THE MEDIATING NATION: AMERICAN LITERATURE AND GLOBALIZATION
FROM HENRY JAMES TO WOODROW WILSON

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Abstract

Nathaniel Cadle: The Mediating Nation: American Literature and Globalization from Henry James to Woodrow Wilson

(Under the direction of Jane Thrailkill)

The Mediating Nation: American Literature and Globalization from Henry James to Woodrow Wilson reconstructs the history of American globalization between 1875 and 1920 through an analysis of literary and public discourse about the United States’ place in the world. Engaging the work of sociologists like Roland Robertson, who locates the origins of globalization in this period, I argue that American identity emerges only in relation to—and interaction with—the rest of the world. This approach therefore rejects exceptionalist readings of American literature, offering instead a functionalist account of the formation of American identity and culture that focuses on America’s position in the international community. The Mediating Nation integrates and expands the work of several recent literary critics, including Walter Benn Michaels, who reveals how racial and cultural anxiety shaped American writers’ sense of national identity, and Amy Kaplan, who demonstrates how American authors underwrote U.S. policies of imperial expansion. In the first section of this project, I establish how global theory contributes to our understanding of American literary scholarship and what historical events and developments turned the United States into a globalized nation. Then, I explore the language that politicians and public intellectuals like Woodrow Wilson and William James used to make sense of these developments. In subsequent chapters, I demonstrate that, through their writing, such authors as Jack London, Abraham Cahan, and
Henry James engaged with and elaborated on the emerging features and problems of globalization, including imperialism, immigration, and the global cultural economy, in order to propel the United States into a more important and powerful position in the international community.
Acknowledgements

I have heard many people describe the process of writing a dissertation as a very lonesome, isolating experience. On the whole, however, that has not been the case for me. I have had the good fortune to work and study in an extremely sociable and supportive environment, and for that, I thank the faculty and graduate students (past and present) of the Department of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

More specifically, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their advice and for their sustained interest in my project. First and foremost among them, I wish to thank my director, Jane Thrailkill, for her commitment to my success as a student and as a professional scholar. She is a remarkably incisive and insightful reader, and working under her guidance over the past few years has been an extremely rewarding learning experience. I know that I have become a better writer and more thoughtful scholar because of my contact with her. I also want to extend my appreciation to John McGowan, Tim Marr, Joy Kasson, and Tyler Curtain—all of whom have encouraged my professional development and enriched my dissertation in incalculable ways.

In keeping with my project’s global dimensions, I also would like to express a general debt of gratitude to the friends I made when I studied at the University of Exeter during the 2000-01 academic year. It was the diverse cosmopolitan make-up of my colleagues there (British, German, Argentinean, Canadian, Australian, Rwandan, and Norwegian, among others) and the international perspectives they brought to bear upon my own American identity that sowed the seed for this project and made me realize just how dynamic and empowering globalization can be.

Finally, I thank my parents and my brothers for their continued support and encouragement throughout my graduate studies. It is almost certainly because I grew up in a family that valued education and intellectual curiosity for their own sake that I first considered pursuing a Ph.D. and managed to find the discipline to complete it.
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Introduction: Global Theory, Radical Empiricism, and American Literary Studies

In the January 2001 issue of *PMLA*, Paul Jay sounded a call for further study of “literature’s relation to the processes of globalization as they manifest themselves in a variety of historical periods” and “literature’s facilitation of economic and cultural globalization.”¹ Drawing attention to the increasingly porous boundaries between the national literatures that have traditionally defined the discipline of English, Jay challenged his colleagues not only to embrace that porosity but also to trace and understand its historical origins. Doing so, he suggested, would bring to literary analysis a more dynamic means of accounting for the functionality of literary texts as cultural commodities and historical artifacts. In the seven years since Jay’s article appeared, the discipline of English, as well as many other humanities disciplines, has experienced an explosion of discourse about globalization. That is not to say that Jay’s article was itself responsible for the recent rise of interest in globalization among literary scholars. In their attempts to internationalize both American Studies and the study of American literature, a cadre of scholars known collectively as the “New Americanists,” of whom I shall say more in the following pages, has been discussing topics closely related to globalization, including imperialism, immigration, cultural economy, and international diplomacy, since the early 1990s.² Yet I have singled out Jay’s article partly because of the clarity of its

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central challenge to literary scholars and partly because its appearance in *PMLA* signaled a discipline-wide willingness to engage the topic of globalization and thereby legitimize it as never before. Moreover, implicit in Jay’s argument is the appealing hope that, if the field of literary studies can benefit from a broader engagement with global theory, then it also carries the potential to return the favor by providing a fuller understanding of the historical and cultural dimensions of globalization.

In some ways, I consider this project a direct response to Jay’s challenge, insofar as it offers a study of “literature’s relation to the processes of globalization as they manifest themselves” in a particular historical period. Specifically, *The Mediating Nation* presents a history of the emergence of globalization through an analysis of the literary and public discourse of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America that helped propel the United States into a more powerful and important position in the international community. In the following four chapters, I demonstrate how such authors, politicians, and public intellectuals as Woodrow Wilson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry James, Jack London, and Abraham Cahan developed and articulated fluid conceptions of national identity that could accommodate the United States’ newly formed status as a member of the so-called Great Powers. Recognizing that technology, trade, immigration, and diplomacy were increasingly interconnecting the world’s societies, these and other writers formulated new literary, political, and psychological vocabularies for describing this interconnectedness and its impact upon daily life in America. Consequently, this

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3 In fact, the entire January 2001 issue of *PMLA* was dedicated to the special topic “Globalizing Literary Studies.”
project examines how these writers actively addressed the problems and opportunities of globalization, not only reflecting an awareness of the permeability of their nation’s borders but also devising the political and cultural strategies of U.S. expansionism. In the next few pages of this introduction, I would like to examine more generally the opportunities that a theoretical and methodological turn to globalization presents to literary studies and outline what intervention I expect to make by analyzing American literature through the lens of global theory. But first, in order to avoid the mystification that sometimes accompanies vague discussions of globalization, it will prove useful to address a somewhat larger question: What precisely does the word globalization mean?

Since global theory extends across a wide range of academic disciplines, each with its own locus of study, there are a number of possible definitions and formulas for what globalization constitutes, and throughout this project, I embrace the complexity that such diverse methodologies bring to global theory. Indeed, I take the view that, as a concept, globalization derives much of its current appeal from its applicability to an array of both abstract and everyday questions and problems: economic, political, social, cultural, technological, and so forth. At the same time, however, I also agree with Anthony Giddens that, at its most basic level, globalization posits that worldwide social relations are so interconnected that local events are determined to a large extent by occurrences elsewhere on the globe. Such a statement is not as commonsensical as it might seem, for it is incredibly difficult to explain just how certain decisions made in distant boardrooms, courtrooms, and parliaments actually affect everyday life in a particular community. There are, of course, various technologies of globalization that have enabled faster, more direct, and more extensive travel and communication between

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4 See Anthony Giddens’ The Consequences of Modernity (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991) 64.
distant regions of the planet, making the world “smaller” and more widely accessible than ever before. The jet engine, for example, allows world leaders to meet with one another more frequently now than at any other time in history, and the decisions and agreements made at the annual G8 summits profoundly affect each of the member nation’s trade, healthcare, and environmental policies. More commonly, however, jet engines also enable many people to work or study in countries other than their own. Cellular phones likewise increase physical mobility. ATM machines and credit cards facilitate rapid financial transactions no matter the local currency. The Internet, e-mail, and satellite television give media outlets the ability to reach a far wider and more dispersed range of consumers than in the past, even as many consumers use the same technologies to circumvent or supplement traditional media, as the widespread use of MP3s or file-sharing programs illustrate.

Technology in general has helped make globalization possible, but I argue that there is more to globalization than these technologies in and of themselves. Malcolm Waters, for instance, identifies “social change” as the operative factor in the upsurge of interest in globalization since the early 1990s. From scholars and pundits to politicians and average citizens, most people use the word globalization as a catchall for the various effects they perceive the world’s increasing interconnectedness having upon their daily lives. In other words, globalization is “about” the transformation that occurs within a society when it comes into sustained contact not just with another society, but seemingly with all of the planet’s societies at once. These changes play out in diverse and sometimes surprising ways, but I would classify such changes broadly along four

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common dimensions: economic, cultural, social, and political. These dimensions are not, however, a laundry list or universal blueprint with which every instantiation of globalization must overlap. Instead, they are categories by which we can organize the ways that people perceive globalization’s effects.

First, globalization exhibits an *economic* dimension, of which the clearest example is the emergence of wealthy and powerful multinational corporations. These corporations reaffirm the commitment of western democratic governments to global capitalism, and they enable economic and symbolic routes of exchange to become faster and more fluid, especially across national borders. The economic dimension of globalization is best summed up with the phrase “the global market.” The second dimension is *cultural*. In a globalized world, culture becomes deterritorialized insofar as geographic proximity no longer remains the most important organizing principle of social life. Borders become more permeable when it comes to forms of cultural expression (music, literature, film, etc.), and physical mobility is increasingly prized. Cultural objects themselves are often reshaped by distant audiences in ways unintended by their originators. Globalization’s third dimension is *social*. The physical mobility mentioned above weakens people’s commitment to territorial loyalties and opens up the possibility of people forming hybrid or cosmopolitan identities. This hybridity sometimes, though not always, comes about through intermarriage across racial, ethnic, or national lines; more often, it arises through transnational commitments, such as dual citizenship or guest

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6 Waters lists the same four dimensions in his definition of globalization: “A social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly” (5). For some reason, he subsequently excludes the social dimension from the “three regions of social life that have come to be recognised as fundamental” to globalization (17). It seems to me, however, that certain social arrangements, such as (inter)marriage, cannot be fully explained by the other three dimensions.
worker status. Finally, globalization exhibits a *political* dimension. Transnational political bodies (the United Nations, the European Union, etc.) come into being, and nationalism becomes a less powerful affective force. Nation-states nevertheless continue to exist and exert power, but they no longer define themselves in racial or ethnic terms, turning from myths of pre-historical origins to comparative or international understandings of nationhood. That is, the nation-state and ideologies of nationalism are continually in transition in a globalized world.

While these technologies and dimensions of globalization help us understand its causes and effects, I also view globalization as a conceptual problem. Roland Robertson refers to this problem as “the problem of the form in terms of which the world becomes ‘united.’” What Robertson means is that globalization must also serve as a theoretical framework upon which we can construct explanatory and predictive, rather than merely descriptive, accounts of how and why worldwide social relations continue to become interconnected. Robertson continues, “Social theory in the broadest sense— as a perspective which stretches across the social sciences and humanities […] and even the natural sciences— should be refocused and expanded so as to make concern with ‘the world’ a central hermeneutic, and in such a way as to constrain empirical and comparative-historical research in the same direction.” No doubt it is the potential explanatory power of globalization that has made it, in Waters’ words, “the concept, the key idea by which we understand the transition of human society into the third

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8 Robertson 52.
In that sense, globalization has replaced postmodernism at the center of most contemporary discussions of the human condition, though Waters goes on to note that *globalization* is a “far less controversial” term than *postmodernism*.

My own understanding of global theory has been heavily influenced by Robertson’s work, particularly his discussion of “global consciousness.” According to Robertson, globalization involves, but is not limited to, “the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.” This holistic consciousness of the earth as a single place expresses itself in various modes, both in highly specialized discourse and in everyday usage. In the business world, for example, advertisers and economists talk about global markets. Similarly, environmentalists draw attention to the biosphere, and journalists and political scientists discuss geopolitics. In each of these cases, “the global” exists to a large extent because people can conceive of it as such. In other words, globalization is characterized by reflexivity. Literary scholars might be sorely tempted to stop right there, with the presumption that globalization can be understood as the result of an act of imagination, as if it were merely a larger, more universal and unitary vision of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities.” There are, of course, important cultural dimensions to globalization in which the realm of the imaginary features prominently.

Arjun Appadurai, who has provided perhaps the finest discussion of the relationship between imagination—both individual and collective—and globalization, points out that “the work of the imagination […] is a space of contestation in which individuals and

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9 Waters 1, original emphasis.

10 Waters 1.

11 Robertson 8.

groups seek to annex the global into their own practices.”¹³ Nevertheless, it is important to remember that “consciousness of the world as a whole” represents only one half of Robertson’s definition of globalization; the other half involves “the compression of the world” through an acceleration of empirically observable historical processes.¹⁴ Any cultural application of global theory that fails to account for both “consciousness” and “compression” risks eliding the very real and complex set of historical processes involved in the emergence of globalization. For that reason, Robertson’s two-part definition is particularly useful to the historical study of globalization, and I take pains to foreground the relationship between history and literature as much as possible throughout this project. In my first chapter, for example, I provide an overview of the key events and developments that transformed America into a globalized nation.

Due to these concerns with history and historicism, one of the primary objectives of this project is to find and examine historical parallels to Robertson’s conception of globalization in order to establish how Americans at the turn of the twentieth century understood, exploited, and helped to articulate the processes that globalized the United States. One important parallel may be found in the writings of the American philosopher William James (1842-1910). Although James himself does not explicitly discuss globalization, I argue that globalization can and should be understood in light of James’ Essays in Radical Empiricism (1912). In the second chapter of this work, “A World of Pure Experience,” James identifies two “kind[s] of thing experienced”: terms (facts or otherwise concrete things) and relations (less tangible lived experiences that nevertheless


¹⁴ Robertson 8.
“must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system”).¹⁵ James’ distinction provides a particularly dynamic means of understanding globalization for several reasons. First, terms and relations parallel Robertson’s distinction between compression (events, technologies, and historical developments that have increased the world’s interconnectedness over time) and consciousness (awareness, discussion, and intellectual exploitation of that increased interconnectedness).¹⁶ Thus in subsequent chapters, I shall examine both the “terms” and the “relations” of the history of America’s globalization—what in my first chapter I call the “facts on the ground” (historical material realities) and the specific language that turn-of-the-century Americans used to make sense of, support, or oppose those facts. Second, in revealing that relations are just as “real” as terms, James pointedly refuses to privilege physical over mental experiences. In other words, the “relations” (i.e., conceptualizations or consciousnesses) of globalization are just as important as its material realities—a point upon which Robertson agrees. James goes even further, however, and argues that facts and our experiences of those facts are not independent of one another but that our “reality” emerges only through the interaction between the two. “In radical empiricism,” he writes, “there is no bedding; it is as if the pieces clung together by their edges, the transitions experienced between them forming their cement. […] Life is in the transitions as much as in the terms connected. […]” These relations of continuous transition experienced are what make our experiences

¹⁵ William James, “A World of Pure Experience,” Essays in Radical Empiricism (1912; Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1996) 42.

cognitive.” In other words, while we may highlight particular “facts,” isolating them from the context of their relations for the sake of convenience, there is no qualitative difference between terms and relations, between facts and our experiences of them.

