and a Negro taught to know his place, was the United States. . . . In his own country a white man was all that he desired to be; and out of it, he was no better than a Negro” (210). As Harris argues, “Whiteness—the right to white identity as embraced by the law—is property if by property one means all of a person’s legal rights” (1726). And it is this fundamental assumption that Blake’s planned revolution is designed to disrupt and dismantle.

At its base, the vision for revolution in *Blake* is one of a re-directed manifest destiny, an equation of that agenda not with the expansion of Anglo-American interests beyond their own political jurisdictions, but with the further movement of the peoples of African descent into the global economic and political arena. In a conversation between Placido and Madame Cordora, for example, Delany spells out some of the underlying principles driving the spirit of revolt in Cuba and, by association, the larger-scale, international revolt that Blake has been fomenting during his travels. According to Placido, Africa has every potential to become a colonialist power like Great Britain, but that Africa’s approach to global domination would be different in key essentials from that taken by white colonizers. He argues, “by a comparison of the races, you may find the Africans in all parts of the world, readily and willingly mingling among and adopting all the usages of civilized life, attaining wherever practicable, every position in society, while those of the others, except the Caucasians, seldom acquire any but their own usages” (262). Blake further expresses the logic of the fundamental differences between whites and blacks in terms of their movement into the regions of North and South America and the Caribbean: “The whites in these regions were there by intrusion, idle

consumers subsisting by imposition; whilst the blacks, the legitimate inhabitants, were the industrious laborers and producers of the staple commodities and real wealth of these places” (287). For Blake, then, a revolution of the enslaved with an aim of redirecting manifest destiny into a process of global redistribution of political power and economic resources is a moral imperative; as he states outright, “whites have no moral right to hold rule over us, whilst we have the moral right and physical power to prevent them. Whatever we determine shall be, will be” (287).

For all of its radical and revolutionary insights into the potential for inter- and transnational slave revolt, however, Delany’s novel in many ways remains extremely conservative. Blake early on opens the door to women as potential leaders in the rebellion he has in mind, declaring, “All you have to do, is to find one good man or woman—I don’t care which, so that they prove to be the right person. . .” (41). But, as I have argued, the real vision for the revolt is a patriarchal one based largely in the forging of black male friendships and inspiring those men, collectively, to risk the dangers of mobility within and without nation spaces that deny them such liberty.

The initial motivation for Blake’s mission emerges within the domestic sphere, and it is within the domestic sphere that the conservative, patriarchal nature of his vision is most apparent. Indeed, what spurs Blake to action and what sustains his travels throughout the United States and beyond, especially as he makes his way to Cuba, is rooted in his role as a husband and a father and the ways in which enslavement renders his performance of those roles suspect: his wife has been sold and transported to Cuba, and Blake intends to rescue her so that they can be reunited as a family with their young

son. Thus, for all of its intrigue and proposed violence, for all of the distance and danger, Blake's travels and the rebellion he foments along the way ultimately grows out of perhaps the most fundamental need reflected in manifest destiny—to secure one's access to personhood, property, and place within the domestic space of home and the family, a space impossible to maintain under the system of slavery.

\* \* \*

In the absence of a finale depicting the actual revolt the main character has plotted and communicated throughout the novel, the story of Henry Blake or, as indicated by the subtitle that makes them somewhat synonymous with the protagonist, "The Huts of America," remains one of national and international spaces wherein slavery still exists. Through its depiction of black male mobility, and the friendships that develop from that mobility, however, this novel envisions a radical response to that injustice. In the process, *Blake* re-imagines the potential (and threat) of black male fugitivity as a means by which enslaved people might be presented as human beings, not property, and thus capable of forming friendships and taking collective action to present whiteness within the space of the United States and beyond its borders as a system whose fundamental assumptions regarding property, personhood, and place can be challenged. At the same time, the mobilized friendships depicted in this narrative of a journey through national and international space also re-imagines manifest destiny from the perspective of a non-white individual and thereby provides both a critique and a redirection of that endeavor.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Examples of such documents include Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) and David Walker's *Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (1829). See also the variety of materials collected by John Blassingame in *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*. For an overview of nineteenth-century "slave conspiracies and revolts," see chapter 11 of Davis.

<sup>2</sup> The text of *Blake* that we have today, derived from the revised run of the novel appearing in the *Weekly Anglo-African*, does not contain concluding chapters thought to have appeared in that serialization of the narrative. For the publication history of *Blake*, see Floyd J. Miller's introduction to his edition of the novel; Block 12; Chiles; Cole 158-163; Rusert 812-813 and 827 n. 44; Zeugner 104-105.

<sup>3</sup> On the history of filibustering as a political and economic phenomenon with close ties to the international slave trade, but also as personal and potentially romanticized "adventuring," see Chaffin, *Fatal Glory* and "'Sons of Washington'"; Gray; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood* 47-53ff. and "Pirates"; May; and Nivison. On the role played by transnational publications in the dissemination of ideals and critiques of filibustering, especially by Cuban exiles, see Lazo.

<sup>4</sup> Many critics do, however, find the novel problematic in terms of its structural and artistic divergences from other slave narratives of the time. Nevertheless, most argue

for Blake's inclusion within the canon of American and African American literature and within the body of that literature focused on slave fugitivity in particular. Roger W. Hite, for example, briefly surveys *Blake*'s "obvious stylistic and structural flaws" before arguing that the novel can be better appreciated for its "rhetorical design" as an argument than for its performance as a work of literary fiction (192-193, quotation from 192); see also Roger Whitlow, who argues that *Blake* "does have literary weaknesses, the chief being the stilted language of the protagonist" (27). Britt Rusert finds in *Blake* a challenge to the standard expectations of the fugitive slave narrative, a genre grounded in the truthfulness of the story being presented; as Rusert argues, *Blake* purports to be simultaneously a work of fiction and a depiction of the truth of the fugitive slave's experience (821).

<sup>5</sup> According to Sundquist, *Blake* is "a most appropriate account of New World slavery—and of the antebellum world of slaves and masters alike—at the moment of its revolutionary cataclysm" (221).

<sup>6</sup> Clymer argues, "*Blake* suggests that it is impossible to make sense of America's political structure and economy without understanding it in relation to the economic decisions and practices of other nations, specifically the mercantile interests of competing countries, conflicts between decaying and rising imperial powers in the Caribbean, and international debates over the traffic in slave bodies and the goods they produced" (710).

<sup>7</sup> For a study of the relevant legislation—such as the Compromise of 1850 and *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857)—and the history of social and political actions arising

from these legislative and judicial decisions, see Campbell; Lubet; Vandervelde; Waugh. See also Crane.

<sup>8</sup> See Lussana, ““No Band”” and “To See.”

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed analysis of the incorporation of African American slaves into the social structure of the Choctaws, see Schreier (especially Chapter 1). Schreier examines, in particular, how United States expansionism created a complex set of international relations through which the Choctaws adopted, but also adapted, white values regarding the enslavement of African Americans.

<sup>10</sup> Recent anthropological and archaeological studies are re-examining the complex culture of the maroons who lived as exiles in the Great Dismal Swamp, as well as of those who negotiated an exile that did not fully separate them from the surrounding communities. See Sayers, “Diasporan Exiles” and “Landscapes of Alienation”; Sayers, Burke, and Henry; and Thompson; for more historical and sociological studies, see also Lubet; and Maris-Wolf.

<sup>11</sup> In addition, Delany’s depiction of Blake’s exploitation of visual as well as verbal means of establishing his own selfhood and passing along that insight to those he recruits to his cause seems in keeping with the strategies of self-identity formation among slaves that Chaney has analyzed in *Fugitive Vision*.

<sup>12</sup> See Maris-Wolf; and Aptheker, who observes: “The story of the American maroons is of interest not only because it forms a fairly important part of the history of the South and of the Negro, but also because of the evidence it affords to show that the



conventional picture of slavery as a more or less delightful, patriarchal system is fallacious” (165).

<sup>13</sup> On the restrictions on the Atlantic slave trade by the United States and other nations in the nineteenth century, see Davis 142. On the history, economics, and sociology of slavery in nineteenth-century Cuba, see Johnson; Knight; Rediker; Smallwood. See also Hartman.

CHAPTER IV  
THE WHITENING OF FUTURE NATIONAL SPACES: INTERRACIAL AND  
INTERGENERATIONAL MALE FRIENDSHIPS ON TOUR IN  
CHARLES WARREN STODDARD'S *SOUTH-SEA IDYLS*

In this chapter, I turn to Charles Warren Stoddard's *South-Sea Idyls*, a collection of narrative sketches published in response to continuing public interest in westward expansion and exotic travel, in which a number of the tales (indeed, one might even say, quasi-autobiographical essays) describe visits to the Hawaiian Islands. A contemporary review of *South-Sea Idyls*, published in the 18 December 1873 issue of *The Nation*, describes the tales as "hav[ing] a good deal of undeniable amusement in them," but the reviewer goes on to note that "it is rather difficult to know exactly what more to say of the book, for what part of it is a record of adventure, and what part is mere fancy, or, indeed, whether Mr. Stoddard has ever been in the South Seas at all, is a pure matter of conjecture" (411). Ultimately, having surveyed several examples of what might be called unbelievable and overwrought elements in Stoddard's tales, the reviewer assesses the collection as "a dreamy sort of amusement, which we suppose is the proper color for California humor to take upon itself in the tropics" (411). The reviewer then goes on to assert, based on Stoddard's tales, "that life in the Southern Seas is such a peculiarly non-moral life" and that "we cannot recommend 'South-Sea Idyls' as a book of an

invigorating and purifying tone” (411). The reviewer, who has used the literary “we” throughout, as if indeed speaking for the collective of *The Nation* (the magazine) and the United States itself, then concludes with an assessment not of the book *per se*, but of the geographical space and foreign culture the volume takes as its subject: “The Southern Seas—as it used to be said of Paris—are not a good place for deacons” (411). The literary quality or shortcomings of Stoddard’s *South-Sea Idyls* aside, the reviewer reminds readers of the exotic otherness and suspect morality of a sovereign space outside the jurisdiction of the United States and, in doing so, presents this region of the world as a potentially suspect objective of Manifest Destiny.