It seems to me that James’ radical empiricism thus offers a powerful formula that bypasses the question of whether a particular writer helps constitute or merely reflects the ongoing processes of globalization. To think about—or, as Robertson might put it, to demonstrate “consciousness” of—globalization is, in some part, to contribute to its development. That is not the same thing as ignoring evidence of reflexivity, though. *The Mediating Nation* focuses specifically upon the globalization of the United States and the efforts of American writers and public figures to translate that experience into greater cultural prestige and political power for their nation within the international community.

Perhaps most importantly, however, James’ emphasis on relational thinking and particularly on the importance of both “conjunctive” and “disjunctive” relations offers an innovative way of thinking about globalization and its history: I suggest that globalization involves a reformulation of relations whereby existing “terms” are thrown into new “relation” with one another or with new terms. To cite an obvious example, a new technology, such as the radio or the Internet, can juxtapose people and cultures that were not formerly in contact with each other by creating a means of communication where one did not previously exist. This radical empiricist approach thus poses globalization as a web of interconnection (i.e., relations between terms) and focuses upon how newly formed connections or relations alter both the material conditions of life at

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17 James 86-88.

18 See pp. 47-52 in James for his discussion of “continuous transition” and “discontinuity-experience.” McGowan recognizes the potential impact of a reformulation of relations in James’ philosophy: “And the very being of those individuals [i.e., terms] will be altered […] if those relations are changed” (121).
one point in the web and the perceptions of those people who live there about their own location and its relationship to other locations. Fully realized, then, globalization is about much more than just “international relations” or “international exchange” because it is about the increase in the total number of possible relations. In other words, as I put it a few paragraphs earlier, globalization is about what happens when a particular society or culture seems to come into simultaneous contact with all other societies or cultures. This web-like simultaneity, I argue, is the single most important contribution of global theory to literary studies. Globalization is not the “international scene” writ large. Rather than focusing on the exchange between two societies, as in, say, traditional readings of expatriate novels, globally-inflected literary criticism requires attentiveness to the web-like interconnections that develop between and among authors, cultures, and nations. Thus in each of my four chapters, I highlight the various representations of America that emerge through a genuinely global, as opposed to a merely international, perspective: W.E.B. Du Bois locating in Africa both the causes of the outbreak of the First World War in Europe and the future empowerment of African-Americans; Henry James rewriting an early novel that was set in Paris in light of his encounters with Armenian immigrants in New England and Native Americans in Washington, D.C.; Abraham Cahan and Knut Hamsun illustrating the importance of return migration to the circulation of American culture throughout Europe; and Jack London interpreting Japanese culture for his American readers while observing a Japanese military campaign in Korea.

Through embracing both radical empiricism and historicism, my approach to globalization stands in opposition to three fairly common assumptions that inform much, though not all, current global theory, and this project aims to correct these three
conceptual flaws. First, *The Mediating Nation* seeks to reassess the history of globalization itself, arguing that it is not exclusively a product of late-twentieth-century technological innovation. Technologies themselves have histories, and as I demonstrate in my first chapter, such inventions as the steam engine, the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio revolutionized travel and communication throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In short, I suggest that globalization is as much the result of the Industrial Revolution as it is of the Digital Revolution, and this project is designed, in part, to correct the tendency to treat globalization as a relatively recent phenomenon by tracing the early history of its impact upon American social, cultural, and intellectual life.

Second, in focusing on globalization’s web-like patterns of interconnection and exchange, *The Mediating Nation* does not equate its subject necessarily with “westernization” or “Americanization.” Globalization is not a “one-way street” that enables American corporations to ram their products and services down the unwilling throats of foreign consumers, nor is it a monolithic force that has made the rest of the world subscribe to American practices and values, whatever those might be. As the British economist Philippe Legrain has pointed out, “Even though American consumer culture is widespread, its significance is often exaggerated. You can choose to drink Coke and eat at McDonald's without becoming American in any meaningful sense. One newspaper photo of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan showed them toting Kalashnikovs—as well as a sports bag with Nike's trademark swoosh.”

Legrain’s reference to the Taliban illustrates that there are, in fact, transnational movements that operate in opposition to American interests. The radicalization and spread of Islam during the past

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few decades, for example, can be interpreted as a reaction against westernization, and the likely appeal of the European Union is the challenge it extends to American economic and political hegemony in western markets. Likewise, thanks to the Internet and credit cards, many Americans have relatively easy access to international e-tailers and, in the case of, say, CDs and DVDs, to albums and films released earlier or even in superior editions to what might be available on the U.S. market. Even more relevant to this project are the uses to which migrant workers put the American economy before and after returning to their respective homelands—a historical phenomenon that I explore in my third chapter.

Finally, The Mediating Nation opposes some global theorists’ view that the political dimensions of globalization spell an end for the nation-state as the most basic form of government and for feelings of nationalism as a form of collective identification.20 There is little chance of the nation-state disappearing any time soon, and patriotism and nationalistic fervor remain strong and potentially volatile forces, as demonstrated by events that occurred in the United States following September 11, 2001. These events ranged from the innocuous, such as the surge in sales of American flags,21 to the far more serious, such as the harassment of Middle Eastern immigrants. Of course, as the social dimensions of globalization indicate, individuals are increasingly able and

20 Perhaps the most important and provocative recent example of this line of thinking may be found in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s Empire (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001). For Hardt and Negri, “empire” is a decentered form of sovereignty that has emerged to fill the vacuum left by “the decline in sovereignty of nation-states” (xi). More generally, a writer’s choice between the terms transnational and postnational is indicative of what position he or she takes in this debate. The difference in meaning between the prefixes trans- and post- is more than semantic, with the use of postnational indicating a perspective similar to that of Hardt and Negri. I employ the term transnational exclusively.


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willing to form affective ties that stretch beyond borders and that sometimes undermine patriotism, but the nation-state still enables and constrains an individual’s ability to interact with the rest of the world. Again, Legrain neatly summarizes the continued significance of nation-states to our daily lives in a globalized world:

> Individuals are forming new communities, linked by shared interests and passions, that cut across national borders. Friendships with foreigners met on holiday. Scientists sharing ideas over the Internet. […] Does that mean national identity is dead? Hardly. People who speak the same language, were born and live near each other, face similar problems, have a common experience, and vote in the same election still have plenty of things in common. For all our awareness of the world as a single place, we are not citizens of the world but citizens of a state. […] You can like foreign things and still have strong bonds to your fellow citizens.²²

What Legrain seems to be getting at is that, in some ways, nationalism and globalization function as what Raymond Williams called “residual” and “emergent” structures of feeling, respectively.²³ Even as the emergence of globalization has reshaped our relationships with other people in far-flung corners of the world, nationalism retains its powerful affective force—both politically (as exhibited in ongoing debates about the future of illegal immigrants in the United States) and culturally (as displayed every four years during World Cup). To account sufficiently for so many people’s continued commitment to national identity, in whatever form, we cannot casually dismiss either nationalism or the nation-state as being in decline; rather, they are in transition, adapting to new social, cultural, and economic conditions of possibility.

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²² Legrain B7.

How the nation-state continues to adapt itself today is a question I must leave to others, since my inquiry is historical. Indeed, one of the most significant conceptual dangers facing any study of globalization’s history is falling into the trap of presentism. In order to combat the inclination to apply our current understanding of globalization retroactively to what Americans actually wrote about a century ago, I have designed this project to serve primarily as an account of the coalescence of globalization from an American perspective. That is why, as I mentioned before, Robertson’s two-part definition of globalization as involving both “consciousness” and “compression” is particularly useful for historical research. Calling attention to “the acceleration in both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole,” Robertson enables subsequent scholars to think through the relationship between empirically observable occurrences (events, inventions, etc.) and people’s awareness of how those occurrences have seemingly “compressed” the world. Any account of the coalescence of globalization must therefore be attentive to the concerns of historicism, especially the conditions of possibility that allowed for globalization to emerge. Equally pertinent for my purposes, however, is the language that writers had at their disposal for describing and making sense of the events and developments that were reshaping their relationship with—and access to—the rest of the world. In a sense, then, I also suggest that we approach globalization as a simple abstraction—that is, as an idea or category that stands in for complex historical processes now obscured by its very existence as an abstraction.\textsuperscript{25} \textit{The Mediating Nation} is dedicated, in part, to ascertaining what historical

\textsuperscript{24} Robertson 8, emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{25} Karl Marx discusses the function of a simple abstraction in the introduction of his \textit{Grundrisse}. Michael McKeon also provides a thorough discussion of Marx’s usage of the terms \textit{rational abstraction} and \textit{simple}
processes brought globalization into being as something that Americans can think of now as a simple abstraction.

Considered as a simple abstraction, globalization’s relevance to the humanities (and *vice versa*) becomes more apparent, for unraveling the tangled histories that lie behind taken-for-granted “truths” or categories is one of the most important practices of historically-oriented humanities disciplines, including literary studies. Now that global theory has begun to reshape our conception of identity and the location of culture, it is my hope that literary projects, including this one, can reciprocate and contribute to this interdisciplinary discourse a fuller understanding of the historical and cultural roots of globalization. No doubt this is what Paul Jay had in mind when he appealed for broader engagement with globalization across the traditional historical periods of our field. Fair enough, but to return to an earlier question, what does globalization add to American literary criticism?

The first and most obvious answer to that question is that global theory decenters the nation from its position as the primary means of organizing our study of literature, thereby challenging our basic assumptions about what constitutes “American” (or “British” or any other national) literature. What precisely gives “American” literature its identity is, of course, a well-known ontological problem, dating back at least to such prominent nineteenth-century writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry James, who struggled to find ways of conceptualizing American literature as something different from British literature, despite sharing a common language, history, and culture. Likewise, the American literary canon has always contained texts by authors

who were not born in North America (e.g., the Puritans and other immigrant writers) and
texts that were written by American-born authors residing in—and culturally identifying
with—other countries (e.g., T.S. Eliot, James Baldwin, and other expatriates). On a very
basic level, embracing a global approach to American literature would necessitate
embracing and extending the implications of this ontological problem by adopting a
rigorously comparativist perspective. Thus globally-inflected American literary criticism
would examine canonical and non-canonical American-born and Americanized authors in
relation to canonical and non-canonical authors from other countries who addressed
similar issues and questions. Again, comparativism is not in itself new to American
literary criticism. Malcolm Cowley, Robert Weisbuch, and other critics who have
studied American expatriate authors and other figures in the so-called “international
scene” certainly discuss how residence in foreign locations and intellectual exchanges
with foreigners have influenced American authors’ own writing.26 Such criticism,
however, does not take full advantage of the implications of global theory. Instead,
Cowley, Weisbuch, and similar critics tend to suggest that experiences abroad and
international intellectual exchange merely help American authors discover or rediscover
an already fixed, essential national character. Comparativism, then, is not synonymous
with a global literary perspective, and it does not wholly account for American writers’
reflexive engagement with international and domestic politics and social movements or
how this engagement shaped the writers’ sense of national selfhood.

The comparativism I am suggesting here must therefore embrace the web-like
understanding of globalization that I have described above. To borrow from William

26 See Malcolm Cowley’s Exile’s Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s (New York: Viking, 1951) and
Robert Weisbuch’s Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of
Emerson (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986).
James once more, however, it must also approach national identity in functionalist terms, as something that emerges only in relation to—and interaction with—the rest of the world. Global theory suggests that the insistent focus on questions of origin and the formation of identity that has dominated American literary criticism may, in fact, benefit from a shift in focus to questions of position and role. Instead of asking, “What cultural identity or account of origins does America carve out for itself?” I therefore ask, “What position or role within the global community does America occupy?” While the two questions are certainly related, they are not the same, and the difference is more than semantic. Words like role and position shift literary analysis away from describing static forms of identity to exploring more functionalist ones. They offer a more dynamic means of reading the same texts and thinking through the same issues because, from a global perspective, national identity makes sense only when it functions within an international context. In other words, American identity is the product of the United States’ and individual Americans’ actions upon the international stage; America is, in a sense, what America does. And in this interactive context, non-Americans’ perceptions of—and writings to and about—Americans themselves matter insofar as they oppose, comment upon, or contribute to the global circulation of a particular conception of the United States’ role in the world. Thus in subsequent chapters, I examine what non-Americans, such as the Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun and the Japanese political theorist Seiji Hishida, have to say about American imperialist expansion and American attitudes toward immigrants. These non-American writers help locate America’s global position.

27 In “A World of Pure Experience,” James asks, “Is it not time to repeat what Lotze said of substances, that to act like one is to be one? Should we not say here that to be experienced as continuous is to be really continuous, in a world where experience and reality come to the same thing?” (59, original emphasis) James refers here to the German philosopher Rudolf Hermann Lotze, an important pioneer in the field of psychology. James’ own writings contributed to the development of functional psychology.
In this respect, my argument owes a great deal to—but goes even further than—the recent scholarship of the so-called “New Americanists,” whose attentiveness to the discursive formation of American identity has already done much to decenter the nation as the exclusive organizing principle of American literary studies and to move beyond Anglo- or even Euro-centric transnational comparativism. For instance, in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (2002), Amy Kaplan has demonstrated the extent to which U.S. imperialism in Latin America and the Pacific Rim determined the development of American identity throughout the nineteenth century; in *Our America* (1995), Walter Benn Michaels has revealed the impact of the nativist ideologies that American modernist authors constructed in order to exclude blacks and non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants from their portraits of the body politic; and in *Constituting Americans* (1995), Priscilla Wald has examined the ways in which cultural anxiety shaped official narratives of American identity at the expense of marginalized peoples who disrupt those national narratives. Collectively, their work has gone a long way toward reframing the study of American literature and culture along the lines that Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman have laid out: “a pluralistic rather than a holistic approach to American culture, the rediscovery of the particular, the repudiation of American exceptionalism, and the rise of comparativist and cross-cultural approaches to American studies.” Nevertheless, I contend that *The Mediating Nation* encompasses a larger, more multifaceted process at work in American literature at the turn of the twentieth century. The respective foci of


Kaplan, Michaels, and Wald—empire, immigration, and cultural definitions of citizenship—are instantiations of globalization, and I seek to resituate these scholars’ contributions to American literary studies within a methodological framework that embraces global theory. To that end, I have organized this project in such a way that subsequent chapters specifically examine cultural economy, immigration, and empire, reframing these instantiations of globalization within their larger context.