In this regard, the reviewer for *The Nation* quite insightfully raises questions about the geopolitical and cultural space in which Stoddard set his tales and (despite the reviewer’s suspicions about South Sea morality) to which he traveled repeatedly during the late nineteenth century. The tales that comprise Stoddard’s collection do indeed depict geographical, as well as social, mobility and male friendship in a space *beyond* the western frontier of the continental United States and allow for a consideration of the further evolution of the nation’s jurisdictional ambitions. In the 1860’s, the time of the travels recorded in *South-Sea Idyls*, Hawai‘i was a sovereign space not yet annexed to or made a territory of the United States, but mainland-based political and economic forces were already establishing influential connections with the monarch and other members of the ruling classes. Within this context, Stoddard’s narratives of mobile male friendships in the South Seas present an ambiguous stance toward the ultimate outcome of such imperialist endeavors on the part of the United States.

In his tales of Hawai‘i, Stoddard depicts his white male protagonists, like other visitors/settlers from the continental U. S., taking a number of imperialist liberties as travelers and explorers. In the process, these narratives put a man in motion beyond the borders of U. S. national space and convey the essence of Stoddard’s own adventures to the Islands, where he developed intense (and often sexually intimate) friendships with younger male Natives. These interracial and intergenerational homosocial and homosexual relationships, however, contribute more than just an expansion of whiteness into a sovereign territorial space. They also introduce another kind of potentially transgressive mobility: a movement geographically, socially, and emotionally that, the narratives suggest, can be simultaneously pleasurable and productive, traumatic and tragic. Thus, while these tales further confirm the crucial role played by diverse male friendships and mobility in nineteenth-century U. S. encounters with other sovereign nations, they also—like Delany’s narrative of Blake’s transgression of U. S. national space—further expose the potential ambiguities in the process of whitening that, I have argued, we see presented with greater certainty in a narrative such as Biddle’s adaptation of the records of Lewis’s and Clark’s expedition at the beginning of the century.

While not his first, best, or even most scandalous publication, *South-Sea Idyls* remains the book on which Stoddard’s reputation, such that it is, rests today.<sup>1</sup> Lush in its descriptions of the Polynesian landscapes and lifestyles, and particularly attentive to the physical beauty and erotic potential of the young men inhabiting these Pacific islands, *South-Sea Idyls* is now often read as a rather surprisingly overt declaration of its author’s homosexual and interracial desires.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I would like to pursue this line of

analysis further, arguing that the exotic and the erotic converge in *South-Sea Idyls* to present a vision of the possibility and pleasures of sexual desire between a white man and men of color in a relatively isolated part of the world. In its exploration of the nature and function of friendships between and among men more generally, the collection ultimately offers an examination of the ambiguities inherent to the process of whitening in a geographic and cultural space beyond the jurisdiction of the United States that will in the future become annexed to and then incorporated into that national entity. Indeed, although many of the tales emphasize the potential of erotic encounters between men from the mainland and men from the Islands, just as many depict the dangers such relationships might mean for Native Hawaiians, and still others explore native resistance to emotional, social, economic, and political incursions from the already whitened U. S. mainland.

### **Treaties of Friendship: Transporting Whiteness to the South Seas**

Although Stoddard's *South-Sea Idyls* largely concerns itself with interracial and intergenerational relationships between white men and island youths, the collection does not ignore the presence and centrality of white male friendships. Indeed, sketches that focus on white men in transit to the South Seas appear throughout the volume, disrupting as it were, a more straightforward exploration of the promise and perils of Stoddard's stories of his often erotic—not just “romantic”—friendships with young men of Hawai'i and Tahiti.<sup>3</sup> These tales of white male friendships illustrate the collection's questioning of

the increasing economic, political, and cultural transport of whiteness beyond the boundaries of the continental United States and the role that homosocial friendships, as a locus for expanding notions of social relations between men of various backgrounds, play in that process.

“In the Cradle of the Deep,” the first story in the collection, explores homosocial relationships between men from the mainland en route to the South Seas and depicts their journey as an occasion for engaging with one another in ways they might not have done in their “civilized” homelands. In this opening sketch, the white male representatives of “civilization” find themselves, like the occupants of Noah’s ark, having spent “forty days in the great desert of the sea—forty nights camped under cloud-canopies, with the salt dust of the waves drifting over” them and still very much in motion upon the sea toward their ultimate destination. An island landscape, likened to “a green oasis” and “a garden in perfect bloom,” presents a vision of geographic beauty and bounty for their delectation, providing even “triumphant palm-trees [that] clashed their melodious branches like a chorus with cymbals” (1) to inspire and motivate them in their continuing journey. This exotic environment, Stoddard suggests, provides a space in which their whiteness and the social structures attendant upon it might be open to reconsideration and revision.

Even when the environment turns threatening, this exotic locale continues to provide opportunities for the white men in transit from the mainland to this region of the world outside the jurisdiction of the United States (and other already whitened national spaces) to reconceive of the possibilities of their relationships to one another. This group

of sailors, for example, must eventually weather a storm that threatens to destroy their ship, and they find that they must huddle together “gathered in the confines of the Petrel’s diminutive cabin” to survive: “It was a time for mutual encouragement: very few of us were self-sustaining, and what was to be gained by our combining in unanimous despair?” (2). Throughout the ordeal, it is the “haggard realism” of an older, more experienced sailor’s tale about another ship’s encounter with desperate times that helps the crew stay focused until the weather clears. The power of the older man’s narrative inspires Stoddard in particular to conceive of storytelling as a productive pursuit:

. . . I conjured up my spells of savage enchantment, my blessed islands, my reefs baptized with silver spray; I saw the broad fan-leaves of the banana droop in the motionless air, and through the tropical night the palms aspired heavenward, while I lay dreaming my sea-dream in the cradle of the deep. (17)

While Stoddard here does not form an erotic (or even an emotional or spiritual) connection with this older man, he nevertheless achieves something equally valuable: a link to the profession of storytelling, a utilitarian relationship that nurtures—“in the cradle of the deep,” as it were—the narratives to follow in the remainder of *South-Sea Idyls*. And the language here reveals Stoddard’s vision of the islands as a mystical space, a place “of savage enchantment” where whiteness and its associated priorities and privileges might be perceived as rather insubstantial. The islands thus represent for Stoddard an opportunity to indulge in a variety of homosocial pleasures made possible where whiteness is itself othered. In the process, they come to assume for Stoddard, as a

traveler from the United States, a value not necessarily dependent upon imperialist acquisition of additional neo-national space.

More importantly, we see in this initial story a tale of white men in motion, leaving the geographic and national boundaries of the United States and making their way toward the sovereign space of the South Sea Islands, and in particular—as detailed in many of the sketches in Stoddard’s collection—to the Hawaiian Islands. As a collective of experienced and inexperienced white males, the intrepid travelers aboard the *Petrel* do indeed weather the storm that disrupts their voyage, and they are rewarded with the promise of island pleasures: “Down went the swarthy sun into his tent of clouds; the waves were of amber; the fervid sky was flushed; it looked as though something splendid were about to happen up there, and that it could hardly keep the secret much longer” (17). The vision here, then, is one that celebrates the mobility of whiteness, especially as represented by white men making their way beyond the jurisdiction of the United States in order to explore further territory as part of their own and their nation’s seemingly (and by now so named) manifest destiny. It is also a vision of mobility as opening opportunities for expanding the horizons of what is possible emotionally within white homosocial relationships between men.

Such incursions of whiteness, closely aligned with groups of male friends, into the South Seas are not limited to travelers from the United States, a fact that Stoddard explores in a later story in the collection, “In a Transport.” In this tale, Stoddard presents an international (and interracial) band of seafarers sailing under the French flag for yet another visit to the Polynesian islands. In this tale, the destination is Tahiti, but the story



invokes similar themes related to the movement of whiteness into Hawai‘i. Stoddard figures forth the ship, this time named *Chevert*, as a means of transferring U. S. and European men and their culture and values into the sovereign spaces of the South Seas, detailing in this narrative of the voyage the various relationships between and among the men and how their degrees of friendship forge a community and ensure the success of the “transport” taking place.

Disguised in the progress narratives that are these two tales about the movement of groups of male shipmates and friends into the South Seas, with their emphasis on the maintenance of whiteness and its cultural values in this exotic foreign space, is the potential threat posed by the arrival of these men into this Edenic environment. Despite such political and economic agreements as those embodied in the 1826 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and the 1849 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation between the United States and Hawai‘i, Stoddard’s *South-Sea Idyls* does suggest something of the potential disruptions that, by the late-nineteenth century, whiteness has already begun to cause within the sovereign space of the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>4</sup>

As Sylvester K. Stevens details in *American Expansion in Hawaii, 1842-1898*, the mid- to late-nineteenth century saw the United States moving to engage in trade with the island kingdom of Hawai‘i. According to Stevens, U. S. interest in the region was sparked by the work of missionaries and by the economic opportunities the region presented, such as the sandalwood and sugar trade and its provision of locations for whaling outposts resupply stations for other forms of seafaring trading and transportation (1-16).<sup>5</sup>

These missionary and economic incursions by the U. S. into the kingdom of Hawai‘i inevitably impacted the politics of the region. As Stevens notes, over the course of the century, “the modernization of the governmental structure of the kingdom increasingly necessitated the use of foreign advisors to direct activities and formulate policies” (25). While the kingdom maintained its sovereignty, some political changes motivated by contact with international contacts, such as those with the United States and Europe, led to significant alterations in traditional Hawaiian ideas about such fundamental matters as property rights. One particularly significant example of this impact of contact with foreign concepts of property ownership, Stuart Banner has observed, can be seen in the Māhele of 1845-1855. According to Banner, this scheme “dismantled much of the traditional Hawaiian system of property rights in land and replaced it with the Anglo-American system of alienable fee simple titles” (274). But, as Banner goes on to argue, this change was actually initiated by the Hawaiians and suggests that they were, at mid-century, taking steps to protect themselves from other forms of imperialist usurpation of their territory, economy, and culture (308-309).

We can see something like this effect in “Pearl-Hunting in the Pomotous,” a third story that places readers with white men making their way to the South Seas, this time aboard a ship dubbed, appropriately enough, the *Great Western*. In this narrative, unlike “In the Cradle of the Deep” and “In a Transport,” one of the white men—Stoddard—develops a friendship with a native who, unable to “resist the superior attraction of a foreign invader” (137) swims out to investigate the ship that has arrived at an island called, locally, Motu Hilo, but also known in English as Crescent Island—an

“independent” polity where “no man has squatted . . . to levy tax or toll” (141). The interaction with the islander, who is named Hua Manu and who approaches the ship “with a kind of spacious nest [in his hair] . . . filled with eggs on sale,” begins with what Stoddard automatically assumes is a commercial exchange: “This colossal youth having observed that I was an amateur humanitarian, virtue received its instant reward (which it doesn’t in all climates), for he at once offered me three of his eggs in a very winning and patronizing manner” (138). In payment, Stoddard offers Hua Manu “a fish-hook, a tenpenny nail, and a dilapidated key-ring,” a few trinkets of varying degrees of practical value and use that the islander “spurned” (138). When, without taking the preferred trinkets, Hua Manu gives Stoddard still more eggs, the elder man from the United States, continuing to read the interaction in terms of a business transaction, immediately frets that this “magnanimous gift” will become “merely a trap to involve [him] in hopeless debt” (138).

As Stoddard soon discovers, however, Hua Manu is offering him an opportunity for something far more valuable and “by no means disagreeable”: “In the midst of my alarm he began making vows of eternal friendship” (139). Recognizing the benefit of a friendship with an islander “big enough to whip any two of his fellows,” Stoddard accepts Hua Manu’s offer of friendship and its implied access to the protection of “the stronger party in a strange land” (139). They confirm their mutual friendship by rubbing noses and exchanging names, a sharing of bodily intimacy and cultural identity that allows the pair to conclude the commercial exchange begun earlier. With this ceremonial marking of their relation completed, they have, in essence, entered into a private treaty of

friendship; under these conditions, Hua Manu now accepts Stoddard's trinkets in payment for the eggs that he had brought aboard the *Great Western* and adorns his body with them, "burying the fish-hooks in his matted forelock, and inserting a tenpenny nail and a key-ring in either ear" (140). Such a display of international trade goods, Stoddard notes, would undoubtedly encourage Hua Manu to "[feel] himself as grand as the best chief in the archipelago" and make him "the envy of the entire population of Motu Hilo" (140). We see here, then, in this nascent friendship between the white male Stoddard and the native islander an exchange of intimacy, to be sure, but also a commerce in trade goods that almost immediately mark the very body of the native other with signifiers of whiteness and the machined, metallic products of the mainland that had been transported to the South Pacific. Whereas Stoddard initially feared that he would be "trapped" by the dealings with Hua Manu, the real "trappings" here are those of whiteness and its increasing presence in the region.

Inspired by the success of this initial friendly commercial exchange, Stoddard proposes that he and Hua Manu go pearl hunting, an endeavor he believes "will be both pleasant and profitable, particularly for [himself]" (141). The new friends leave the *Great Western*, negotiate with local suppliers for a canoe and other necessary equipment and provisions, and set out for the "outer rim of the island" (141). Throughout the largely unsuccessful outing, Hua Manu performs most of the physical labor. It is he who rows the canoe, and it is he who, despite his own limited skill at the task, risks the dives to collect oysters that might contain the pearls they seek. As will become a characteristic of the friendships Stoddard describes having formed with native youth throughout the

volume, his relationship with Hua Manu is—as he predicted about the mission more generally—decidedly more profitable for himself than for the islander.

Several days into their excursion, the weather turns foul and the friends find themselves in great danger of shipwreck. Again, Stoddard profits from the relationship far more than does his native companion. Hua Manu’s greater knowledge of the area, not to mention his greater physical prowess, allow the pair of friends eventually to survive the churning water and make it to “a mound of coarse sand in the middle of the ocean” (148) where they will remain until Stoddard is rescued several days later. Upon awakening in the relative safety of the *Great Western*, the ship on which he had arrived on this voyage into the South Seas, Stoddard learns that Hua Manu died during their time as castaways. The memory of what happened remains vague, yet Stoddard recounts an impression of being “consumed with thirst” and “speechless with hunger” and then receiving some relief from his companion (150). “What did [Hua Manu] then?” Stoddard wonders, finally concluding that “I must have asked for drink. He gave it me from an artery in his wrist, severed by the finest teeth you ever saw. That’s what saved me” (152). As a result of this peculiar, vampiric exchange—willingly offered, it seems, by the native islander to the white man from the mainland who just as willingly drinks his fill—the representative of whiteness survives, while the representative of the islands is, quite literally, consumed:

I lived to tell the tale. I should think it might mean of me not to live after such a sacrifice. Hua Manu sank rapidly. I must have nearly drained his veins, but I don’t believe he regretted it. The captain said when he was dying, his faithful eyes were fixed on me. (152-153)

Stoddard thus goes further in his report of the incident, redirecting at every turn the gaze not only of the reader, but also that of the dead native back onto himself as the primary subject and beneficiary of the friendship the two men shared. The heroic sacrifice of self that Hua Manu has made here, Stoddard asserts, has been for the greater political, social, and cultural good of the project of whitening increasingly underway in the region. Indeed, the final description of Hua Manu is of his body, lying in state (and stateless) on the deck of the *Great Western*, itself a kind of foreign territory and (inter)national space, with his very body “stretched under a sail” (153) and thus no doubt shrouded in yet another “trapping” of whiteness:

Well, if he is a heathen, out of my heart I would make a parable, its rubric bright with his sacrificial blood, its theme this glowing text: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for a friend.” (153)

As Christopher McBride has observed, despite the potential of this heroism by the Polynesian character to “call into question American supremacy over foreigners” (172), the friendship on display throughout this tale, as throughout *South-Sea Idyls* as a whole, repeatedly privileges and accrues to the benefit of the white male.

As if in homage to the very titles of the treaties signed between the nations of the United States and Hawai‘i, “Pearl-Hunting in the Pomotous” thus progresses from commerce to navigation, all made possible by the “new-found” friendship between Stoddard, as a white male representative of the United States, and Hua Manu, as a representative of the islanders. The death of the native participant in the homosocial (and, increasingly, homosexual) relationships that Stoddard will trace throughout the

overall collection will, in various ways, reassert time and again the commercial and cultural prerogatives attendant upon the extension of whiteness and United States national interests in the region. As we shall see, Stoddard depicts this process especially in relation to male friendships he developed across racial and generational boundaries in Hawai‘i, where challenges to native sovereignty are beginning to reveal themselves in the work of missionaries, leper colonies, and the transportation of young male islanders to the mainland of the United States.

### **Missionaries and Friends in the Hawaiian Islands**

Before turning to additional narratives marked by the death of the native islander who enters into a friendship with Stoddard, I would like first to consider further evidence of the whitening of sovereign national spaces in the sketches Stoddard assembles in *South-Sea Idyls*. In particular, I turn to entries in the collection that detail the presence of white, Christian missionaries and the geographical properties on the Hawaiian Islands they have claimed and undertaken to (re)develop in their own cultural images. Throughout the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries in Hawai‘i took as their calling more than religious proselytizing, and their influence extended into areas of government, education, and even social and sexual reform. In addition, they became major landholders in the islands.<sup>6</sup>

As in the first two shipboard stories I discussed in the previous section, the narratives that I will analyze here most often privilege relations between white male

friends. These stories—"A Tropical Sequence," "The House of the Sun," "The Chapel of the Palms," and, perhaps most intriguingly, "Kahéle"—thus reveal that, even within its missionary element, mobilized homosocial male friendships are useful to the process of social, economic, and cultural whitening on which Stoddard reports throughout his *South-Sea Idyls*, but that he does not necessarily see fit to champion or to challenge in any coherent, systematic way in the volume.

Although "A Tropical Sequence" is set in Tahiti, and not Hawai'i, Stoddard presents in this tale the basic elements that will come to characterize his various narratives depicting the impact of missionaries in the Hawaiian Islands. The story begins with a reminder of the trappings of the white, mainland world, with the narrator and his host, an "old friend the venerable pastor of a much-vaunted mission at the antipodes," sitting down to an afternoon of "'high tea,' on the broad veranda, munching thin, crisp slices of toast" (154). These hallmarks of civilization, however, quickly appear to be in stark contrast to the lush, tropical environment of the island setting, with its floral, geographic, and oceanic wonders: "We were at the water's edge; the ripples warily climbed the coral terrace below us; the sea fell bravely upon the reef with a low and soothing moan; a passion-vine that half veiled the tranquil marinorama bathed its splendid blossoms in the afterglow" (155). This present visit between the narrator and the pastor recalls a similar visit from the past, affording Stoddard an opportunity to reflect upon the friendship between the two white men, a friendship founded upon both men's sojourns outside the jurisdiction of the United States:



How restful this pastoral life, so to speak, after the tribulations of travel! Now we could talk complacently of the old days when I had found shelter under that hospitable roof, and of the changes—how few for them [the pastor and his family], how many for me!—that occurred since my former visit; yet our table talk was as frugal as the repast, for we were never quite able to get rid of the impression that gathering about the board was a kind of solemnity, and to be observed as such. (155)

Throughout this initial tea-time reunion, the awkward silences between the two white male friends—one, the narrator, who has moved on in his bohemian world travels and the other, the pastor, who has stayed still, having traveled only so far before settling down to establish himself as a father and religious leader in his adopted community—the “light laughter of the natives in the groves of the village” seems to offer a curious challenge to and a critique of the attempted whitening of their sovereign space (155).