Besides employing globalization as a more dynamic methodology and drawing heavily upon the philosophy of William James, I also differ with the New Americanists in two key theoretical ways. First, as a group, they have never clarified whether their understanding of globalization is postnational or transnational. Pease and Wiegman, for instance, seem to assume that the advent of globalization signals the decline of the nation-state: “Comparative American studies calls for a rethinking of cultures and identity formations in the face of the nation-state’s failure to function as guarantor. […] The global analytic of the new American studies would no longer move from the U.S. center.”

At any rate, in their criticisms of the flaws and hypocrisies of American national identity and in their appeal to a set of ethical standards that supersede national commitments, the New Americanists’ politics clearly imply a postnational outlook—for which they have been severely criticized.

While I do not disagree with the impulse behind the New Americanists’ criticisms of U.S. national policy and the history of U.S. cultural imperialism, I am less convinced of the complete failure or decline of the nation-

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30 Pease and Wiegman 27.

31 The criticisms of the New Americanists generally revolve around objections either to their writings not treating the achievements of American culture in a positive enough light or to their perceived disdain for “old” Americanists who took a more celebratory point of view. Perhaps the most notable example of such criticism is Leo Marx’s “On Rediscovering the ‘Ur’ Theory of American Studies,” American Literary History 17.1 (2005): 118-34. By disposition, my own writing tends to be more optimistic than that of the New Americanists, but I find these criticisms largely unfair.
state and prefer to discuss globalization in transnational terms. Second, and more importantly, the New Americanists regularly pose the “global” in opposition to the “national,” thereby reducing that relationship to a false binary. In fact, because of the transitional nature of the nation-state, national and global processes and affective ties frequently overlap and exploit one another. Likewise, the “global” is not a monolithic entity but a composite, dynamic, and interconnected one, made up of multiple interacting “national” (and “local”) entities. The Mediating Nation therefore seeks to foreground the complex ways in which global and national modes are imbricated in one another. As a result, my work also differs from that of the New Americanists in that it is less intensely focused on the dangers of national solidarity and tends to oppose the reification of national identity in favor of a more fluid understanding of such identity.

The interactive relationship between the terms and relations of globalization, between “compression” and “consciousness,” guides this study of the globalization of America and supplies the point of departure for my first chapter, where I examine how the reformulation of relations played out historically in three specific ways. First, I lay out the events and developments that transformed America into a globalized nation, including economic and imperial expansion in Latin America and throughout the Pacific, increased diplomatic prestige among the Great Powers, and the development of faster technologies of transportation and communication. Second, I explain how politicians and public intellectuals developed a vocabulary for making sense of those developments,

32 I also oppose the use of a “global”/“local” false binary. One New Americanist who adroitly avoids the pitfall of this false binary is Paul Giles in Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary (Durham: Duke UP, 2002). Nevertheless, as its secondary title indicates, Virtual Americas is almost entirely transatlantic in its subject matter, thereby unnecessarily excluding many other strands in the global web and inadvertently reinscribing a Euro-centric model of transnational comparativism.
ranging from Josiah Strong’s representation of the United States as a “world-salvation” in *Our Country* (1885) through Woodrow Wilson’s description of America’s role in the world as a “mediating Nation” (1915)—the latter, which lends this project its title, providing a particularly powerful example of turn-of-the-century functionalist understandings of the nation in a global context. Finally, I argue that this vocabulary possessed a reflexive dimension, which enabled Strong, Wilson, and W.E.B. Du Bois to push for the United States’ greater involvement in international affairs, including arbitration between warring nations and missionary and economic uplift of nonwhite societies.

The chapters that follow highlight three important facets of globalization: the global cultural economy, immigration, and empire. Through analyses of both canonical and non-canonical texts, these chapters reveal the intricacies of globalization’s cultural and socio-political dimensions. In chapter two, for example, I explore the transformation in Henry James’ understanding of America’s relationship to Europe by analyzing his extensive revisions of his early novel *The American* (1876-77/1907) in light of his account of his return to the United States after a twenty-year absence in *The American Scene* (1907). In particular, I demonstrate how James’ reencounter with American society and culture led him to downplay the symbolic chasm he had originally depicted between the two societies in the original version of *The American*. The revised version of this novel, as well as *The American Scene*, rejects the notion of a rupture between Europe’s and America’s cultural heritage and economic interests, embracing the global cultural economy that aligns them instead.
In chapter three, I focus on immigration as a process of circulation rather than absorption, involving not just one-way trips to the United States but also physical and cultural returns to the homeland. This attentiveness to the transnational dimensions of immigration serves as a corrective to traditional models of assimilation, forced Americanization, and ethnic and cultural anxiety as depicted by Werner Sollors and others. Specifically, I explore the international circulation of American money, products, and culture that Abraham Cahan portrays in *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), his classic but deeply ambivalent novel of immigration. Then I analyze the Norwegian Nobel-laureate Knut Hamsun’s lesser-known accounts of his own failed immigrant years and the descriptions of American society and culture he disseminated upon his return to Europe (c. 1889).

My fourth chapter addresses the question of U.S. imperialism by focusing on the unique relationship between America and Japan, two nations that rose to international prominence at the same time and on mutually agreeable terms. An examination of Jack London’s Russo-Japanese War correspondence (1904) and two of Lafcadio Hearn’s nonfiction books about Japan (1896 and 1904) problematizes Edward Said’s Orientalist model. I reveal how London and Hearn found in Japan an example of what the philosopher Charles Taylor terms “alternative modernities,” the existence of modernized but non-westernized cultures. This recognition provoked different but equally global responses from London and Hearn; Hearn embraced Japan as a means for evaluating America’s shortcomings, while London attempted to allay his own fears of the threat Japan posed to America’s imperial ambitions in the Pacific.
Finally, in a coda, I depict the growing concerns that Americans held about the uncontrollability of globalization after the First World War by analyzing the reactions of John Dos Passos, Edmund Wilson, and Katherine Anne Porter to the influenza pandemic of 1918-19 in light of Priscilla Wald’s discussion of “carrier narratives” in “Imagined Immunities.” Even as the United States increasingly retreated into isolationism through the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, the closing of its borders to immigrants, and the federalization of Jim Crow laws, the Spanish Flu proved that Americans were literally not immune to global events and that the United States was a globalized nation whether its leaders wanted it to be or not.
Chapter 1: “World-Salvation”: The History and Rhetoric of the Globalization of America

“World history did not always exist; history as world history is a result.” – Karl Marx

On April 20, 1915, as the First World War continued to divide most European nations into armed camps, Woodrow Wilson justified his administration’s commitment to U.S. neutrality in a speech that was remarkably devoid of references to domestic concerns or national self-interest. Instead, Wilson appealed to the United States’ status as a “melting pot”—what we now call the nation’s multicultural identity—claiming:

We are the mediating Nation of the world. I do not mean that we undertake not to mind our own business and to mediate where other people are quarreling. I mean the word in a broader sense. We are compounded of the nations of the world; we mediate their blood, we mediate their traditions, we mediate their sentiments, their tastes, their passions; we are ourselves compounded of those things. We are, therefore, able to understand all nations; we are able to understand them in the compound, not separately, as partisans, but unitedly as knowing and comprehending and embodying them all. It is in that sense that I mean that America is a mediating Nation. The opinion of America, the action of America, is ready to turn, and free to turn, in any direction. […] The United States has no

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racial momentum. It has no history back of it which makes it run all its energies and all its ambitions in one particular direction.²

On one level, this passage is peppered with typical Wilsonian idealism. America, he argues, can rise above the petty nationalistic squabbles that plunge other nations into war because the United States remains free from any driving racial or ethnic agendas. Furthermore, America must continue to stand apart and offer itself as a disinterested arbiter of the eventual peace that will come. On another level, there is something deeply troubling about Wilson’s conception of mediation. Perhaps most notably, his claims stand in stark contrast to his own dismal record on civil rights. Even as Wilson was proclaiming the United States’ lack of “racial momentum,” his administration was pushing for ever more stringent Jim Crow legislation. During Wilson’s first term in office, the House of Representatives passed a law making racial intermarriage a felony in the District of Columbia. Wilson’s postmaster general, Albert Burleson, and his secretaries of the treasury and navy, William McAdoo and Josephus Daniels, respectively, ordered that their offices be segregated. Wilson himself declined to follow tradition and appoint a black ambassador to Haiti, and he approved a new requirement that all applicants for federal jobs submit photographs of themselves with their applications.³ In short, Wilson helped federalize Jim Crow at a time that he was claiming for himself and his nation the ability of “knowing and comprehending and embodying” all the peoples of the world. This hypocrisy and the contestation over who really makes up Wilson’s “mediating Nation” are two of the central problems that frame turn-of-the-


³ For an excellent account of these developments—and African-American political resistance to them—see Nicholas Patler’s Jim Crow and the Wilson Administration: Protesting Federal Segregation in the Early Twentieth Century (Boulder: Colorado UP, 2004).
twenty-first-century discussions of America’s position and role in the international community, as I examine in more detail later in this and other chapters.

For now, however, I wish to draw attention to the language of Wilson’s rhetorical claims. What is most striking about his choice of words is how unexpected they are. Instead of casting the United States’ relationship with other countries in terms of economics, trade routes, alliances, and so forth, Wilson talks about blood, sentiments, passions, and tastes. The fact that he avoids discussing the war itself in this passage serves to highlight his administration’s stated commitment to avoiding any binding alliances: America is “free to turn in any direction.” The course of history would force him to change his policy and rhetoric; less than a month later, the German submarine U-20 would torpedo the Lusitania, killing over 100 Americans and helping to elicit greater sympathy and public support for France and Great Britain. Nevertheless, as it stands, Wilson’s language displays a deep concern with the aesthetics of conceptualizing the nation; he describes the body politic in both corporeal and affective terms. His account rests upon the notion that the United States is unique among the community of nations because its population and culture are “compounded” of all other nations. In a sense, Wilson offers his own answer to the seemingly ever-present question of what constitutes American identity: it is a composite identity whose chief characteristic is its multivocality, its ability to give expression to other nations’ “sentiments” and “passions.” But Wilson is less concerned with fixing a static definition of American identity than he is with constructing a more pragmatic narrative of America’s role in world events. Wilson characterizes this role as one of mediation, which he is clear does not equate with merely settling disputes. Rather, he uses the word mediate both in its relational sense of
connection and in its symbolic sense of transmission; America’s role involves “knowing and comprehending and embodying” every other nation. Although Wilson is almost certainly referring to the actual physical presence of various ethnic groups within the United States, he also moves into the realm of the symbolic, implying that America’s job is to interpret the world and then transmit that interpretation back to the world. Presumably, once incorporated into the United States, different ethnic groups cancel out each other’s “racial momentum” and serve instead to produce complementary frames of reference for viewing and understanding the world. In Wilson’s vision, therefore, America itself becomes both a microcosm that can physically embody all of the earth’s peoples and a globalizing force of representation that can read and represent all other nations and cultures from a position of privilege.

In other words, the above passage stands as a culmination of Wilson’s twenty-year-long attempt to provide a politically and historically savvy but also, crucially, a rhetorically and aesthetically satisfying account of America’s position in international affairs. In making the rhetorical claims about American identity that he does, he also privileges the importance of telling a story that can encompass both the United States in particular and the rest of the world at large. Wilson’s simultaneous employment of the word mediate in its diplomatic sense of peace-brokering, its relational sense of connection, and its symbolic sense of transmission offers a powerful formula for rethinking American identity because he examines such implied questions in insistently functionalist terms: What is the United States? It is “the mediating Nation of the world.” What does it mean to be American? It means possessing the ability to “understand all nations.” Oddly enough for a man who was a historian by training, Wilson goes so far as
to dismiss history’s ability to tell us anything about either question. After all, he claims confidently, the United States “has no history back of it which makes it run […] in one particular direction.” In order to understand who you are, Wilson tells his fellow Americans, you need to recognize what it is you do, not where you come from or how you got where you are. In one sweeping statement, Wilson shifts the language of national identity away from essentialism to functionalism, even if his administration did not follow through on that rhetoric.

But an even more dynamic set of ideas is at work in Wilson’s speech as well. For his definition of America as “the mediating Nation” to work, he must also acknowledge the existence of a closely integrated international system of nation-states, which Wilson’s own nation-state simultaneously mediates and is compounded of. Thus what we find in this 1915 speech is not only a picture of America’s emerging place as a powerful member of the international community, or simply a gesture toward a new definition of American identity, but just as important, a highly sophisticated and carefully formulated description of a globalized world. In short, Wilson provides us with one of the fullest early articulations of global theory. Nowhere, of course, does Wilson actually use the words *global, globalized, or globalization.*

The trouble he takes to define *mediate* and to provide synonyms for *compounded* indicates that he was fully aware of the paucity of terms at his disposal for communicating the complexity and novelty of his ideas.

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4 As authors of introductory studies of globalization are fond of pointing out, the verb *globalize* did not appear until after the Second World War. According to the *OED,* our current usage of *global* has been shaped by Marshall McLuhan’s discussion of “the global village” in *Explorations in Communication,* ed. Edmund Carpenter and McLuhan (Boston: Beacon, 1960). To Wilson, *global* simply would have meant “universal”; instead, he would have employed the term *internationalism,* which dates to 1851, again according to the *OED.* I discuss Wilson’s vocabulary in more detail later in this chapter.
Nevertheless, the key problems and concerns of global theory are nascent in the above passage and throughout many of his other writings.