The contrasts between the natives and the missionary, his family, and the narrator become more evident during the next day’s church service, as, indeed, the depiction of this time of Christian worship suggests a literal process and progress of whitening on the island:

Family prayers were more impressive than common, as befitted the day; and we were clothed in white raiment when we marched in grave and dignified procession down the long walk to the front gate, and thence by the road around the corner to the square white meeting house; this we invariably did, instead of stepping quietly through the side gate, a short cut, and allowable on a week day when there was no service. (159)

This overt display of whiteness (“white raiment” and “white meeting house”), and its association with an agenda of religious conversion, do not, however, overwhelm and eradicate the traditions of the Hawaiians who are subject to this intervention in their

community. While they “quietly [glide] in” and take their places in the church, the Hawaiians do not garb themselves in the white fabrics of the missionary and his family and guest; instead, they follow their own taste in appropriate fashion for a religious gathering: “They were resplendent after their kind, in purple and fine linen” (159). What is more, they negotiate this foreign space by honoring its alien traditions, but by nevertheless making themselves at home within it: “Those who had shoes for the most part bore them in their hands as far as the threshold, where they were put on with some effort; but they were put off again almost as soon as the worshippers were seated” (159). With such a moment, Stoddard suggests the potential limitations of the missionary efforts to inspire complete spiritual and cultural transformations within the native community.

More significantly, though, Stoddard concludes the tale with a counternarrative to that with which he began the sketch. One of the household changes that the narrator reports in his opening description of his reunion with the missionary and his family is that Hokoolélé, the oldest native girl the missionary had adopted and who had taken the Christian name Elizabeth, had married and left her adoptive family’s home. At the end of the story, the narrator finds himself, after an extended excursion into other parts of the island, welcomed into the home not of another white traveler like himself but of a native husband and wife. As the narrator learns, Elizabeth had been wooed by a native youth and had eventually married him, opting as a result to live according to the traditional island ways that constituted her birthright and not according to the white customs bequeathed her by her adoption into the missionary’s family. As the narrator notes, “she seemed to have let fall from her, like a mantle, all the influence of domestic Puritan life”

(170). He goes further still, asking her if she “prefer[s] this life . . . to any other,” and she responds, he tells us, “in a tone of earnest conviction”: “Infinitely” (170). Despite Hookeolé’s powerful declaration of resistance to the world of whiteness that she had experienced earlier in her life, and that was still present and in process elsewhere on the island, Stoddard fails to conclude the story on that note of resistance. Instead, the narrator “wondered if her wakeful eyes ever turned again to the luxury of shelter and plenty, and if the shadow of repentance never once plunged its airy dagger to her heart, and made horrible the long watches of the night” (170). It is as though he must neutralize the potential threat represented by this native woman’s willful return to a life of “standing in the firelight, bare-headed, bare-footed, bare-armed, and with a bare shift to cover her” (170)—even though he, as the collection makes quite clear in its many stories of Stoddard’s various relationships with young native men, finds himself drawn to the appeal of such an existence.

Operating within the same narrative conception as “A Tropical Sequence,” the three interconnected stories of “The House of the Sun,” “The Chapel of the Palms,” and “Kahéle” further develop Stoddard’s exploration of the way white male friendships function within a system of missionary activity in Hawai‘i that attempts, despite significant native resistance, to further whiten the sovereign space of the islands. Importantly, the primary link among these three stories is the character Kahéle, a Hawaiian youth who travels with Stoddard throughout the events depicted in these tales that invoke the missionary presence in Hawai‘i (and who will reappear in yet one more story later in the collection). Like many of the native youths Stoddard depicts in *South-*

*Sea Idyls*, Kahéle is an idealized (and often eroticized) representation, a handsome physical specimen, if “compact” and displaying a feminized “chubby grace,” and someone who adores Stoddard and wants to show him the wonders of Hawai‘i (205). In fact, Kahéle is, as Stoddard declares at the beginning of “The House of the Sun,” nothing less than his “Hawaiian oracle” (205).

In “The House of the Sun,” the first of the stories featuring Kahéle, Stoddard crafts an adventure that ultimately explores the incursion of Christianity into Hawaiian religious and cultural practices. The story opens with a scene set in a dwelling defined by Christian religion. At the beginning of this idyll, the narrator and Kahéle are enjoying the hospitality of a white man named L----- and his wife. As in “A Tropical Sequence,” this settler’s home is situated in “the nicest kind of climate” and with a spectacular view of “a blazing beach, with warm waves sliding up and down it, backed by blue-watery and blue-airy space for thousands and thousands of miles” (204-205). When the narrator decides to go with Kahéle on a pilgrimage to Haleakala, the extinct volcano whose English name gives the story its title, his parting words to the L-----s tell us much about the couple:

Adieu, dear L-----, thou picture of boisterous industry! Adieu, Mrs. L-----, whose light is hid under the bushel of thy lord; but, as it warms him, it is all right, I suppose, and thy reward shall come to thee some day, I trust! By-by, multitudes of little L-----s, tumbling recklessly in the backyard, crowned with youth and robust health and plenty of flaxen curls! (207)

Given its attention to Mr. L----’s industry and Mrs. L-----’s religious faith, this valediction suggests that the couple are living as religious settler colonists, if not outright missionaries, and the presence of their “multitudes of little L-----s” further implies a

reproduction of whiteness within the space of the island, a new generation and a new breed of white natives to “tumb[e] recklessly in the backyard” of this—at the time Stoddard wrote *South-Sea Idyls*—still sovereign island nation. In contrast to this heteropatriarchal family dynamic, with its realized procreative potential, Stoddard’s homosocial (and homoerotic/homosexual) friendships with Native Hawaiian men clearly poses a more ambiguous incursion of mainland whiteness into the islands.

The conclusion of “The House of the Sun” offers an even more explicit portrayal of the complex social and spiritual juxtapositions as a result of the presence of Christian missionaries in Hawai‘i. Having completed an exhausting journey into the magnificent and mystical crater of Haleakala, Stoddard and Kahéle, and the group they traveled with on the treacherous expedition, make their way to a village located near “the verdant slopes of Kaupo” (219). In this village, they discover a Catholic chapel “where the priests sleep when they are on their mission to Kaupo” (220), and the narrator takes up temporary residence inside. As he rests, the narrator observes the native children at play outside the chapel:

. . . the after-glow of the evening suffused the front of the chapel with a warm light, and from above the chapel-door the statue of the Virgin—a little faded with the suns of that endless summer, a little mildewed with the frequent rains—looked down upon us with a smile of welcome. Some youngsters, as naked as day-old nest-birds, tossed a ball into the air; and when it at last lodged in the niche of the Virgin, they clapped their hands, half in merriment and half in awe, and the games of the evening ended. (221)

In this closing moment, then, the story extends its consideration of the ambiguous presence and influence of Christianity and the whitening it represents. Not just the L-----

children, but the native youth as well, play in sight of monuments, already faded and already mildewed, that have been constructed to herald an imported religion and the potential colonialism that often attended its arrival, and that of the whiteness it represented, in otherwise sovereign spaces. Here, though, Stoddard emphasizes that the trappings of this imported religion, and the mainland whiteness it represents, are thus far powerless to overwhelm the generation of young islanders who play ball in the presence of religious iconography that they perceive “half in merriment and half in awe.”

In conjunction with its depiction of the missionary presence in Hawai‘i, “The House of the Sun” renders ambiguous the role of mobile male friendships in the process of whitening that *South-Sea Idyls* traces in the islands. In between its opening and closing references to Christian religion, the narrative presents as its central event a journey into a natural space with quasi-sacred associations for Kahéle and other natives: the Haleakala crater, which takes on not only in its translation as “House of the Sun” but in its structure and natural grandeur something of the qualities of a cathedral. As the narrator, Kahéle, and their native guide set out on this pilgrimage, they seek out “a house full of *haolis*,” that is, white men, where they intend to spend a night (208). Coming upon “the little white cottage of the *haolis*” (209), they discover a band of white men about a campfire:

The mountaineers proved to be a company of California miners, who had somehow drifted over the sea, and, once on that side, they naturally enough went into the mountains to cut wood, break trails, and make themselves useful in a rough, out-of-door fashion. They had for companions and assistants a few natives who, no doubt, did the best they could, though the Californians expressed considerable contempt for the “lazy devils, who were fit for nothing but to fiddle on a jew’s harp.” (210)

These men thus also represent a kind of settler colonialism and its associated process of Christianized whitening. Instead of questioning this process, however, Stoddard portrays the opportunity to sport with these white men as a relief from the ennui that had plagued him earlier in the narrative before he and Kahéle had set out on their journey. He also takes from Jack, whom he calls “chief of the camp,” the inspiration to continue his own travels: “He said to me, ‘If you can rough it, hang on a while—what’s to drive you off?’” (210). Indeed, what is there to drive off a white man, like Stoddard (or the miners), who has traveled from California to Hawai‘i and who finds himself in a territory both exotic and yet increasingly familiar?

This combination of the exotic and the familiar plays out as well in “The Chapel of the Palms,” the second of Stoddard’s narratives about his travels with Kahéle. In this idyll, moreover, mobility and white male friendship attendant upon Catholic missionary work in Hawai‘i dominate the narrative, and we see here further ambiguities attendant upon the movement of mainland whiteness into of the cultural landscape of the islands. In this story, Stoddard and Kahéle take shelter in the home of Père Fidelis, a French Catholic priest whom Stoddard at once declares an ideal friend: “Why do our hearts sing jubilate when we meet a friend for the first time? What is it within us that with its life-long yearning comes suddenly upon the all-sufficient one, and in a moment is crowned and satisfied?” (225). That the story will further explore the nature and role of friendships between white men, especially as those friendships related to missionary work in Hawai‘i, becomes clear when Père Fidelis tells his guests about his great

friendship with Père Amabilis, another French priest who is “miles away, repairing a chapel that had suffered somewhat in a late gale” (229).

In this story, Stoddard associates the two priests’ friendship as central to their motivation for a life of work in the Church:

Born in the same city in the north of France, reared in the same schools, graduated from the same university, each fond of life and acquainted with its follies, each in turn stricken with an illness that threatened death, together they came out of the dark valley with their future consecrated to the work that now absorbs them, the friendship of their childhood increasing with their years and sustaining them in a remote land, where their vow of poverty seems almost like a sarcasm, since circumstance deprives them of all luxuries. (233)

Indeed, such is their devotion to their missionary work, such is their entrenchment among the communities they have joined in the “remote land” to which they have been sent, that their identities have become a blend of the familiar and the exotic, the native and the foreign. This blending of identity is particularly evident in a memory Père Fidelis shares about an exchange that took place during one of his traveling confessionals:

*Confessor.* “Who’s there?”