Wilson was not alone in grappling with these problems; indeed, as I suggested in my introduction, these concerns helped shape the public and literary discourse of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America. For instance, as early as 1867, Henry James penned an even more explicitly literary analogue to Wilson’s political concept of a “mediating nation.” In a letter written to his friend Thomas Sergeant Perry on September 20 of that year, James writes:

We have exquisite qualities as a race, and it seems to me that we are ahead of the European races in the fact that more than either of them we can deal with forms of civilization not our own, can pick and choose and assimilate and in short (aesthetically, etc.) claim our property wherever we find it. To have no national stamp has hitherto been a defect and a drawback; but I think it not unlikely that American writers may yet indicate that a vast intellectual fusion and synthesis of the various national tendencies of the world is the condition of more important achievements than any we have seen.5

In subsequent chapters, I examine in more detail how such American authors as James, Abraham Cahan, Jack London, Katherine Anne Porter, and others constructed new national narratives that could accommodate the United States’ emergence as a world power and make sense of ongoing concerns over the influx of immigrants, American political leaders’ imperial ambitions, and America’s increasing diplomatic and military authority among the so-called Great Powers. In this chapter, however, I present a history of both the “compressions” (i.e., events and conditions of possibility) and “consciousnesses” (i.e., discursive practices) that transformed the United States into a

globalized nation. In other words, I argue that Wilson’s speech represents a culmination of a series of events, developments, discussions, and debates that globalized America, and the bulk of this chapter is dedicated to establishing the history that enabled Wilson’s formulation and the genealogy of his rhetoric. In the process of tracing this history and genealogy, I also provide an account of the emergence of globalization and its impact on American public discourse. To borrow from the quotation by Karl Marx that heads this chapter, I argue that globalization and “world history” possess a history, that globalization is itself “a result.” What globalization resulted from, and how Americans in particular attempted to describe both the result and the sources of that result, are the two questions that will guide the pages that follow. First, however, in order to avoid the trap of presentism and to establish exactly what sort of vocabulary Wilson and his contemporaries, like James, had at their disposal to talk about what we now think of as globalization, I will return briefly to a closer examination of Wilson’s speech.

For instance, Wilson’s—and, to a lesser extent in his letter, James’—concept of world is unprecedented. Unlike the words mediate and compounded, Wilson does not bother to define or provide synonyms for world—perhaps because, in many ways, it is an even vaguer term. Instead, he uses the word twice (“We are the mediating Nation of the world”; “We are compounded of the nations of the world”) and moves on. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the chief usages for the word world (in some cases dating as far back as ninth-century Old English) tend to refer either to the earth itself, though often the writer/speaker means only that portion he or she personally inhabits and knows, or to the totality of human existence, frequently connoting the vastness of everything that ever has existed or ever will exist throughout time. Neither of these more general
meanings are entirely absent from Wilson’s conception of world. Clearly, he is referring to the planet earth and its human inhabitants, but he is also referring to a specific, not an abstract, totality: the community of nations. What distinguishes Wilson’s and James’ world is that it is an entity made up of interconnected but quite distinct, easily discernable parts known as nation-states. The whole, as it were, is not greater than the sum of its parts, for his world is defined by the nations that inhabit it, not the other way around.

What we find in Wilson’s speech and James’ letter, then, is a radical shift in the meaning of the word world, at least in terms of its traditional usage up until the mid-nineteenth century, and in the relationship of that word to rhetoric about America. For one thing, Wilson does not view the world simply as a space Americans happen to inhabit; rather, Wilson envisions it as something inherently human and social with which Americans interact on a daily basis. More specifically, Wilson’s world is an aggregate of nation-states, each with its own independently functioning “traditions,” “sentiments,” “tastes,” and “passions.” Presumably, these nation-states can interact with each other to the exclusion of the United States; they go about “quarreling,” after all. Yet they still make up a totality, one in which international borders seem to matter very little. Even more significantly, it is the very act of American mediation that turns them into a totality: “we are able to understand them in the compound, not separately, as partisans, but unitedly as knowing and comprehending and embodying them all.” Americans can mediate, know, and embody the tastes, sentiments, and passions of all other national cultures—apparently from the comfort of their own homes. Whether immigrants from these nations carry their cultures with them to America or, just as likely, expanding American businesses transport products from other countries to American markets, the
result remains the same: Within the confines of its own borders, the United States can recreate the cultures of other nations completely intact; outside its borders, the United States can bring nations closer together by mediating their potentially partisan cultural practices. Finally, Wilson’s claim that Americans are “compounded of the nations of the world” is an outright rejection of any dichotomous understanding of America’s relationship with the world. There is little room to insert any binaries, such as I/Other or Us/Them, into the equation. Rather, Wilson tacitly acknowledges the inappropriateness of such binaries in a nation inhabited primarily by the descendants of various groups of immigrants.

The OED also draws attention to a linguistic practice that became increasingly frequent from the mid-nineteenth century onwards: the use of the word world as prefix, much as German compounds are constructed. (World-Power appears as a separate entry in the OED, for example.) For nineteenth-century writers, this practice serves as the closest approximation of our adjectival term global, taking on much of the same complexity that that latter term carries for us. More generally, this practice gives a degree of greater importance and applicability to whichever word makes up the second half of the compound, and on the other hand, it gives greater specificity to the word world itself by tying it to a more particular object, attribute, or process. To list just a few examples, the OED cites William Dwight Whitney’s prediction in Language and the Study of Language (1867) that English would become a “world-language, understood and employed on every continent”; William Morris’ reference in News from Nowhere (1890) to “a most elaborate system of buying and selling, which has been called the world-market”; and a claim in the Congressional Record (January 29, 1900) that the United
States had “become a ‘world-power.’”⁶ In each instance, using world as a prefix drastically alters the meaning of the word that follows, broadening its meaning—but a meaning that only functions conditional to its active application. Thus English becomes a “world-language” only when “employed on every continent,” and the “world-market” only exists in the context of “buying and selling” within an “elaborate system.” Although Wilson himself does not follow suit in his speech, he had at his disposal several such compounds: world-order (dating to 1846), world-system (1874), and even international community (1894).⁷ The practice of employing world as a prefix reached its apogee in the powerful concept of world-salvation, a phrase that spanned the entire thirty-five-year period I am surveying and one examined extensively below. Now, however, I turn to the historical conditions of possibility that allowed for the emergence of globalization.

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A key challenge facing any study of globalization is to make as clear a distinction as possible between the facts on the ground and the conceptualization of those facts. That is to say, in order to understand the history of globalization, it is necessary to distinguish actual historical events that accelerated the processes of globalization from the language and rhetoric people used for making sense of those events. Drawing such a distinction, however, does not necessarily entail labeling every historical event, action, or text as either a powerful constituent or a mere reflection of globalization. On the contrary, the boundaries between what constitutes and what reflects globalization are quite permeable. Indeed, Wilson’s speech illustrates powerfully just how unsteady the border between

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⁷ For international community, see “Draft Additions May 2003” for the entry on “International,” OED Online.
such distinctions really is; a president’s speech that announces or outlines national policy is clearly a performative utterance. As I pointed out in the introduction, I view this distinction between events and conceptions in much the same way as I view William James’ distinction between terms and relations and Roland Robertson’s distinction between global compression and global consciousness. The distinction exists for the sake of convenience when examining what conditions of possibility enabled or constrained an emerging global consciousness; otherwise, events and conceptions are interactive. Our ability to name globalization as such is the result of considerable interplay between historical socioeconomic trends and intellectual attempts at naming and studying these trends. Yet, even while my primary focus is the rhetorical conceptualization of globalization, it is important to acknowledge the differences between history and discourse and to provide a brief overview of what aspects of the world situation most influenced American writers’ thinking at the end of the nineteenth century. What follows, then, is a brief account of the events, developments, and problems that distinguished the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century from other periods in U.S. history. It is also a gesture toward explaining how events over 100 years ago connect to the present and shape our current concerns and understanding of globalization.

The history of globalization is not, of course, wholly synchronic with U.S. history. The concept of the nation-state, which is the building-block of the global order, predates the United States, as does colonialism, mapmaking, and international commerce. And these ideas and practices inhabit analogous histories in other nation-states. Thus while it is necessary to examine the particularities of globalization’s development in
relation to U.S. history, it is also important to consider the more general characteristics of
the history of globalization in the west.

Roland Robertson, perhaps the foremost historian of globalization, offers what he
calls a Minimal Phase Model of Globalization that both “indicates the major constraining
tendencies which have been operating in relatively recent history as far as world order
and the compression of the world […] are concerned” and delineates “the temporal-
historical path to the present […] high degree of global density and complexity.”

Although Robertson is quick to note that his framework may amount to little more than a
skeletal outline for guiding future research, the Minimal Phase Model attempts nothing
less than to trace the development of globalization from the early-fifteenth to the late-
twentieth century. For our purposes, Robertson’s model is helpful for two reasons. First,
it persuasively distinguishes several broad historical movements, or phases, from one
another without erecting an overly rigid system of periodization or failing to register
continuities between different phases. Second, it highlights events and developments that
significantly accelerated the processes of globalization during each of those phases.

Robertson identifies five distinct phases in the history of globalization: the
Germinal Phase (early-fifteenth to mid-eighteenth century); the Incipient Phase (mid-
eighteenth century to 1870s); the Take-off Phase (1870s to mid-1920s); the Struggle-for-
Hegemony Phase (mid-1920s to late-1960s); and the Uncertainty Phase (late-1960s to
early 1990s). Phase III, “the crucial take-off period of globalization itself,” is what
concerns us most because, according to Robertson, it was this phase that “set firmly in

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9 Robertson 58-59.
motion” the form of globalization with which we are still familiar. Covering the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, this phase also corresponds to the years under study in this project. Robertson summarizes the “take-off phase” this way:

**Phase III: The Take-off Phase** Lasting from the 1870s until the mid-1920s. ‘Take-off’ here refers to a period during which the increasingly manifest globalizing tendencies of previous periods and places gave way to a single, inexorable form centered upon the four reference points, and thus constraints, of national societies, generic individuals (but with a masculine bias), a single ‘international society,’ and an increasingly singular, but not unified conception of humankind. Early thematization of ‘the problem of modernity.’ Increasingly global conceptions of the ‘correct outline’ of an ‘acceptable’ national society; international formalization and attempted implementation of ideas about humanity. Globalization of immigration restrictions. Very sharp increase in number and speed of global communication. The first ‘international novels.’ Rise of ecumenical movement. Development of global competitions—for example the Olympics and Nobel prizes. Implementation of world time and near-global adoption of Gregorian calendar. First world war.

While I disagree with Robertson’s use of such universalizing adjectives as *single* and *inexorable* to characterize globalization, which I view as historically richer and more multifaceted, Robertson’s brief description of this period is still useful because his examples draw attention to the important distinction between facts and conceptualizations.

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10 Robertson 52, 60. According to Robertson, what distinguishes Phase III from earlier phases is that, although the key concepts of *individual*, *national community*, and *humanity* first appeared and expanded throughout Europe during the Germinal and Incipient phases, these concepts literally “went global” during the Take-off Phase. In other words, people were forced to begin thinking of *international society* and *humanity* as existing beyond the confines of Europe.

11 Robertson 59, original emphasis.
On one hand, Robertson cites the following historical facts: the publication of the first “international novel,” a designation often attributed to Henry James’ *The American* (1877); the development of new, faster, and more extensive forms of communication, such as the telephone (patented 1876) and the radio (1896); the arrival of “global competitions,” such as the first modern Olympic Games (1896) and the first Nobel Prizes (1901); and, as Robertson pointedly concludes, the advent of the “first world war” (1914-1918). Significantly, Robertson also mentions the “implementation of world time,” which occurred in 1884 when an international conference held in Washington, D.C., designated the meridian that passes through Greenwich as the prime meridian for the purposes of both timekeeping and geographic longitude. This particular example points directly to the most salient feature of globalization: that it involves a reformulation of relations between different people or objects (discussed at greater length in the introduction). In the case of the 1884 International Meridian Conference, most people’s relationship with time itself changed; in order to coordinate transportation and communication more effectively, local time everywhere in the world now depended upon local time at Greenwich rather than when the sun appeared overhead. In producing a newly global temporality, this event provides dramatic evidence of how globalization reshapes the local, everyday aspects of people’s lives as well as their own understanding of their relatedness with other communities. Mark Twain, for instance, reveals the impact of the implementation of world time in *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894). Published only ten years after the International Meridian Conference, Twain’s novel begins with Tom, Huck, and Jim boarding a giant balloon that eventually transports them to Africa. As they travel eastward, they notice that the town clocks they pass over do not match
their own watches. The following exchange reveals the growing frustration of Tom, who understands the principles of world time, as he attempts to explain the reason for the discrepancy to the increasingly perplexed and disturbed Huck and Jim:

[Tom:] “We’ve covered about fifteen degrees of longitude since we left St. Louis yesterday afternoon, and them clocks are right.” […]

Jim was working his mind and studying. Pretty soon he says:

“Mars Tom, did you say dem clocks uz right?”

“Yes, they’re right.”

“Ain’t yo watch right, too?”

“She’s right for St. Louis, but she’s an hour wrong for here.”

“Mars Tom, is you tryin’ to let on dat de time ain’t de same everywheres?”

“No, it ain’t the same everywheres, by a long shot.”

Jim looked distressed, and says:

“It grieves me to hear you talk like dat, Mars Tom; I’s right down ashamed to hear you talk like dat, arter de way you’s been raised. Yassir, it’d break yo’ Aunt Polly’s heart to hear you.”12

Eventually, Jim concludes that, if Tom is right and it can be Monday evening in North America and Tuesday morning in Europe, there cannot be a literal Last Day, in the eschatological sense. Jim’s encounter with one aspect of globalization shakes his religious faith.

Robertson goes on to acknowledge that globalization is also the result of intellectual and rhetorical reformulations. In the above description of the Take-off Phase, he refers to the “inclusion of a number of non-European societies in ‘international society.’” Robertson is probably alluding to the Ottoman Empire, which allied itself with Germany and Austria-Hungary during the First World War, and especially to Japan,

which underwent rapid modernization in the late 19th century, adopted the European model of colonialism in Korea and Taiwan, and fought alongside the Great Powers in China during the Boxer Rebellion (1900). Even more importantly, however, Robertson implies that the Take-off Phase was the period during which a formalized conception of the precise meaning of “international society” first appeared. Referring to “a single ‘international society’” and “increasingly global conceptions of the ‘correct outline’ of an ‘acceptable’ national society,” Robertson is almost certainly thinking of the League of Nations and of Woodrow Wilson himself, whose notion of the international community was founded upon the sovereignty of individual nation-states and the inviolable right of national communities to self-determination.

But Robertson is also pointing to the slow but steady replacement of mythic conceptions of “the nation” with comparative ones. By 1882, for instance, the French philologist and historian Ernst Renan could categorically reject each of the popularly believed pre-historical origins of the nation: race, language, religion, royal dynasty, ethnic character. Instead, Renan famously declared, the nation was merely the product of “a large-scale solidarity,” the result of “a daily plebiscite.”  

Each nation, Renan claimed, existed mainly because its citizens found it the most convenient means of maintaining law and order and of guaranteeing their own liberty. While, as Eric Hobsbawm has emphasized, it would be inappropriate to attribute Renan’s views to all

late-nineteenth-century thinkers, Renan’s essay nevertheless demonstrated a growing willingness to rethink the relationship between the nation and its citizens.

Moreover, in a less frequently cited though equally important passage from the same essay, Renan went on to note the mutual interdependence of every nation-state: “Through their various and often opposed powers, nations participate in the common work of civilization; each sounds a note in the great concert of humanity. […] Isolated, each has its weak point. […] Yet all these discordant details disappear in the overall context.” The “overall context” that Renan invoked sounds remarkably similar to what modern sociologists refer to as the “world society,” in which nation-states legitimize themselves and police each other by presenting themselves as models for other nation-states to follow. Referring to this process as isomorphism, John W. Meyer echoes Renan when he argues that “nation-state forms, in many specific areas, reflect world models, change along with these models, and change in similar directions despite obvious international diversities in local culture and resources.” What Renan viewed as the complementary nature of different nation-states participating in the “common work of civilization” is, according to Meyer, the result of each nation-state being embedded in a much wider global political culture. Despite whatever regional differences may obtain, nation-states are always recognizable as such because they tend to follow each other’s

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14 In Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), Hobsbawm notes that, although Renan influenced later thinkers, his attitude towards nationalism was much more relaxed than most of his fellow Victorians’ “passionate preoccupation with ‘race[,]’ language, religion, territory, history, culture and the rest” (43-44). The watershed study of national identity is, of course, Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983).

15 Renan 20.

examples, whether this means establishing a parliamentary form of representative
government or, as it did in Renan’s time, acquiring large-scale overseas empires. In other
words, both Renan and Meyer would argue that nation-states do not come into being
because of some sort of “racial momentum” (to borrow once again from Wilson), but
rather because they are recognized by other nation-states (the “world society” for Meyer)
as fitting preexisting models of what nation-states are supposed to look like and do (the
“common work of civilization” for Renan). Thus Renan’s 1882 lecture marks the
transition from a mythic to the comparative understanding of “the nation” and
international society that Robertson describes.

But if these wider developments were occurring elsewhere in the world in the
late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, what specific events and trends characterize
the American experience of globalization? What shaped the increasingly international
views of Woodrow Wilson and other Americans engaged in the public and literary
discourse of their time? What events, in short, propelled the United States onto the
global stage? These questions have long occupied historians, who have traditionally
exhibited greater attention to the interplay between domestic and international concerns
in the shaping of American culture than have scholars of American literature; as a result,
a considerable body of literature on the history of U.S. foreign policy already exists.17

17 The vast amount of historical scholarship on U.S. foreign policy between the McKinley and Wilson
administrations can prove intimidating, especially since this scholarship has itself undergone dramatic—
and sometimes highly charged—shifts in foci, assumptions, and aims. For a detailed overview of these
shifts, see Joseph A. Fry, “From Open Door to World Systems: Economic Interpretations of Late
understanding of the period has been shaped largely by Michael H. Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy
(New Haven: Yale UP, 1987); Walter LaFeber, The New Empire: An Interpretation of American
Expansion, 1869-1898 (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1963); LaFeber, The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-
Cambridge UP, 1993); and Emily S. Rosenberg, Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and
Frequently, these historians disagree in their interpretations of events, such as whether economic or ideological concerns played a more important role in motivating overseas expansion and whether the 1890s marked a radical departure in U.S. foreign policy or illustrated continuity with the policies of earlier administrations. Nevertheless, they tend to trace America’s entry onto the global stage via the same key events and connect those events to more diffuse social movements: 1) the appearance of the first anti-immigration laws (the first being the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882); 2) the Spanish-American War (1898) and the debates about imperialism that it generated; 3) the formulation of the Open Door Policy (1899) and the Taft administration’s (1909-13) commitment to “dollar diplomacy”; 4) Theodore Roosevelt’s mediation of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the increased prestige its success—and Roosevelt’s Nobel Peace Prize—brought to U.S. diplomacy; and 5) America’s entry into World War I and Woodrow Wilson’s prominence during the Peace of Paris (1919-20). I, however, would like to examine these events from an explicitly global perspective, that is, not simply as events that marked the United States’ entry onto the international stage as a Great Power but as events that transformed America into a globalized nation.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the other anti-immigration legislation that appeared in the following decades marked a radical shift in U.S. immigration policy. Until that point, the United States had pursued a policy of open immigration, despite increasing tension over the influx of Irish immigrants as early as the 1850s, and the government certainly had not singled out a specific ethnic group for such discrimination. Indeed, as late as 1868, the United States and China had agreed to the Burlingame Treaty, 

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*Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). I am particularly grateful to Michael Hunt for his advice on where to begin my research in this area.
which allowed unlimited immigration between the two nations, and the United States had actively encouraged Chinese workers to immigrate because of the source of cheap labor they provided, especially for the construction of railroads. Yet the late-nineteenth-century influx of millions of immigrants, all of them seemingly carrying their native cultural practices with them, produced a widespread anxiety that the nation itself was fragmenting in even more disturbing ways than the sectionalism that had led to the Civil War. This anxiety, as Michael Hunt demonstrates, “made the unifying effect of an assertively nationalist foreign policy particularly attractive,” thus contributing to the idea that domestic pressures could be vented through “overseas adventures.”

Increased contact with different ethnic groups led white Americans to commit to what both Hunt and Walter LaFeber call “Anglo-Saxonism,” the belief in the superiority of English-speaking people’s civilization and in the duty of English speakers to protect that civilization through the establishment of racial hierarchies that could control other peoples at home and abroad. Among the results were a domestic policy of closed borders and a foreign policy of, at first, territorial and then economic expansion overseas. In other words, as an examination of the writings of Josiah Strong will demonstrate below, U.S. foreign and domestic policy converged to produce a sort of nativist globalism that enabled American politicians and intellectuals to link their exclusion of non-Anglo-

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19 In Hunt, see pp. 77-91; in LaFeber, New Empire, see pp. 99-100. In The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945, Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), Akira Iriye intriguingly suggests that the practices of such racial hierarchies result from globalization itself. He briefly alludes to “the conception of race hierarchy that had always existed but which now became more relevant in view of the coming closer together of various races of mankind” (15). W.E.B. Du Bois agreed with this assessment; see note 49 below.
Saxon immigrants with their attempts to intervene in global markets elsewhere, such as in China and Latin America.

Nowhere is that transition from a foreign policy of territorial expansion to one of economic expansion more dramatically illustrated than in the two watershed moments of the McKinley administration: the Spanish-American War and the formulation of the Open Door Policy. In the decade or so leading up to those events, America’s political leaders had faced a series of economic crises, including widespread opposition to the government’s continued commitment to the gold standard and a severe depression that began in 1893 due in part to overproduction. Many Americans were also growing uneasy at what they perceived to be the encroachment of European imperial powers within U.S. spheres of influence (namely, Latin America and the Pacific Rim). The solution to both problems, some argued, was to follow the European imperial model: to protect existing American interests by building a larger navy and to generate new markets for American goods by acquiring overseas colonies. Yet when the Spanish-American War offered the United States the opportunity both to test its navy and acquire the Philippines from Spain, many prominent Americans, including William Jennings Bryan, opposed colonial expansion for a combination of moral and economic reasons. They argued that not only was it a contradiction in terms for a democracy to set itself up as an imperial power, but that the costs of running and protecting overseas colonies—not to mention suppressing any native populations—would far outstrip whatever economic benefits possessing such colonies might produce. In the end, the protracted and largely unexpected Philippine Insurrection (1899-1913) lent credence to the anti-imperialist argument, and American policymakers searched for an alternative model of economic expansion.
That alternative model already existed in the form of Cuba, which officially gained its independence after the Spanish-American War but which remained an American protectorate under the Platt Amendment of 1901 and the Reciprocity Treaty of 1902. Cuba’s nominal independence, Emily Rosenberg claims, served as “a laboratory for methods of influence that fell short of outright colonialism” and proved that “the expansion of trade and investment could best proceed without formal colonialism.” So economically successful did the McKinley administration find this policy of “non”-colonization that it pursued similar protectorate treaties throughout Latin America, where a strong U.S. presence made it possible to enjoy special tariff privileges to the exclusion of European nations. In regions where the United States could not impose such beneficial tariffs, it attempted to win the European powers over to its model of “non”-colonization. The most notable result was the Open Door Policy, a largely rhetorical approach to foreign trade that was first proposed by Secretary of State John Hay in 1899. Designed to guarantee the territorial integrity of China and thus to ensure equal trading rights in China for all western nations, the Open Door Policy was never officially accepted by any other nation, a fact that did not prevent Hay from declaring that it had been. Yet the inaction of most of the other Great Powers made it seem that, in practice, the Open Door Policy was a success—at least until Japan began occupying Manchuria and other Chinese territories from the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) onwards. The perceived success of Hay’s Open Door Policy (or a willful blindness to its ultimate failure) laid the cornerstone for subsequent U.S. foreign policy during the period that

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20 Rosenberg 47.
Rosenberg labels the “promotional state” (1890-1913),\(^{21}\) which reached its apotheosis during the administration of William Howard Taft. Taft believed that substituting “dollars for bullets” was the surest method of expanding American economic interests and, as Akira Iriye puts it, of “promoting an economically more interdependent—and therefore […] politically stabler—international order.”\(^{22}\) This equation of economic growth and geopolitical stability was particularly appealing to American investors, who received regular incentives to invest in overseas industries and markets and thus laid the groundwork for today’s multinational corporations.

The final two events, the respective diplomatic prominence of Theodore Roosevelt during the Russo-Japanese War and Woodrow Wilson after World War I, were perhaps the most important in accelerating the United States’ entry into global prominence. Through their efforts at mediating conflicts between or among major powers, both men increased the global prestige of the American presidency significantly. Furthermore, the activities of both presidents fed into a widely held sense of mission, an almost religious conviction that America faced a special duty to transform the world. Next to Roosevelt’s and Wilson’s diplomatic undertakings, however, the most conspicuous result of this ideology of global transformation was, as Rosenberg points out, the “outpouring of American Protestant missionary activity [that] provided a cultural counterpart to the American economic invasion.”\(^{23}\) Missionaries and philanthropists subscribed enthusiastically to the notion that extending American culture, particularly American religious culture, abroad simultaneously promoted better international

\(^{21}\) See pp. 13, 48-49.

\(^{22}\) Iriye 17.

\(^{23}\) Rosenberg 28.
understanding and made it easier for U.S. businesses to gain footholds in other countries, despite such evidence to the contrary as the targeting of foreign missionaries in China during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Accordingly, this ideology of global transformation and “world-salvation” provided a powerful lens through which Americans could view—and interact with—the world and coordinate their various political, economic, and cultural expansionist practices. It is to the genealogy of that ideology of “world-salvation” and the power of its rhetoric I now turn.

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In 1885, a relatively obscure Congregational minister named Josiah Strong published a remarkable book entitled *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*. Originally intended as little more than an extended plea for contributions to the American Home Missionary Society, the text gradually extended into a more complicated treatise on the then-current state of American society and its future role in world affairs. Strong, who fancied himself an intellectual and social reformer, drew—and attempted to synthesize—information from a wide variety of sources: census reports, Papal Encyclicals, the Encyclopædia Britannica, Alexis de Tocqueville, articles from *The Nation* and *The Century*, and so forth. Linking the importance of missionary work (including home missions) to U.S. foreign policy and the duty of Anglo-Saxons to spread civilization (namely, Anglo-American culture) throughout the world, Strong produced an instant bestseller. In less than a decade, *Our Country* sold 175,000 copies in the United States alone, making it one of the most popular books of its time.²⁴

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²⁴ LaFeber, *New Empire* 73. In the second chapter (“The Intellectual Formulation”), LaFeber treats several of the same figures I am examining here to brief but thoughtful analysis.
Without question, the reason for the book’s enormous popularity lay in the careful balance Strong struck between playing to his audience’s patriotic belief in America’s cultural, economic, and moral supremacy and, at the same time, playing up their fears that alien forces were diluting an alleged national unity that made America’s supremacy possible. In throwing these two affective forces into relation with one another, Strong uses *Our Country* to construct and articulate a particularly virulent and exclusionary concept of American identity. Half of the book’s fourteen chapters are dedicated to describing and deploving seven major “perils” to America’s cultural homogeneity: immigration, Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, intemperance/alcoholism, socialism, financial inequality, and urbanization. The other half is a paean to the seemingly limitless economic resources of the American West and moral resources of the Anglo-Saxon race and to the providence that brought the Anglo-Saxon race to the American West. Throughout, Strong insists that America can realize its potential only if its citizens first civilize and Christianize their rapidly closing western frontier, ensuring that the same Anglo-Saxon, Christian culture extends across the continent. Thus Strong takes a carrot-and-stick approach to his argument, reassuring his readers that America is indeed destined to lead the world yet warning them that the only way to achieve that destiny is to act now.

In essence, Strong places the responsibility for America’s continued greatness at the doorstep of his readers, no doubt hoping that the immediate result would be an influx of financial contributions to the American Home Missionary Society. But the length and complexity of Strong’s argument—and the fact that he would return twice more to the same themes, in *The New Era or the Coming Kingdom* (1893) and *Expansion under New*
World Conditions (1900)—suggest that Strong’s aims were more ambitious. Indeed, LaFeber claims that Strong wanted nothing less than to influence U.S. foreign policy at the highest levels, citing Strong’s later association with expansionist ideologues like Alfred Thayer Mahan and Senator William P. Frye of Maine. In Our Country, Strong repeatedly links domestic issues with global events, and he accepts unquestioningly the central principle of home missions: that “salvation” of the world is inextricably tied to “salvation” of the nation. As a result, he forces his readers to look outwards, beyond America’s borders, to perceive existing dangers and to glimpse future opportunities. Following the logic of Strong’s argument, LaFeber argues, “American foreign policy makers could only operate from the basic assumption of an ever increasing involvement in world politics. The policy makers had no choice, given the discoveries of steam and electricity and the resulting unity of the peoples of the world. […] Salvation lay in the fulfillment of the Anglo-Saxon mission to reshape the world in the mold of western civilization.”