*Père Fidelis.* “It is I!”

*Conf.* “Who is I!”

*Père F.* “Fidelis!”

*Conf.* “Fidelis who?”

*Père F.* “Fidelis kahuna pule!” (Fidelis the priest.)

*Conf.* “Aweh!” (An expression of the greatest surprise.) “*Entre*, Fidelis kahuna pule.” (235)



English, Latin, Hawaiian, French: the fluid linguistic markers in this exchange exemplify Père Fidelis's evolving sense of himself and his place within the community to whom he is ministering and the community's evolving sense of his place among them and the implications of that process for understanding what he can and cannot provide them (and, by extension, no doubt Père Amabilis's place in this dynamic as well).

For Stoddard, though, the place of these two friends is securely, and eternally, located in the space of Hawai'i and in their roles as representatives of Christianizing whiteness:

From beyond the waters my heart returns to them. Again at twilight, over the still sea, floats the sweet Angelus; again I approach the chapel falling to slow decay; there are fresh mounds in the churchyard, and the voice of wailing is heard for a passing soul. By and by, if there is work to do, it shall be done, and the hands shall be folded, for the young apostles will have followed in the silent footsteps of their flock. Here endeth the lesson of the Chapel of the Palms. (238)

In this vision of the future, then, Stoddard assumes that these two priests remain—physically and socially—a part of Hawai'i, even in death, and that their mobilized friendship will stand as a testament to their missionary work and the ambiguous process of whitening attendant upon it. Indeed, Stoddard's narrative of the friendship between these two white men who have moved to the islands raises the question of who, ultimately, is converting others to a foreign worldview and who is being converted.

For all the narrative attention Stoddard gives to the emplacement of missionary influence within Hawaiian culture, he nevertheless concludes this trilogy of idylls detailing his island adventures with Kahéle by means of a story that reveals the limits of

the process of whitening that has previously accompanied the Christianizing presences. In “Kahéle,” in fact, Stoddard not only depicts the title character’s resistance to the process of whitening, but also dramatizes his conscious decision to terminate his friendship with the white narrator. During the course of this story, the narrator and Kahéle continue their travels, this time through an area called the “Valley of Solitude” that puts them in the midst of a native celebration: “I saw the most dignified chiefs of Méha sporting like children, while the children capered like imps, and the whole community seemed bewitched with the glorious atmosphere of that particular night” (248). At this celebration, Stoddard reports, “Kahéle went clean back to barbarism . . . and seemed to take to it amazingly” (248). It is upon this tension between Kahéle’s allegiance to his people and culture and his friendship with the narrator that the rest of this tale is founded.

The resolution comes, interestingly enough, not in the midst of a native celebration or in the exotic crater of a sacred volcano, but in the space occupied by yet another white missionary. In this case, the travelers come upon a church service in progress and, tired and hungry, both men—the narrator *and* Kahéle—find it uninspiring. And it is here that the narrator realizes that he has already lost Kahéle, despite the latter’s lingering observance of such practices as “[saying] a brief grace before eating, pray[ing] audibly before retiring, [being] patient to the pitch of stupidity, and amiable to the verge of idiocy” (259). As he brings their time together on the island to a close, the narrator observes that “another four-and-twenty hours, and [Kahéle] would be restored to the arms of his guardians; the sweet lanes of Lahaina would again blossom before him; and all that

he thought to be excellent in life would know him as it had known him only a few weeks before” (259). Although Stoddard does not fully explore the implications of Kahéle’s resistance to all that the missionaries and the narrator have to offer him, he nevertheless does give Kahéle this agency, and he respects him for it: “I knew, boy, that if I went astray, you would meet me upon the highest moral grounds; and, though I could not rely upon you, somehow you came to time when least expected, and filled me with admiration and surprise—a sentiment which time and absence only threaten to perpetuate” (260).

Collectively, then, the stories in which Stoddard explores the presence of missionaries and the processes by which they attempt to import mainland whiteness into the islands associate that process with mobile male friendships, either between white men or between white men and nonwhite men. Ultimately, these narratives figure forth that endeavor as, at best, only partially successful and, more often, not successful at all. In doing so, Stoddard raises significant questions about the efficacy and long-term outcomes of extending U. S. territorial ambitions into the Hawaiian Islands—for both the islanders and for those from the mainland who undertake travel to the region. In the next section, I will consider one particularly deadly result of such endeavors.

### **Friendship, Disease, and Death in the Hawaiian Islands**

As Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio explains, leprosy accompanied increasing international trade and settlement in the Hawaiian Islands and complicated political, social, and economic activities in the region.<sup>7</sup> Among other steps encouraged

for dealing with this crisis, Osorio notes, was legal separation, which was imposed by the Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy and which created isolated communities of lepers on the island of Moloka‘i (176-177). In two stories in *South-Sea Idyls*—“Joe of Lahaina” and “The Night Dancers of Waipio”—Stoddard introduces readers to such leper colonies as they existed in mid-nineteenth-century Hawai‘i.<sup>8</sup> As in most of the other stories in the collection, these narratives focus on homosocial (and potentially homosexual) male friendships, among both white men and white men and native men. Here, though, Stoddard links these friendships to a process of whitening that is itself intimately related to the presence in these colonial spaces of sorrow and death in the midst of great environmental and cultural beauty. In doing so, he extends the collection’s contemplation of Manifest Destiny beyond the various pleasures to be partaken in by travelers to the islands and into a somber meditation on the potentially deadly consequences faced by representatives of the whitened United States and those they encountered in the South Seas.

“Joe of Lahaina” is one of the most overtly homoerotic narratives in *South-Sea Idyls*. This story tells of the narrator’s setting up “housekeeping” with a young native male from Lahaina, a space on the island of Hawai‘i that Stoddard describes as “a little slice of civilization, beached on the shore of barbarism” (100). To enter into this relationship with Joe, the narrator reports, he had to “[bribe Joe’s] uncle to keep the peace” and to guarantee “Joe’s irreproachable conduct while with [him]” (102). The narrator goes on to add that he “willingly gave bonds—verbal ones—for this was just what [he] wanted of Joe: namely, to instill into his youthful mind those counsels which, if

rigorously followed, must result in his becoming a true and unterrified American” (102). And, in fact, by the end of their time together, it seems that Joe has begun to adopt Americanized, consumerist values, going so far as to once stealing money from the narrator to buy himself “a brand-new suit of [American-style] clothes, including boots and hat” (104). And Joe goes so far as to wear this outfit to bid “adieu” to the narrator, who has booked passage on a ship for further traveling around the islands.

In its contrasting second half, this story takes a decided turn from a lighthearted depiction of the playful, erotically charged friendship between a white man from the United States and the young Hawaiian man that he is very much trying to Americanize to become a narrative about the “singularly sad and interesting colony of lepers” located at Molokai (106). “Have you never had such an experience?” the narrator asks, and then proceeds to describe the experience of being in the leper colony at Molokai:

Then go into the midst of a community of lepers; have ever before your eyes their Gorgon-like faces; see the horrors, hardly to be recognized as human that grope about you; listen in vain for the voices that have been hushed forever by decay; breathe the tainted atmosphere; and bear ever in mind that, while they hover about you—bidden to touch you, yet longing to clasp once one a hand that is perfect and pure—the insidious seeds of the malady may be generating in your vitals, and your heart, even then, be drunk with death! (108)

This space is, then, quite literally, a locus of death, and it must be carefully—and officially, governmentally—contained and regulated: as the narrator notes, there is “an admirable system adopted by the Hawaiian Government for the protection of its unfortunate people” (109).

During his time as a tourist in the leper colony, the narrator discovers that resident among the afflicted is his former friend Joe. At first, he does not recognize this youth he so recently attempted to Americanize and who had, on his own initiative, tried valiantly even to dress the part:

There was a face I could not have recognized as anything friendly or human. Knots of flesh stood out upon it; scar upon scar disfigured it. The expression was like that of a mummy, stony and withered. The outline of a youthful figure were preserved, but the hands and feet were pitiful to look at. What was this ogre that knew me and loved me still? (110)

Unable to touch the narrator, or even to leave the fenced-in area meant to contain the lepers, Joe can only utter a series of descriptors for how he perceived the nature of his relationship with the narrator: “dear friend” gives way to “good friend,” and then the idea of friend dies away, to be replaced with “master” (110). Given this dynamic between the narrator and Joe, and the unexplained means by which the native youth contracted leprosy and found himself confined to the colony at Molokai, it would seem that “Joe of Lahaina” could suggest a potential critique of the interactions between the narrator and Joe. Stoddard, however, does not grant his narrator a fully sympathetic final reflection on what he has experienced in this relationship with the doomed, and now immobilized, Hawaiian youth: “I knew he would be looking for me, to say Good-night. But he did not find me; and he will never again find me in this life, for I left him sitting in the dark door of his sepulchre—sitting and singing in the mouth of his grave—clothed all in Death” (114). And in this last observation, the narrator seems once again to equate Joe

with the Americanized outfit that he bought with stolen money and wore on the final good day of their relationship.