The use of the word salvation in this context is significant and almost certainly intentional on LaFeber’s part, for it is precisely this word—and its metonymic status within Strong’s reformulation of relations between the United States and the rest of the world—that drives the rhetoric behind Strong’s ideology of global transformation. Unquestionably, this rhetoric echoes that of John Winthrop and other Puritan writers. In its careful blending of religious and nationalistic language, Our Country can take its place comfortably alongside Winthrop’s “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630) and Ronald Reagan’s Farewell Address (1989) in the historical trajectory of the rhetoric of American

25 LaFeber, New Empire 78.
26 LaFeber, New Empire 76-77.
exceptionalism. Yet the particular ideology that Strong articulates, which I term the ideology of world-salvation, is different from Winthrop’s in several respects. Perhaps most importantly, Strong’s grand mission, unlike the Puritans’, is not tied to any one religious group. Indeed, for a minister, Strong’s rhetoric is surprisingly devoid of theological particularity. Rather, for Strong, the secular organizing principle of the nation is the key to world-salvation. Furthermore, Strong’s vision places the United States in a far more active international role than Winthrop ever imagined. As a “city upon a hill,” Winthrop’s ideal community is essentially passive; his America leads primarily by example. Strong, on the other hand, advocates a more aggressive and interventionist approach to the secular world of international politics. His America harnesses new technologies, pursues far-flung economic interests, and engages in diplomacy—all in an effort to effect what he viewed as change for the better in other societies. In short, the ideology of world-salvation is both global and transformative.

The strand of American exceptionalism found in Our Country thus reflexively engages the historical conditions and concerns of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century America. As the United States emerged as a world power, through imperial and economic expansion overseas and greater involvement in international diplomacy, American writers, intellectuals, and politicians began interrogating the nature of their national identity, the future of their country, and the United States’ role in world affairs. Like Strong, these writers were responding to and participating in the changes going on within America’s social landscape and in the United States’ relationships with foreign nations. What Strong provided was a powerful formula for making sense of those changes and carving out a more active and influential role for the United States within the
international community. For the second half of this chapter, I now turn to the genealogy of Strong’s ideology and rhetoric, examining how Strong’s formula provided writers and intellectuals leading up to Woodrow Wilson a means for pushing for greater U.S. activity on the global stage. I further show, however, that world-salvation remained a highly malleable concept; Strong’s rhetoric could be—and was—taken up by other writers with divergent political agendas. W.E.B. Du Bois, in particular, shared Strong’s global perspective but arrived at a different set of conclusions about America’s role in the world, acknowledging that the world beyond America also had a role to play in the lives of his fellow African-Americans.

The concept of world-salvation turns up repeatedly throughout Our Country. It makes its first appearance even before Strong’s text begins, in the introduction written by Austin Phelps, a fellow Congregational minister and the former president of Andover Theological Seminary. Phelps, whom Strong admired and quoted extensively, quickly highlights the central strand of Strong’s argument: that of a connection existing between national and international well-being or, as Phelps puts it, “the idea of crisis in the destiny of this country, and through it in the destiny of the world.”

A few paragraphs later, Phelps also summarizes Strong’s solution for averting this two-fold crisis:

The conflict for the world’s salvation partakes of the same character [as a military crisis]. And the facts and their corollaries massed together in this book show that nowhere is it more portentously true than in this country. Our whole history is a succession of crises. Our national salvation demands in supreme exercise certain

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27 Austin Phelps, introduction, Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis, by Josiah Strong (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1885) iii, original emphasis.
military virtues. […] The truth [is] that Christian enterprise for the moral conquest of this land needs to be conducted.\textsuperscript{28}

The salvation of America and, by extension, the salvation of the world can result only through ensuring that the “moral conquest” of the United States gets carried out by Protestant organizations like the American Home Missionary Society, which provided support for new churches in the western territories until they became financially independent. In his use of militaristic language, which was typical of Protestant leaders of the time,\textsuperscript{29} Phelps seems to prescribe a single rule of thumb that guarantees both America’s and the world’s salvation: The spread of Christian civilization must keep pace with American expansion—and, presumably, \textit{vice versa}. That is, to ensure America’s salvation, Phelps believes that Americans must make the cultural and political identity of the United States synonymous with Christian civilization, and to ensure the world’s salvation, they must actively reshape the world in America’s own image.

In Phelps’ introduction, therefore, we find the core of Josiah Strong’s argument and the starting point of Strong’s career as an apologist for American imperialist expansion. Yet what distinguishes this book in its entirety from other imperialist tracts of the time, such as those of the British novelist G.A. Henty,\textsuperscript{30} is exactly what Phelps admires but leaves out of his introduction: all that mass of “facts and their corollaries.”

It is, in fact, the sheer amount of information that Strong grapples with and attempts to tie

\textsuperscript{28} Phelps v, emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{29} The formation of the Salvation Army by Edwin Booth in 1865 best exemplifies the militaristic values espoused by Protestant Christians in the mid- and late-nineteenth century. The lyrics for the song most frequently associated with the Salvation Army, “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” which metaphorically depicts Christian service as war, were written by Sabine Baring-Gould the preceding year.

\textsuperscript{30} In the preface to his children’s novel \textit{With Clive in India: The Beginnings of an Empire} (London: Blackie, 1884), Henty rhapsodizes over the “wonderful events” that saved “English influence apparently at the point of extinction in India” (v). Henty would go on to romanticize and oversimplify the relationship between white Confederate slave owners and their black chattel in \textit{With Lee in Virginia: A Story of the American Civil War} (1890).
together that transforms his treatise from a mere exercise in fundraising into something far more groundbreaking. Despite the dubiousness of Strong’s politics, it would be unfair to dismiss *Our Country* as misinformed propaganda from a reactionary figure. On the contrary, as a historical document, *Our Country* remains an intelligent and insightful inquiry into a complex set of social and economic questions that intersected in ways the author himself barely understood. Reading the book today, one is consistently surprised at how closely Strong’s study resembles our current understanding of globalization. Without Strong’s perceptive observations and incisive correlations, it is unlikely that Wilson, who knew and read Strong’s work, would have managed to conceive of America’s relationship to the world in as sophisticated a way as he did. In short, the importance of Strong’s *Our Country* rests as much upon its lasting impact on Americans’ conceptualization of the world as upon its immediate influence on U.S. foreign policy.

Take, for instance, Strong’s discussion of immigrants, which is the first and most pressing “peril” he addresses in his book. Although he frets at length over the “noxious” and “profound influence on our national life and character” that a “typical” European immigrant’s “meager or false religious training” might exert, he never once entertains the possibility of closing America’s borders or establishing immigration quotas. To be sure, he paints a bleak picture of the extent to which immigrants were beginning to transform certain parts of the nation; according to Strong, several cities on the east coast, including New York City, are already “essentially foreign” (44). Instead of viewing these immigrants as interlopers, however, Strong portrays them as victims of circumstance or, to be more precise, as the necessary and unstoppable result of historical

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forces of technology and the global economy. He explains that the mass migration is due to faster and cheaper “facilities of travel,” most notably “steam navigation,” that reduced the cost of passage from Europe to America by as much as 70%-90% between 1825 and 1885 (38). Strong also links this migration to economic and political conditions on both sides of the Atlantic and, even more perceptively, to how the conditions on one side can affect the conditions on the other. For example, he points to the invention and production of “labor-saving machinery” in America that is then exported to Europe: “The making of this machinery in the United States increases the demand for labor here, and its exportation decreases the demand for labor in the Old World. That means immigration to this country. We are to send our labor-saving machinery around the globe, and equivalents in bone and muscle are to be sent back to us” (39). Thus in Strong’s opinion, international migration is as much a historical certainty as are the economic realities of production and consumption or the inevitability of technological progress.

But if Strong does not advocate isolationism, then what remedy for this “peril” to American culture does he suggest? His solution is, quite simply, assimilation. He writes, “Our safety demands the assimilation of these strange populations. […] Either this in-sweeping immigration is to foreignize us, or we are to Americanize it” (45). Coming from an advocate for home missions, such a solution is unsurprising. Once assimilated and Americanized—by which Strong means converting them into Protestants and instilling in them the values of hard work and frugality—these immigrants will become Americans in a way that citizenship alone cannot guarantee. Whether Strong would promote intermarriage as one possible route to assimilation is unlikely; his conception of Americanization is largely cultural. At the end of his chapter on immigration, however,
Strong does venture into metaphorical terrain. Comparing the influx of immigrants to a zoo animal being force-fed, he advises that the “only alternative is, digest or die” (46). In its emphasis on corporeality, Strong’s choice of metaphor is strikingly in line with Woodrow Wilson’s description of the United States “embodying” all other nations in his speech made thirty years later. Both men depict assimilation as a process of absorption into the larger body politic. Unlike Wilson, though, Strong’s depiction is far less celebratory, and his reasons less benign. Whereas Wilson seems comfortable with some degree of cultural diversity, Strong wants greater homogeneity. Otherwise, he argues, the nation cannot function coherently on the global stage. Yet this seeming paradox that Strong espouses—a sort of nativist globalism that employs racism and ethnocentrism to further the nation’s international interests—remains both comparativist and functionalist. He writes, “With the […] increasing facilities of intercourse, intelligence and influence are less centralized, and peoples become more homogenous; and the more nearly homogenous peoples are, the more do numbers tell. America is to have the great preponderance of numbers and of wealth, and by the logic of events will follow the scepter of controlling influence” (166, original emphasis). In other words, since centers of population and wealth are destined to shift from Europe to America, the United States needs to maintain as culturally homogenous an identity as possible in order to direct its national efforts towards global prominence. By sheer weight of numbers (wealth and population), America can dominate international politics and the global economy.

The importance that Strong places on numbers extends to other facets of his argument. For him, numbers are not just about size and power; they also affect the way we experience the world and our overall quality of life. “To preserve republican
institutions requires a *higher average* intelligence and virtue among large populations than among small,” he writes. “The government of 3,000,000 people was a simple thing compared with the government of 50,000,000; and the government of 50,000,000 is a simple thing compared with that of 500,000,000. […] In the latter there are multiplied relations whose harmony must be preserved. A mistake is farther reaching. It has, as it were, a longer leverage” (139, original emphasis). What Strong seems to be saying here is that quantitative and qualitative are not discrete paradigms. An increase in the size of any given population entails a simultaneous increase in the number of relations among the individuals who make up that population, and an increase in the number of relations means that society itself becomes more complicated and less predictable, one of the key conditions of globalization. Preexisting models for understanding society cannot sustain themselves when they are unable to account for the new conditions of possibility that a wider range of relations opens up.

Strong fully engages with these new conditions of possibility that were emerging at the close of the nineteenth century. For instance, he accords new technologies, especially the steam engine and mass media, special importance in *Our Country* because they were drawing the peoples of the world into closer contact with one another and thereby multiplying relations across international borders. To Strong and others, the advent of these new technologies signaled a new era in human history: “The impetus given to inter-communication of every sort by the application of steam was the beginning of new life in the world” (2). Steam power and mass media were working in concert with Christianity to transform the globe and its inhabitants into a unified community. “Christianity,” he writes, “is slowly binding the [human] race into a brotherhood. The
press transforms the earth into an audience room; while the steam engine, so far as commerce is concerned, has annihilated, say, nine-tenths of space” (69). The “new life” that Strong envisions involves a dramatic shift in relations across the board, brought about largely by emerging technologies of travel and communication. Disparate audiences think of themselves as a single community of readers, thanks to a press that can distribute the same information throughout the world simultaneously. And thanks to the message of Christianity, natives of one nation view citizens of foreign countries as brothers rather than rivals. People’s relationship with space changes due to the steam engine, which shrinks the world of commerce by making it possible for a single product to appear in any market of the world. Even time itself alters, since people can experience and know more about the world than preceding generations; anticipating Roland Robertson’s identification of “compression” as a key feature of globalization, Strong suggests that our lives “compress, it may be, years into hours” (70, emphasis added).

Communication and the exchange of ideas hold special importance for Strong. (After all, for a missionary, Christianity is first and foremost a message to be spread.) Strong repeatedly links travel and commerce with communication. For example, he refers to steam ships as “steam communication” (4), and Our Country opens with a brief history of steam power and its effect on the spread of Western ideas. And as noted above, Strong never advocates an isolationist position. Instead, he promotes what he calls intercourse. For Strong, intercourse comprises both economic and travel routes, neither of which can be fully separated from the other, as well as the exchange of ideas. “Isolation leads to stagnation,” he writes. “Intercourse quickens thought, feeling, action. […] By bringing the country to the city, the inland cities to the seaboard, the seaports to
each other, [steam] has multiplied many-fold every form of intercourse. [...] It has greatly complicated business” (69). In this formula, the distances of time and space no longer separate products, people, or ideas. All exist within a web of intercourse, and as demonstrated in the introduction, this attentiveness to web-like interconnectedness is integral to the emergence of a global consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century.

Strong, however, clearly wants this web of intercourse to operate on his own terms, or at least he wants to exploit it for his own purposes. “The elbows of the nations touch,” he says. “Isolation—the mother of barbarism—is becoming impossible” (14). But he goes on to equate “barbarism” with whatever is non-Christian: “The warm breath of the Nineteenth Century is breathing a living soul under [Asia’s] ribs of death. The world is to be Christianized and civilized. [...] Commerce follows the missionary” (14-15). In other words, Christianity, civilization, and material and economic progress go hand in hand. And as far as Strong is concerned, only America, with its Anglo-Saxon and Christian heritage and vast economic resources, can adequately embody these three forces and then transmit them throughout the world. In his concluding chapter, Strong assures his readers, “Our plea is not America for America’s sake; but America for the world’s sake. [...] If I were a Christian African or Arab, I would look into the immediate future of the United States with intense and thrilling interest; for, as Professor Hoppin of Yale has said: ‘America Christianized means the world Christianized’” (218).

The ideology of world-salvation that Strong formulated pervades the writings of many influential historians and political theorists in the decades following the publication of Our Country, though the impulse to Christianize that was present, though largely nondenominational, in Strong gradually gives way to an ever more secular reliance on the
transformative power of the nation. Specifically, Frederick Jackson Turner, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Brooks Adams, Henry Cabot Lodge, and the other men who were influenced by Strong’s worldview have become, as Michael Hunt calls them, the “stock figures” in political histories of the era. Stock figures they may seem, but they were, in fact, central players in the history of American expansionism. All of them exercised considerable intellectual influence over the administrations of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. LaFeber notes, for example, that Mahan and Brooks often helped shape official U.S. foreign policy and that Turner enjoyed a close friendship with Wilson while also influencing Roosevelt’s view of American history through his writing. Naturally, not all of these men (and all of them were, of course, men) agreed upon the exact course America’s political leaders should steer for the nation. There were frequent and heated disagreements both between Republican and Democratic factions within the government and, sometimes, within the parties themselves, as the splintering of the Republican Party in 1912 demonstrated. Even Henry Cabot Lodge, whose support for extending U.S. influence abroad was as staunch as anyone’s, spearheaded the campaign in the Senate to block ratification of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919-20 because of his opposition to many of Wilson’s aims, and as we see in the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, the ideology of world salvation itself could transform dramatically when taken up by the writers of an alternative political history.

Nevertheless, what tied these thinkers together was the shared belief that they had entered a “new epoch” in American history and that this new epoch was the result of—

32 Hunt 216, note 28.

33 LaFeber, New Empire 80, 71. In some of his academic writings, Wilson responds directly to Turner’s ideas and often speaks admiringly of Turner as a fellow historian.
Woodrow Wilson expressed both sentiments quite clearly. In his address to the Senate on July 10, 1919, Wilson proclaimed, “America may be said to have just reached her majority as a world power. […] Our isolation was ended twenty years ago [with the Spanish-American War of 1898]; and now fear of us is ended also, our counsel and association sought after and desired. There can be no question of our ceasing to be a world power.” And as he continued to urge ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and entry into the League of Nations, he explained in a speech on September 10 of that same year: “We have managed in the process of civilization […] to make a world that cannot be taken to pieces. The pieces are intricately dovetailed and fitted with one another, and unless you assemble them as you do, the intricate parts of a great machine, the pieces won’t work.” Isolation for the United States has ended, Wilson says, and a return to an isolationist foreign policy would be tantamount to ripping one of the most important gears out of an intricate machine; the world simply will not work properly if America refuses to take part in its affairs.

These sentiments are expressed more fully and become redirected in support of American economic expansion in the writings of Wilson’s friend Frederick Jackson Turner. Like Josiah Strong, Turner is most famous today for the significance he placed on the closing of the American west, yet it is important to remember that, in its fullest

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34 See LaFeber, *New Empire* 95, 101. This is not to say that what they believed was necessarily true. As I pointed out earlier, some scholars, including Hunt and Kaplan, have made the case that the foreign policies and cultural politics of the era display continuity with preceding periods. Still, I would argue that this belief was enough to influence their actions and, more significantly, the rhetoric of their public discourse.

35 Wilson, *Papers*, vol. 61, 435-36.

articulation, Turner’s frontier thesis finds its logical conclusion in overseas expansion. In his 1896 essay “The Problem of the West,” Turner writes, “For nearly three hundred years, the dominant fact in American life has been expansion. With the settlement of the Pacific Coast and the occupation of the free lands, this movement has come to a check.” Note that Turner does say that this movement has come to an end, merely to a “check.” He goes on, “The demands for a vigorous foreign policy, for an interoceanic canal, for a revival of our power upon the seas, and for the extension of American influence to outlying islands and adjoining countries, are indications that the movement will continue.”

Perhaps Turner’s greatest contribution to the development of a global consciousness among turn-of-the-twentieth-century Americans, however, is that he distinguishes the new conditions of possibility that he, Wilson, and Strong were encountering from outright colonialism, making it clear that he did not simply equate the emerging processes of globalization with the forms of Western imperialism that were already in place at the end of the nineteenth century. For instance, the subsequent “movement” Turner envisions taking place is not limited to—or even primarily about—people and colonization. He believes that economic routes of exchange must precede other forms of physical movement. In an earlier essay, he writes that “political relations, in a highly developed civilization, are inextricably connected with economic relations. […] Reciprocity is a word that meets with increasing favor from all parties. But once fully afloat on the sea of worldwide economic interests, we shall soon develop political

38 Turner, “Problem of the West” 296.
In an attempt to refute the notion that the United States is or can remain isolated from the rest of the world, Turner points to America’s existing interests in Samoa, Africa, and South America. Clearly, Turner’s frontier thesis was never just about domestic concerns; it was a means of revealing the need for new frontiers and of convincing his fellow Americans to think beyond their national borders.

For Alfred Thayer Mahan, the intellectual who was perhaps most responsible for shaping U.S. foreign policy before Wilson became president, the sea formed such a new frontier, and this frontier was omnipresent and could never be permanently closed. Like Turner and Strong, Mahan is remembered primarily for only a small part of his larger argument, though that part exerted a profound influence over U.S. foreign policy and upon the course of American history. In his massive 1890 tome, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, Mahan argued that naval power was the decisive factor in a nation’s success in modern war and international politics. Those nations that controlled the major sea-lanes and excluded other nations from their use, he explained, were historically the most successful at maintaining a stable economy (because they were able to export goods safely abroad) and at wielding power over other nations. In practical terms, Mahan’s ideas helped convince the U.S. government to invest in building up the navy, a decision that resulted in the famous Great White Fleet as well as in quick naval victories during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Arguably, they also contributed to World Wars I and II, since Mahan’s suggestions were followed both by the Germans and by the Japanese, whose own aggressive expansionism brought them into conflict with the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively.

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Mahan’s importance to the development of an American global consciousness is due to his complex understanding of how global markets work and, especially, to his attentiveness to the multidirectionality of international diplomacy. Mahan’s conception of sea power is not unidirectional; he does not suggest that one powerful nation always exerts force over other less powerful nations. Instead, like Turner, he privileges the word *reciprocity* (the principle that exchange between two nations should be open and mutually beneficial): “Reciprocity, increased freedom of movement, is the logical corollary of expansion, which is but increase of scope and power to act.”

Moreover, Mahan was not quite the glory-hungry saber-rattler he is often portrayed as being; his extensive use of militaristic language is a rhetorical device in much the same way that Austin Phelps’ or Josiah Strong’s similarly militaristic metaphors are. Mahan’s battlegrounds are predominantly economic ones, and he states that the primary objective of U.S. expansion should be “to invade the markets of the world.” Even after describing his project as “largely a military history,” Mahan avoids depicting the sea as a line of defense. On the contrary, Mahan opens his first chapter of *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* with a description of the sea as a wide complex of routes of travel and economic exchange:

> The first and most obvious light in which the sea presents itself from the political and social point of view is that of a great highway; or better, perhaps, of a wide common, over which men may pass in all directions, but on which some well-worn paths show that controlling reasons have led them to choose certain lines of

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41 Mahan, “Retrospect and Prospect” 19, emphasis added.

travel rather than others. These lines of travel are called trade routes; and the reasons which have determined them are to be sought in the history of the world.43

What Mahan describes here sounds remarkably similar to Strong’s web of “intereourse.” Just as Strong does in Our Country and Wilson does in his speech of 1915, Mahan acknowledges that a multiplicity of relations exist among the nations of the world and that, although these relations seem to operate independently of one another, they intersect in various ways that ultimately produce an overall harmony.

Mahan asserts that the United States can ensure its own safety and prosperity only by learning how to control this “wide common”—in a sense, by learning how to play the game of international trade and politics. Elsewhere, Mahan argues that “to seek the welfare of the country” and “to affirm the importance of distant markets, and the relation to them of our own immense powers of production, implies logically the recognition of the link that joins the products and the markets, that is, the carrying trade.”44 In other words, maintaining national self-interest means acknowledging and strengthening ties with foreign markets. Such a “view of the relations of the United States to the world [is] radically distinct from the simple idea of self-sufficingness.”45 Thus Mahan rejects isolationist thinking as wholly untenable now that America has become a mature member of the community of nations. Indeed, Mahan not only agrees with Strong and Wilson that the United States has entered a new era in its history; he characterizes this perceived rupture with the past in far starker and more dramatic terms, comparing it to “the breach

43 Mahan, Influence of Sea Power 25.


of continuity between the middle ages and modern times.”\textsuperscript{46} The result: “Whether they will or no, Americans must now begin to look outward.”\textsuperscript{47} Echoing Strong’s advice to “digest or die,” Mahan envisions no other alternative.

That all of the men discussed above were intensely interested in social history goes without saying, as does the fact that most of them were established intellectuals and professional scholars. Wilson and Turner earned Ph.D.s at Johns Hopkins University; Henry Cabot Lodge did the same at Harvard. Both Lodge and Wilson were respected teachers before they entered politics, Mahan taught and served as an administrator at the U.S. Naval War College, and Turner enjoyed a long academic career first at the University of Wisconsin and later at Harvard. Perhaps never before in American history had so many accredited intellectuals exerted so direct and extensive an influence upon official policymakers. Even when, as in Mahan’s case, the historical research they undertook was not always particularly reliable, their work was taken seriously by powerful people, and Wilson, of course, remains the only U.S. president to date to have completed a research doctorate. Despite their credentials and sometimes considerable intellectual skills, however, all of them were white men who bought wholeheartedly into the ideology of Anglo-Saxonism. Consequently, it would be easy to assume that the entire intellectual trajectory outlined above, including the basic rhetoric of world salvation, was similarly committed to that same ideology. But such was not the case. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, the emerging forces of globalization and the new conditions of possibility that they set up were to some extent (and still are) always beyond the control of any one group of people and therefore open to being exploited for

\textsuperscript{46} Mahan, “Retrospect and Prospect,” 21.

\textsuperscript{47} Mahan, “United States Looking Outward” 822, emphasis added.
competing purposes. In a sense, then, the concept of world salvation was too powerful not to have a life of its own, and it could be—and was—picked up and used purposively for alternative objectives by a very different type of intellectual.

W.E.B. Du Bois’ own standing as an intellectual and scholar was certainly equal to that of any of the other writers discussed so far. Du Bois, too, had earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1895, becoming the first African-American to do so, and he began teaching at Atlanta University two years later. Over the next decade, Du Bois’ writings, including The Souls of Black Folk (1903), and political activism, including his involvement in the founding of the NAACP (1909), would make him one of the foremost black intellectuals of his era. His influence upon U.S. policy may never have been as direct, as consistent, or as extensive as that of his white counterparts, but his interest in and careful examination of global politics was just as strong. And that facet of his work only intensified as he became more and more interested in Pan-Africanism and the role that African-Americans could play in that movement.

Du Bois’ commitment to the Pan-African movement would lead him in turn to interrogate the ideology of Anglo-Saxonism and the relationship between global capitalism and imperialism. His fullest and most satisfying investigation into these questions probably remains Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil (1920). In “The Souls of White Folk,” the second chapter of Darkwater, Du Bois argues that the colonization of non-white territories was implicit in the logic of global capitalism and that World War I was the logical conclusion of the European scramble for those non-white territories. Du Bois writes, “The world market most wildly and desperately sought today is the market where labor is cheapest and most helpless and profit is most
abundant. This labor is kept cheap and helpless because the white world despises ‘darkies.’”

48 Even more importantly, Du Bois claims, it is precisely this increased contact between whites and non-whites and the (for whites) economic and political necessity of establishing racial hierarchies to control such contact that gives “modern days” their “newness.”

49 Thus despite the fact that Du Bois and Josiah Strong might appear irreconcilably at odds, especially in terms of their differing attitudes toward race, Du Bois in fact shares Strong’s recognition of there being “new life in the world.” Du Bois’ vision of this “new life” is far bleaker, however, because he knows it is founded upon the global institutionalization of racism. That is why he rejects Wilson’s optimistic pronouncements that America had reached “her majority as a world power” and that “fear of [America had] ended also.” “It is curious,” he writes in what could be a direct response to Wilson, “to see America, the United States, looking on herself, first, as a sort of natural peacemaker, then as a moral protagonist in this terrible time. No nation is less fitted for this role.”

50 Far from being the ideal “mediating Nation,” the United States represented the ultimate failure of democracy, since it had been guilty of institutionalizing racism within its own borders, not only in far-off colonies.

*Darkwater*, however, is not Du Bois’ only meditation on these problems. He had already conducted a trial run for that work, as it were, in his much shorter but equally trenchant essay “The African Roots of the War,” published five years earlier in the May 1915 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*—and less than a month after Woodrow Wilson delivered

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49 Du Bois, *Darkwater* 42-43. This idea is central to Hunt’s and LaFeber’s discussion of Anglo-Saxonism, and it seems to be Iriye’s point as well, as mentioned in note 19 above.

50 Du Bois, *Darkwater* 50.
the speech that opens this chapter. This essay’s central argument is much the same as the one in “The Souls of White Folk”: World War I is the direct result of economic competition among the European powers in Africa (i.e., the so-called “scramble for Africa”). Here is how Du Bois words it:

The present world war is, then, the result of jealousies engendered by the recent rise of armed national associations of labor and capital whose aim is the exploitation of the wealth of the world mainly outside the European circle of nations. These associations, grown jealous and suspicious at the division of the spoils of trade-empire, are fighting to enlarge their respective shares; they look for expansion, not in Europe but in Asia, and particularly in Africa.  

What distinguishes “The African Roots of the War” from Darkwater is its more optimistic outlook. In the earlier essay, Du Bois acknowledges more fully the potential for resistance that globalization affords oppressed peoples. In order to reach this optimistic conclusion, Du Bois employs not only the rhetoric but also the very phrase world-salvation that Austin Phelps used to introduce Josiah Strong’s Our Country thirty years earlier, demonstrating just how powerful and pervasive that rhetoric truly was.

Furthermore, in “The African Roots of the War,” Du Bois adopts Wilsonian logic and language—but only in order to turn Wilson’s argument on its head. To begin with, Du Bois accepts completely the supposition that the sovereignty of the nation-state is the building-block of the international community and that all national communities possess the inviolable right to self-determination. In fact, Du Bois goes a step further and claims that only through belonging to a sovereign nation-state, respected by the rest of the community of nations, can an individual or a people hope to achieve any measure of

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wealth, respectability, or power in the 20th century. He observes that the “national bond is no mere sentimental patriotism, loyalty, or ancestor-worship. It is the increased wealth, power, and luxury for all classes on a scale the world never saw before” (645). Then, making the same appeal to self-determination that white nationalists in, say, Poland or Czechoslovakia were making, Du Bois argues that the privileges of nationhood should be extended to Africa: “The principle of home rule must extend to groups, nations, and races. The ruling of one people for another people’s whim or gain must stop” (649). Du Bois’ appeal would go unheeded, naturally. No one at the Peace of Paris would have taken seriously the suggestion that imperialism in Africa and Asia should end. The fact that France and Britain divided the spoils of the German and Ottoman Empires among themselves, even after having informally promised home rule to the Arabs during their insurrection against the Ottomans, lends much credence to Du Bois’ claim that the war was about imperial rivalries after all.