Leprosy also figures prominently in “The Night Dancers of Waipio,” another story that focuses on a friendship the narrator develops in Hawai‘i. In this idyll, however, the friendship is between the narrator and another white man named Felix. Traveling through the valley of the Waipio, the pair engage in unapologetic erotic (if not outright sexual) tourism, partaking of a number of local activities and rituals. They try *lomi-lomi*, a form of intense massage, at the hands of native women, to varying degrees of pleasure—the narrator finds the experience delightful, whereas Felix finds himself embarrassed by the procedure. They join in a communal meal, where everyone eats with their fingers from the same dish of poi; again, Felix balks at the native approach, calling it “Disgusting!” (122). They then witness a lengthy evening performance of what their host calls “the *hula-hula*” (118), and which the narrator defines as a “seductive dance still practised in secret, though the law forbids it; and to the Hawaiian it is more beautiful, because more sensuous, than anything else in the world” (128).<sup>9</sup> As the narrator tries to explain to Felix, who falls asleep during their conversation on the matter, he once witnessed a group of lepers perform the hula-hula as a response to their constant awareness of their own mortality:

At an early hour the strange company assembled. The wheezing of voices no longer musical, the shuffling of half-paralyzed limbs over the bare floor, the melancholy droning of those bamboo flutes, and the wild sea moaning in the wild night were the sweetest sounds that greeted them. And while the flutes piped dolorously to this unlovely spectacle, there was a rushing to and fro of unlovely figures; a bleeding, half-blind leper, seizing another of the accursed beings—

snatching her, as it were, from the grave, in all her loathsome clay—dragged her into the bewildering maelstrom of the waltz. (130)

It is not unimportant, I think, that the narrator chooses to associate stimulation of the *hula-hula* with the potential threat of death as embodied by the lepers and the various colonies in place to contain them in the Hawaiian Islands. This association certainly resonates with the narrator's earlier experience with Joe, whose friendship with the narrator did not save him from a painful, tragic death, and it points toward other narratives in which other native youth do not survive—or do not survive unchanged—their encounters with the narrator as a representative boundary-crossing U. S. citizen.

### **Transporting Hawaiian Youth to the United States**

The dangers of exploring foreign territory—whether for sexual tourism or for political acquisition attendant upon aims related to Manifest Destiny—are certainly easier for citizens of the U. S. to contemplate when the region of the world being explored is, like the Hawaiian Islands, far out in the Pacific Ocean and thus well beyond the continental confines of the nation. And in his attention to the leper colonies, Stoddard certainly offered his mainland readers a troubling examination of death and disease in that part of the world. But Stoddard's consideration of travel to and from Hawai'i does not stop with movement of men from the United States to the islands. In *South-Sea Idyls*, he also includes narratives that tell of Hawaiian youths who travel to the whitened mainland of the United States, and in these tales, he often figures forth that transportation



of young island natives as a death sentence. Indeed, several of the idylls suggest a more troubling paradigm in which interracial and intergenerational friendships between the older white male narrator and his young Hawaiian male protégés prove destructive to the islanders. Not all of the friendships involving movement of an islander to the mainland of the United States, however, automatically point toward the inevitability of death for the Hawaiian member of the pair. Indeed, here as in the other pieces in the collection, Stoddard maintains an ambiguous perspective on the future relations between the citizens of his home nation and those of the island nation that so attracted and inspired him.

The destructive nature of the transportation of the white male/native male friendship from the South Seas to the United States takes on a particularly sinister, commercial cast in “My South-Sea Show.” In this peculiar (and perhaps entirely fictional) entry in the volume, the white male narrator—presumably, still Stoddard—has returned from his travels among the South-Sea Islands with a trio of native youths, whom he calls his “South Sea babies” (188) and whom he intends to exhibit as part of a for-profit lecture tour of several villages in an unspecified area of the United States. The “enormous placard” he has prepared to advertise the show to the “Great Public” (194) spells out, in a strikingly diverse range of fonts, the nature of the performance and the narrator’s attitude toward the young islanders currently in his care:

JENKINS' HALL.  
**IMMENSE ATTRACTION!**  
*FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY!*  
**HOKY AND POKY,**  
A BRACE OF SOUTH-SEA BABIES, FROM THE ANCIENT RIVERS OF  
KABALA-KUM,  
—and—  
THE WONDERFUL BOY  
**ZEBRA,**  
A CANNIBAL PRINCE, FROM THE PALMY PLAINS OF POTTOBOKEE,  
IN THEIR GRAND MORAL DIVERSION. (193)

Two additional declarations, marked by iconic hands with pointer fingers extended, further clarify for potential attendees what they can expect to witness during the course of this exotic spectacle: “The first and only opportunity is now afforded the great public to observe with safety how the heathen, in his blindness, bows down to wood and stone” and “These are the only original and genuine representatives of the Kabalakumists and Pottobokees that ever left their coral strand” (193). Although the cost of such entertainment remains unspecified in the placard’s closing line, where readers find the information that “Admission, ——.” and “Children, Half Price,” this vague pricing structure nevertheless demonstrates that this sort of lecture was designed to educate not only the adults in the community, but also their children regarding the native inhabitants of islands in a part of the world where the United States had, relatively recently, negotiated a “treaty of friendship.”

What is more, in describing his efforts to promote the show beyond this advertising placard, the narrator makes clear that this event exploits cultural exchange for economic opportunity and that it does so with the sanction of “the leading men in town,”

among them a preacher, a professor, and an editor. Of these three community leaders, the editor seems most interested in the project; he “strongly urged the plausibility of this new method of winning the heart of the Great Public, and was willing to take [the narrator’s] note for thirty days, in consideration of his personal friendship for [him], and his sympathy, as a public man and a member of the press, with the show business” (195). The morality of the show is not really in question here, as the lecture tour promises to provide domestic citizens the chance to come face-to-face with three reputed cannibals, three young South Sea islanders that the narrator likes to call his “little inhuman jewels” (192). Nor is the narrator’s treatment and care for the three young islanders called into question. As the narrator openly and apologetically admits, in detailing his autumn arrival in the United States at the start of his lecture tour, his “South Sea babies [Hoky and Poky] were very cold and moaned pitifully under [his] arms, and the little pearl-bearer [Zebra] shivered in all his stripes, and capered in the dead leaves like an imp of darkness” (188). The young islanders are thus being asked to adapt to a new environment with minimal attention to their genuine physical, emotional, and cultural needs.

This careless introduction of the island youths into the space of the United States, not surprisingly, results in trauma and death. While Hoky and Poky seem to have adjusted to their new lives as side-show attractions, Zebra, purported to be the tattooed son of a king back in his island homeland, has not been fully assimilated to his new role. On the opening night of the Jenkins’s Hall performance, for example, the narrator discovers his star attraction “stretched upon the floor of his room, quite insensible” (195), having drunk several bottles of cologne belonging to the woman who has agreed to

provide housing to the narrator and his motley crew. Left behind with the owner of the house to recover while his companions go on tour, Zebra next “got into the kerosene” (197) and then, as a result of a cultural misunderstanding over the nature of Christian prayer (which he mistakes for a mortal wounding, as it would have been among his own people), Zebra wills himself to waste away toward death. Shortly before he finally passes away, the narrator promises him that they will all return “to his kingdom,” where they will live for years and die together as elder members of the community (201). Instead of this return to a life of health and happiness in his homeland, however, Zebra is buried in the United States, in a grave marked with a tombstone that reads:

Here lies,  
In this far land,  
A PRINCE OF THE SAVAGE SOUTH,  
And the Last of his Tribe. (202)

Thus, by story’s end all Zebra receives is another kind of advertising placard, one that, even in its heralding of its subject’s death, continues to market his exotic otherness and to celebrate his incorporation into the very ground of the mainland United States’ continental geography.

In “Chumming with a Savage,” the second and longest entry in *South-Sea Idyls*, Stoddard crafts a story in three parts to explore an erotic, but also an emotional and spiritual, friendship between a white man and a Hawaiian youth named Kána-Aná. As a marker of the complexity of the connection between these two characters, the line

between who is a desiring subject and who is an object of a desiring gaze is blurred from the first moment the two men meet:

[Kána-Aná] continued to regard me steadily, without embarrassment. He seated himself before me; I felt myself at the mercy of one whose calm analysis was questioning every motive of my soul. This sage inquirer was, perhaps, sixteen years of age. His eye was so earnest and so honest, I could return his look. I saw a round, full rather girlish face; lips ripe and expressive, not quite so sensual as those of most of his race; not a bad nose, by any means; eyes perfectly glorious—regular almonds—with the mythical lashes “the sweep,” etc., etc. The smile which presently transfigured his face was of the nature that flatters you into submission against your will. (20-21)

Indeed, upon meeting Kána-Aná, Stoddard redefines his priorities and even his cultural allegiances, developing a plan for abandoning his current obligations to “The Doctor,” a white male professional friend who, in contrast to the beautiful native youth, Stoddard now perceives as “perfectly savage” (19) in demeanor and action. Reminding Stoddard of “the regulator on a steam-engine” (18), the Doctor physically embodies the industrial world back home in the United States, and Stoddard soon succeeds in leaving his country-man’s company to take up housekeeping, and an emotionally and spiritually fulfilling friendship, with Kána-Aná. Thus, Stoddard “renounced all the follies of this world, actually hating civilization, and feeling entirely above the formalities of society,” he tells us, having “resolved on the spot to be a barbarian, and, perhaps, dwell forever and ever in this secluded spot” (24).

For a while, all is delightful between Stoddard and his new “bosom friend” (24) and, it turns out, bedfellow. The erotic element of their relationship, despite the narrative

subterfuge that Roger Austen has identified as characteristic of Stoddard's style in these tales, is plainly enough described:

I wondered what more I could ask for to delight the eye. Kána-Aná was still asleep, but he never let loose his hold on me, as though he feared his pale-faced friend would fade away from him. He lay close by me. His sleek figure, supple and graceful in repose, was the embodiment of free, untrammelled youth. You who are brought up under cover know nothing of its luxuriousness. (26)<sup>10</sup>

Almost to excess, Stoddard describes the sensual pleasures he enjoyed as part of his friendship with Kána-Aná:

Again and again he would come with a delicious banana to the bed where I was lying, and insisted upon my gorging myself, when I had but barely recovered from a late orgie of fruit, flesh, or fowl. He would mesmerize me into a most refreshing sleep with a prolonged and pleasing manipulation. It was a reminiscence of the baths of Stamboul not to be withstood. (32)

But there is also something beyond physical delights bonding the two men together, an emotional and spiritual sympathy which seems almost to wed them as a couple.

Recognizing Stoddard's dependence on his increasingly decayed boots, for example, Kána-Aná takes great pains to keep that footwear in as good condition as he can, and Stoddard acknowledges the profundity of that gesture: "O Kána-Aná! how could you wring my soul with those touching offices of friendship!—those kindnesses unailing, unsurpassed!" (33).

Despite the intensity of this emotional and spiritual connection, and despite the wonders of the physical pleasures attendant upon their relationship as well, Stoddard ultimately finds himself desiring to return to civilization. One morning, he sneaks away

from the bed he has shared with Kána-Aná and makes his way via a canoe rowed by other native boys to a ship moored off the coast, thinking by this stratagem to avoid having to say farewell to his friend. Kána-Aná, however, awakens and pursues Stoddard, plunging naked into the surf in a futile attempt to overtake the departing boat. The first part of this long story thus ends with Stoddard's going "straight home" to get "civilized again" (34), and though he does re-enter his former family life and social world, he thinks constantly of and desperately misses his erotic, emotional, and spiritual friendship with "dear little velvet-skinned, coffee-colored Kána-Aná," who—he declares to his father—is "about half sunshine himself; and, above all others, and more than any one else ever can, he loved your Prodigal" (35).

Still missing Kána-Aná when the second part of the story opens, Stoddard resolves to have the youth brought to the United States, where—he imagines—he can introduce his Polynesian friend to life in polite society and, with little difficulty, civilize and Christianize him. Above all, Stoddard admits, he will attempt this reunion because he "wanted more to see how the little fellow was getting on" (36). In stark contrast to the delightful experience that Stoddard enjoyed as a visitor to Kána-Aná's island paradise, the Polynesian youth finds life in the United States, with its "new restraints, such as clothes, manners, and forbidden water privileges" (39), to be unbearable—and even Stoddard recognizes that Kána-Aná "appeared to have no business there" (38). Gone are the sensual pleasures of their former friendship, and gone, too, are the profound emotional and spiritual connections they shared. Realizing the physical, mental, and spiritual damage being done to the youth during his sojourn in the civilized world, and to

his own memory of what they once shared, Stoddard sends Kána-Aná home at the end of this part of the story, asking of the youth to “pardon and absolve your spiritual adviser, for seeking to remould so delicate and original a soul as yours” (48).

In the final part of the story, Stoddard continues to feel the absence of his island friend and undertakes another Pacific voyage to reunite with him. When he arrives, however, Stoddard learns from Kána-Aná’s mother that her son, far more greatly damaged by his time in the United States than anyone could have imagined, was unable to reintegrate himself into the life of the island and made an “heroic exit from a life that no longer interested him” (62). Confronted with the death of his beloved Kána-Aná, and wracked with guilt over what he perceives to be his part in motivating his friend’s suicide, Stoddard passes this visit to the island in the company of Niga, another native youth who had also known Kána-Aná well. Together, Stoddard and Niga retrace the last days of Kána-Aná’s life and commune with his lingering spirit in the natural wonder of the island paradise. While this pilgrimage makes it possible for Stoddard to return home somewhat emotionally and spiritually restored, it also impresses upon him the eternal (and erotic) connection he had made with Kána-Aná: “Then I looked for the last time upon that faint and cloudy picture, and seemed almost to see the spirit of the departed beckoning to me with waving arms and imploring looks; and I longed for him with the old longing, that will never release me from my willing bondage” (68). Thus, despite the physical loss of his friend, and despite the emotional and spiritual challenges with which it presents him, Stoddard’s return to the island, coupled with the opportunity to spend



time with Niga—an important surrogate for the dead Kána-Aná—leads him ultimately to a qualified peace with the loss of his friend.

Unlike the native youths in “Chumming with a Savage” and “My South-Sea Show,” the young Hawaiian male in “Kahéle’s Foreordination” survives—and, in a way, like the white male narrator of “Pearl-Hunting in the Pomotous” he does “[live] *to tell* the tale” (152). His voice, unlike the voices of the islanders in most of the narratives, asserts itself in *written* discourse that speaks within and, I would argue, back to the text crafted by Stoddard to showcase and contain the letters the Hawaiian youth himself wrote—and does so largely in the form in which he wrote them. In the letters that purport to record Kahéle’s own writing, of particular note is the evolving sense of U. S. geography those documents reveal, both with respect to Kahéle’s conception of Stoddard’s location within the space of the nation and with respect to his identification of his own place on that map. Misspelling the surname of the intended recipient, Kahéle addressed his first letter, for example, simply to “*Mr. Charles Stoodard, California*” (262). A second, he addresses even more sparsely to “*Mr. Charles W. Stodd.*” (264). By the third letter, however, he has included at least the initials for San Francisco, the relevant California city, even if he has further abbreviated his addressee’s surname:

*Mr. Charles Warren S.,  
S. F., Calif. (265)*

In terms of his own location, both within and without the jurisdiction of the United States, Kahéle is usually quite clear. In all three of these letters, for instance, he offers

explicit statements, either in headings to the messages or within the body, that locate him, at the time he penned the epistles, in the Washington Territory (variously, at Port Gamble, Kitsap County; Seattle; or Tacoma). The content of these first three letters also makes clear his desire to join Stoddard in California to resume their friendship, which—Stoddard tells us—ended after the close of the events of the idyll “Kahéle,” when the “soft-eyed savage discreetly took his leave” (261).

While these letters, to be sure, have been annexed by Stoddard, as white male narrator, to flesh out his own record of the relationship, they are far from entirely or easily subsumed to his control as a representative of whiteness from the national space on the mainland. In the first letter, for example, Stoddard presents Kahéle’s unedited prose, but with several of his own observations interpellated in square brackets:

MR. CHARLES STUDARD, ESQ.—DEAR SIR: I am very glad to see you my Dear Lord of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amenn. This is the first letter I sent to you my Dear. I remember you for the year One thousand Eight hundred and seventy one—before we are to gone Circuit Island of Maui—and gone to Kaupo—from Kaupo to Hana and see the two Rev Father Priests. I am your young servant Kahéle. I live to [left] Honolulu on the last day of July and come here with my Both [which is Boss, with a palpable lisp] and then my Both he dead. I had nothing to do here—no one to keep my life—if you please to give me some job then I stay with you for five year. If you see this letter you teregraph for me. This is our second letter to you—[mark with what royal condescension he recalls our former correspondence] because you write me one letter to Lahaina.

Your young servant,

KAHÉLE. (263)

In his introduction to this letter, Stoddard observes that it has all the hallmarks of the writing of “a native Hawaiian scripturist” and asserts that “no one but a savage could have written it; no one but a boned savage stuffed with missionary teachings” (263).

While the religious elements—and the missionary influence they belie—are undeniable, it seems that equally important to Kahéle are the travels he took with Stoddard, those adventures recounted in the idylls “The House of the Sun,” “The Chapel of the Palms,” and “Kahéle” and distilled to their essence here in this letter pleading for reunion and the support promised by the friendship the two men shared in Hawai‘i. Despite its language of servitude, it is also a call for reciprocity between a Hawaiian man and a white man, and it all depends on having the means to continue moving within the space of the United States.

The second and third letters further complicate this dynamic. In the second letter, sent from Seattle, where Kahéle reports that he is “wait[ing] for the steamer” to take him to San Francisco, we read that Stoddard has replied by “tereograph” and, it seems, has encouraged a rekindling of the friendship, which has made Kahéle extremely happy (264). Despite this happiness, however, he notes that he has “no news to tell you about the golden chain of love between you and me” (264), a remark that suggests that nothing has changed in the nature of his feelings for Stoddard. In the third letter, Kahéle makes a request for money: “If you please—in love for your servant—to send me ten dollars inside letter for me to pay my passage” (265). About this request, Stoddard observes that “ten dollars are but as a feather in the balance when there is a soul to save” (265-266). About the letter, he also notes that Kahéle has dropped the adjective “young” from his description of himself as Stoddard’s “servant,” an indicator, Stoddard surmises, of his friend’s having “grown old in the vain attempt to reach a haven of rest” (265). What Stoddard does not remark on is the conditional with which Kahéle closes the letter

proper: “If I stay with you I pay you my owe” (265). This invocation of a potential second discreet leave-taking on the part of Kahéle, which is indeed what happens, seems not to register with Stoddard at all.

As Stoddard reports, setting forth a metaphor of mobility, Kahéle’s final communiqué “ran as follows”:

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ.  
I am gone to Los Angel, and to Mexico—with my wife. Aloha. K.  
To MR. CHARLES

Like the previous letters he has sent to Stoddard, this one presents Kahéle with yet another opportunity to locate himself in relation to Stoddard within particular geographical and national spaces. In contrast to those other letters, however, this brief, terminal epistle records the youth’s movement *away from* and not toward the elder American within the North American space of the United States and even beyond its national continental borders. In the process, the Hawaiian youth’s short letter serves as a plainly stated, yet multilingual declaration of independence, and offers notice, too, of the youth’s resistance to potential power inequities in the relationship the two men have shared over the years, asserting in the process something of a genuine “treaty of friendship” with Stoddard as a representative of the already whitened United States. Contained within the cartographic and marital trajectory of this valediction is also, I would argue, an implicit claim to another kind of manifest destiny, this one an imagined response to the whitening of U. S. national space by a person of color from another sovereign nation who has traveled to the U. S. mainland and found *it*—not himself—

wanting. In this final story about his relationship with Kahéle, then, Stoddard further interrogates the contemporary sovereignty of Hawai‘i and the ambiguous place that region might yet play in the imperial ambitions of the United States.

As in all of the sketches in *South-Sea Idyls*, however, this narrative nevertheless privileges the point of view of the white male in the relationship and reasserts Stoddard’s own, more elaborate explanation of Kahéle’s actions and places them, as it were, under a cover of whiteness not unlike that represented by the image of the sail-draped body of the dead Hua Manu at the end of “Pearl-Hunting in the Pomotous.” Stoddard thus speaks over Kahéle’s assertion of his personal goals, calling into question the youth’s ability to succeed in his quest to exploit the capitalist, imperialist system that had, for some time now, exploited him:

Insensible victim! Is he founding his fortune in the fastnesses of the mineral hills? Is it well with him in his mountain stronghold? Do the torrents that pour their silver beside his door muffle the tinkling music of guitars, the “click” of castanets, the boom of the hollow drum? Does he dream again of the loves of the Barbary Coast, chief of whom is his Circe? (271)

In addition to this presentation of his own judgment of the affair and of the character of the Hawaiian youth, Stoddard goes on to further privilege his own textual production as the means by which to bring the story of Kahéle’s “foreordination” to a close. In fact, at the end of this fourth story in the Kahéle saga, Stoddard quotes *himself* from the finale of “Kahéle,” the immediately preceding story in the quartet of interrelated tales and in the physical space of the collection, as much to celebrate his own perceptiveness regarding the young man’s character as to explain the course of action the youth took in leaving

him, the white man from the mainland who “might have cut the net that enthralled [Kahéle], and perhaps have spared him for a costlier sacrifice” (271):

He was a representation worthy of some consideration; a typical Hawaiian, whose versatility was only excelled by the plausibility with which he developed new phases of his kaleidoscopic character. He was very charming, and as diverting in one rôle as another. He was, moreover, worthy of much praise for his skill in playing each part so perfectly that to this hour I am not sure which of his dispositions he excelled in, nor in which he was most at home. (272)

Stoddard concludes, moreover, with a cavalier exclamation of his own imperialist, capitalist excesses: “But what does it matter to me so long as I have my experiences over and over, and outlive them one and all! Come, daisies and buttercups—the more the merrier; spice my dull life with at least this variety, and let me agonize or let me die: For I am of those Zaras who, when they love, must perish!” (272). For all of his declarations of pride and desire for the island youths he has “brought under his metaphorical wing” during his excursions in the South Seas, Stoddard remains very much a citizen of the United States. Within the context of whitened U. S. national space and the increasing cultural and exchange between Hawai‘i and the jurisdictional matrix of his home country, Stoddard summarizes his ambiguous attitude regarding the pleasures and the pains to which his and his nation’s South-Sea adventuring might eventually lead for the currently sovereign island nation: “And I’m awfully used to it” (272).

The narratives in Stoddard’s *South-Sea Idyls*, so potentially scandalous in their imagining of homoerotic and homosexual liaisons as well as merely homosocial ones, ultimately reflect upon and engage with concerns similar to those in the other narratives

of nation-building and mobile male friendships that I have examined in earlier chapters. Like Biddle's *History of the Expedition*, Stoddard's *South-Sea Idyls* depicted for nineteenth-century readers the exploits of a white citizen of the United States whose travels allow him to experience a range of homosocial friendships within and without the domestic space of the nation. But, through its interrogation of the effects of the interracial and intergenerational friendships its author pursued in his travels, Stoddard's collection of tales, like Delany's *Blake*, also offers a critique of the potential consequences of U. S. Manifest Destiny and the whitening of national and international spaces attendant upon it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Gale treats the pieces collected in *South-Sea Idyls* as a series of “largely unconnected autobiographical travel essays” (12). Roger Austen and John W. Crowley (Austen’s editor) consider the chapters of *South-Sea Idyls* to be semi-autobiographical short fiction. For additional biographical background on Stoddard, see Stroven; and John-Gabriel H. James.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the general thesis of Austen’s reading of the collection, for example. For an early twentieth-century review of *South-Sea Idyls*, see George Wharton James.

<sup>3</sup> On the concept of “romantic” friendships, see Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct* and “The Female World.” On Stoddard’s homoerotic friendships as they related to nineteenth-century concepts of “primitivism,” see Edwards (33-47).

<sup>4</sup> On the “language of friendship” in such treaties, see Devere, Mark, and Verbitsky.

<sup>5</sup> For additional general histories of the relationship between Hawai‘i and the United States, see Banner; Coffman; Merry; Okihiro; Osorio; and Silva.

<sup>6</sup> See Meller; Kaomea; Kashay; and Stevens, 8-10, 25-29.

<sup>7</sup> Osorio notes that many at the time believed that leprosy made its way to the islands via the Chinese presence in the islands (176).

<sup>8</sup> On leper colonies in Hawai‘i, see Ahuja; and Tomso.

<sup>9</sup> On the hula as a cultural phenomenon in Hawai‘i during the time Stoddard writes about his experiences on the islands in *South-Sea Idyls*, see Balme.



<sup>10</sup> To explain why the homoeroticism of a passage such as this one did not alarm the general readers of the late nineteenth century, Austen argues that Stoddard's literary technique might be compared to the behavior of a squirrel advancing and retreating in the testing of "the leafy end of a branch" (59). According to Austen, "instead of crossing out and revising passages of telltale homoeroticism, Stoddard merely retreated, hoping he could scurry back to safety under the cover of misleading explanations" (60).

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have argued that mobile male friendships offer an important analytical category for examining nineteenth-century literary depictions of U. S. expansionism across the North American continent and into sovereign regions beyond that geographic space. Attention to these depictions of male friendships on the move outside the jurisdiction of the established United States reveals them to be a locus of complex social flexibility, as they participated in and also called into question the process of whitening associated with the goals of U. S. Manifest Destiny.

In each of the works I have studied here—*The History of the Expedition, Blake*, and *South-Sea Idyls*—the narratives place the key homosocial friendships in geographical locations that allow them to operate outside the social, political, and legal restrictions that would otherwise limit those relationships. As we have seen in *The History of the Expedition*, Biddle demonstrates that, once they were outside the jurisdiction of the established United States, the members of the Corps of Discovery could function in ways that muted, if they did not entirely collapse the military hierarchies that technically bound them as a working group of civil servants on a government-sponsored mission to explore newly acquired U. S. territory. In his adaptations of Lewis's and Clark's notes about the diplomatic negotiations between the Corps and representatives of various nations of Native peoples, Biddle casts the political and economic relations they were initiating in

terms that invoke yet another kind of friendship particular to the neo-national space that was in the process of being whitened by the activities of the expedition.

The vision of male friendships mobilized in the service of U. S. expansionism and its associated whitening of neo-national space that Biddle records in *The History of the Expedition*, I argue, was challenged by Martin Delany in his novel *Blake*. Here, Delany depicts male homosocial friendships and movement throughout and beyond the jurisdiction of the United States not to celebrate the whitening of that space in the service of U. S. Manifest Destiny, but to propose a counternarrative that redirects both mobilized male friendships and Manifest Destiny as a function of blackness. Again, attention to the narrative's treatment of male friendships is crucial to appreciating Delany's revolutionary vision of the potential for mobilizing blackness and rebelling against the institution of slavery in the United States, Cuba, and other sovereign spaces in the region.

Mobile male friendships, as I have explored in Charles Warren Stoddard's *South-Sea Idyls*, continued to serve as a locus for interrogating narrative accounts of the continuing legacy of U. S. incursions into sovereign spaces in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In his collection of tales, the range of homosocial friendships that Stoddard presents—between white men and between white men and Native youths—exposes the potential for such relationships to demonstrate still further forms of social flexibility, particularly (but not exclusively) when they are taking place outside the boundaries of the established United States. Collectively, the friendships Stoddard depicts in *South-Sea Idyls*, like those Delany creates in *Blake*, fail fully to celebrate the process of whitening associated with U. S. expansionism and reveal Stoddard's rather

ambiguous position on the place of international tourism, trade, and cultural interference in the region.

To conclude, allow me to note that in the early twentieth century, Stoddard befriended and exchanged a series of letters with a young man in the United States who was himself eager to explore the world and to write about his travels.<sup>1</sup> The dotting correspondent who sought him out as a mentor was Jack London, a fellow traveler and writer of stories about adventures in exotic international locales. Of particular note during the course of the six-year correspondence between these two kindred spirits is the fact that London, like the titular Hawaiian youth in Stoddard's story "Kahéle's Foreordination," gradually altered his salutations to Stoddard. From the formal greeting of "Dear Warren" (of 27 October 1900), London then began to address his friend with the still-more-formal, full-name address of "Dear Charles Warren Stoddard" (of 6 December 1900, 23 January 1901 and, minus the surname, 11 April 1901), but that formality finally gave way to an expression more intimate and familiar—indeed, even familial, with which London would invariably open his letters to Stoddard from 21 August 1903 to the end of the correspondence on 7 July 1906: "Dear Dad." This evolution in address seems to coincide with London's recognition of Stoddard's practice of taking younger men—whom Stoddard called his "kids"—into his care and confidence, and with London's own willingness to imagine Stoddard as a surrogate father as well as a mentor and friend.<sup>2</sup> In the letter of 21 August 1903, for example, London addresses Stoddard as "dear Dad" not only in the salutation, but in the body of the letter and in its complimentary close, and he asserts "that [he] never had a dad, never knew one," but that he can speak to Stoddard as

though he were a father who will understand his declaration of independence from a failed marriage and, by extension, from the world of public scorn over his separation of himself from the expected duty of a family man: “The world may think otherwise, but I do not live for what the world thinks of me, but for what I think of myself” (108).<sup>3</sup> And such an attitude in the younger writer would no doubt have received unconditional sanctioning by Stoddard, who himself remained true to his desires in his private and public life, and who dared, furthermore, to write about them.

I invoke the letters of London and Stoddard here because their correspondence suggests that the relationship between mobility and male homosocial friendships and the whitening of U. S. national space continued into the twentieth century. As London and his generation moved toward and into the twentieth century and out into the opportunities for travel in the world, so too did the United States continue to expand its geographical influence and jurisdiction. As an heir to Stoddard, London explored the territory of the South Seas, but he also journeyed as well into the region of Alaska, and his writings on that U. S. acquisition could be considered in light of the dynamic I have considered throughout this dissertation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For copies of the correspondence between Stoddard and London, see “The Letters of Jack London.”

<sup>2</sup> London opens his letter to Stoddard dated 21 August 1903 with the announcement that “I am sending this mail the autographed copy of the dog story to that ‘kid’ of yours” (108). Given the date of this correspondence, the “Kid” in question may have been Kenneth O’Connor (or, perhaps, O’Connor’s “Kid” Will Combs); see Austen, 131-135, 144, 151.

<sup>3</sup> As Rotundo observes, “Father-son relationships in the nineteenth century presented a complex picture. Fathers still had a place of emotional importance in the lives of their sons. A father was the first man a boy knew, was the ultimate source of material comforts, made decisions that controlled a boy’s life, and was a boy’s predominant role model as a man. Yet he was still a diminished figure, frequently absent from the house, and for most middle-class boys, not the primary parent” (27).

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