Du Bois also shares Wilson’s interest in the act of remapping. Whereas Wilson would work to remap the borders of Europe during 1919-20, Du Bois offers a conceptual remapping of the entire globe in 1915, one that places the continent of Africa at the center of all economic, cultural, and political interests. Quoting the Roman writer Pliny, Du Bois opens his essay with a Latin phrase: *semper novi quid ex Africa* [“everything new always comes out of Africa”]. At first, he is referring to the belief that the crucial developments in human history emerged out of Africa, but it becomes clear that Du Bois believes the truth of the quotation continues to obtain. He writes, “Particularly to-day most men assume that Africa lies far afield from the centres of our burning social problems. […] In the Dark Continent are hidden the roots, not simply of war to-day but
of the menace of wars to-morrow. [...] Nearly every human empire that has arisen in the world, material and spiritual, has found some of its greatest crises on this continent” (642). And more emphatically later on: “Africa is the Land of the Twentieth Century” (646). What Du Bois means is partly that the vast economic resources of Africa (gold, diamonds, cocoa, rubber, ivory, etc.) offer the rest of the world “boundless chances” to increase its wealth and raise its standard of living (646). In a sense, Du Bois echoes Strong’s arguments about the seemingly boundless resources of the American west and then inverts them geographically and racially. According to him, the real center of human civilization is Africa—not just because human civilization began there but because, as Du Bois suggests, Africa can continue to sustain the global economy indefinitely.

By the end of the essay, however, when Du Bois repeats the Latin quotation he opened with, it is apparent that something else new can “come out of Africa,” and that new thing is the empowerment of non-white peoples. Perhaps unsurprisingly for Du Bois, this empowerment comes about through a combination of modernization and education. Along with regaining home rule and control over African resources, he writes, “we must train native races in modern civilization. [...] Modern methods of educating children, honestly and effectively applied, would make modern, civilized nations out of the vast majority of human beings on earth to-day....” (649) And who does Du Bois expect to undertake this training? He asks and then answers that question himself:

In this great work who can help us? In the Orient, the awakened Japanese and the awakening leaders of New China; in India and Egypt, the young men trained in Europe and European ideals, who now form the stuff that Revolution is born of. But in Africa? Who better than the twenty-five million grandchildren of the
European slave trade, spread through the Americas, and now writhing desperately for freedom and a place in the world? And of these millions first of all the ten million black folk of the United States, now a problem, then a world-salvation. (650, emphasis added)

Although Du Bois’ solution is perfectly clear, the way he presents it is particularly adroit. At the most basic level, he expects his fellow African-Americans to take up his call and teach their African comrades how to adapt themselves to modernization. Du Bois’ commitment to modernization—and by extension to westernization—is striking. Much like Strong and Mahan, Du Bois seems to think that there is no alternative to modernization; the conditions of possibility demand it. Thus he refers to the children of elite Egyptian and Indian families, who were sent to Oxford and Cambridge to learn how to run their own countries based on European models of governance and bureaucracy, and he refers to the governments of Japan and China, which were similarly attempting to modernize. American blacks, the descendents of Africans sold into slavery, are already westernized, Du Bois points out, and so they should be able to pass that knowledge on to Africans who have not yet modernized. It is difficult not to be reminded of Du Bois’ famous “Talented Tenth” here. Just as the most highly educated African-Americans (the top 10% of their race) bear a duty to lead the rest of the African-American community in their struggle for civil rights, African-Americans in general bear a duty to lead the peoples of Africa in their struggle for independence. In a sense, then, Du Bois seems to imply that African-Americans make up the “Talented Tenth” of the entire non-white world.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak makes a similarly pragmatic claim in “Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value,” Literary Theory Today, ed. Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990): 219-44. The paradoxical problem of postcolonial identity is to take part in a narrative that has been forced upon you and for which you have no adequate historical point of reference.
But exactly how are African-Americans supposed to lead their African comrades, especially when Du Bois concedes that they are themselves still “writhing desperately” for their own civil rights and their own “place in the world”? To answer that question, I turn finally to Du Bois’ use of the term world-salvation. I suggest that Du Bois’ appropriation of this highly charged rhetoric is entirely purposeful. For one thing, he clearly picks up on the missionary work that writers like Austin Phelps and Josiah Strong had in mind when they talked about world-salvation. When Du Bois asks his fellow African-Americans to take up the responsibility of educating Africans, he has two methods of education in mind: first, teaching by example, by achieving their own freedom and self-sufficiency; second, teaching by serving as “missionaries” to Africa. Instead of spreading Anglo-Saxon values, paving the way for American economic expansion, or even preaching Christianity per se, Du Bois’ missionaries will work towards the goal of achieving Pan-Africanism. Like Strong’s Our Country, Du Bois’ essay contains echoes of Winthrop’s “Model of Christian Charity,” but like Strong, Du Bois preaches a more interventionist message.

Finally, Du Bois also picks up on Strong’s goal of reshaping the world, and for Du Bois, world-salvation achieves its transformative power precisely because it embraces and celebrates multidirectional exchange. Here, of course, he falls very much in line with Strong, Mahan, and especially Wilson. While some of them undoubtedly wanted to reshape the world in the image of America rather than the other way around, all of them recognized that the burgeoning multiplicity of relations in America’s new global context made isolation and self-absorption impossible. What distinguishes Du Bois from the other writers, however, is the paramount importance he places on this back-and-forth
exchange. For it is only through their attempt to reshape Africa that African-Americans can find their “place in the world.” That is to say, Du Bois acknowledges that “now” African-Americans are simply “a problem,” a promise unfulfilled; they cease to be a problem when they become “a world-salvation.” Du Bois pointedly refuses to supply a midpoint between “problem” and “world-salvation” because one status ends when and where the other begins. Thus the act of transforming and empowering others is simultaneously an act of self-transformation and self-empowerment.

Is Du Bois’ view of America’s role in the world in 1915 so very different from the one Wilson espouses in his speech of the same year? To some extent, it is. Where Wilson finds “no racial momentum,” Du Bois sees nothing else. Where Wilson thinks Americans are free to turn in any direction, Du Bois knows that African-Americans lack many basic kinds of freedom. And where Wilson optimistically believes that, as an American, he can “know” and “comprehend” and “embody” all the peoples of the world, Du Bois more skeptically emphasizes the seemingly impassable gulf that already separates white and black Americans. At the same time, however, Du Bois argues that African-Americans are indeed capable of representing all of Africa. Extending Du Bois’ logic would transform African-Americans into the “Talented Tenth” of all non-white peoples—or at least all the descendents of black Africans—making them the “mediating” peoples of the non-white world. Thus what we find in Du Bois’ writing is, in a sense, a form of African-American exceptionalism, an acceptance on behalf of African-Americans of as significant a role of mediation as the one Wilson envisions for the entire nation.

What ultimately aligns Du Bois with Wilson and the other writers, therefore, is that all of
them knew that being American or African-American takes on meaning only when understood within a global context.
Chapter 2: Preferred Courses and Queer Falsities: *The American*
and Henry James’ Re-Vision of a Global Cultural Economy

When Henry James began the long, laborious process of compiling and revising his fiction for inclusion in the New York Edition, he took the opportunity to revisit some of his earliest novels, including *Roderick Hudson* (1875), *The American* (1877), and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). In some cases, over thirty years had elapsed since their composition, and upon rereading them toward the end of 1905, he was struck by the disjunction between his original aims for those novels and his more mature impressions of their status within his body of work. *The American* in particular troubled him, as he later revealed in its 1907 preface: “What I have recognised then in ‘The American,’ much to my surprise and after long years, is that the experience here represented is the disconnected and uncontrolled experience—uncontrolled by our general sense of ‘the way things happen’—which romance alone more or less successfully palms off on us.”¹ This realization triggers one of James’ finest and most extensive discussions of the key characteristics of romance and realism. For James, “the real” represents “the things we cannot possibly not know, sooner or later, in one way or another,” while “the romantic” stands for “the things that, with all the facilities in the world, all the wealth and all the courage and all the wit and all the adventure, we never can directly know.”² Or as he

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² James, Preface 9, original emphasis.
phrases this distinction somewhat more glibly, romance equates to “the way things don’t happen” and realism to “the way things do.”\(^3\) By the time he initiated the New York Edition, James was a committed realist, an author who was attuned to “the conditions that we usually know to attach to [experience]” and to “the ‘related’ sides of situations.”\(^4\) Consequently, the surprise James registers in his preface is due to his discovery that, despite his original intentions, the world of *The American* is a world of “romance” instead of “the real.” “The way things happen,” James sheepishly admits, “is frankly not the way in which they are represented as having happened, in Paris, to my hero: the situation I had conceived only saddled me with that for want of my invention of something better.”\(^5\)

The situation to which James refers is what he labels “the queer falsity—of the Bellegardes.”\(^6\) Their “queer falsity” is, of course, the plot point upon which the entire novel hinges: although impoverished, the aristocratic French Bellegarde family steadfastly refuses to allow their daughter Claire to marry the wealthy businessman Christopher Newman simply because he is American and therefore unsuitable. In reality, however, impecunious European aristocrats frequently married into newly affluent American families, as even a cursory glance at Winston Churchill’s family tree confirms. In 1874, Churchill’s father Lord Randolph, the third son of the seventh duke of

\(^3\) James, Preface 11.

\(^4\) James, Preface 10.

\(^5\) James, Preface 11.

\(^6\) James, Preface 12.
Marlborough, married Jennie Jerome, the daughter of an American millionaire. How much easier, then, for the Bellegarides to unload an already married-and-widowed daughter? James’ point is that, on the contrary, instead of opposing his courtship of Claire so vehemently, a real-life Bellegarde family would have compared the size of Newman’s bank account to the shabbiness of their own ancestral home and—perhaps reluctantly, perhaps not—would have accepted him as a potential husband for their daughter. Far from “not finding Newman good enough for their alliance,” James admits in his preface, the Bellegardes’ “preferred course, a thousand times preferred, would have been to haul him and his fortune into their boat under cover of night perhaps, in any case as quietly and with as little bumping and splashing as possible, and there accommodate him with the very safest and most convenient seat.”

If we take James at his word, then he had simply got it wrong in the 1870s, though his thinking was somewhat more complicated, as will be shown below. He placed the blame for this mistake on his own stubborn commitment to “the theme to which I was from so early pledged.” That “theme,” as James describes it, was a “situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged, compatriot: the point being in especial that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilization and to be of an

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7 It is instructive to note that neither Lord Randolph’s father (the duke) nor his mother attended the wedding ceremony, perhaps understanding the “cover of night” principle that James envisages a real-life Bellegarde following. At any rate, Lord Randolph’s marriage carried no stigma as far as his public career was concerned; he eventually served in Lord Salisbury’s Conservative cabinet.

8 James, Preface 12.

9 James, Preface 13.
order in every way superior to his own.”¹⁰ In short, James’ topic was what is sometimes referred to as the “international theme” in American literature: a conflict between individual American and European characters that reflects a larger, more symbolic contrast between two opposing cultures and sets of values. James would make this subject his own, returning to it again and again in such works as *Daisy Miller* (1878), *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Ambassadors* (1903). Yet significantly, when reevaluating his first foray into this topic (indeed, some scholars consider *The American* the first true “international novel,” as I will discuss in more detail), James believed that the specific situation he had imagined was unrealistic. In the intervening thirty years, he had developed a far more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between American and European society, and that more advanced understanding was not reflected in *The American*. Nevertheless, despite whatever reservations he may have held about the novel’s “queer falsity,” James neither excluded *The American* from the New York Edition, as he did *The Europeans* (1878) and *Washington Square* (1880), nor altered the outcome of its plot, as he had already done for his own stage adaptation of *The American* in 1891.¹¹ Instead, he chose to revise extensively, claiming that “the way things don’t happen may be artfully made to pass for the way things do.”¹²

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¹⁰ James, Preface 2.

¹¹ In his preface, James went on to observe that a plot that reflected the historical reality “might very well be a situation and a subject” of its own (p. 12). Perhaps he felt that, by 1907, he had explored that “situation and subject” sufficiently elsewhere, as in *The Ambassadors*, where a wealthy American matron objects to her son’s liaison with a European woman, or in *The Reverberator* (1888), where a wealthy young American woman is accepted by an aristocratic French family.

¹² James, Preface 11. If James genuinely believed that romance could “pass” for realism, then it seems that his own commitment to any abstract definition of realism did not run very deep. Perhaps the experience of rereading *The American* led him to reject hard-and-fast distinctions between the two literary forms. In the same preface, he writes that “it is as difficult […] to trace the dividing-line between the real and the romantic as to plant a milestone between north and south” (p. 13), thereby suggesting that realism and romance are directions in literature rather than clearly defined genres or styles.
The resulting alterations to this novel go far beyond the largely superficial changes James made to the other works in the New York Edition, and they have long fascinated literary scholars. Leon Edel, for instance, labels *The American* “the most rewritten of all [James’] novels.”13 James himself acknowledged the extensiveness of his revisions even as he dismissed his friends’ objections that those changes hurt the novel. Robert Herrick quotes passages from two letters in which James referred to the need for “close amendment (and even ‘rewriting’) of the four earliest novels” [by which he meant *Roderick Hudson, The American, The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Princess Casamassima* (1886)] and, later, to the fact that “the re-touching with any insistence will in fact bear but on one book (*The American*—on R. Hudson and the P. of a Lady very much less).”14 To date, most critical studies of *The American*’s revisions have focused almost exclusively on one of two issues: whether the changes actually improve or weaken the novel and what insights they offer into James’ thirty-year artistic evolution. I, however, contend that the two versions of *The American* ought to be considered as wholly separate works and that no purely aesthetic comparison of the two versions can explain what motivated James to revise this novel so drastically. To be sure, his desire to revisit his early fiction was guided, at least in part, by the appeal of compiling a definitive edition of his collected works that would reflect a certain degree of artistic uniformity. Herrick confirms that much: “To me he [James] emphasized the quality of selectiveness which the new edition was to exemplify; it was to be ‘severely-sifted,’ and also embellished. ‘Indeed,’ he said, ‘it was only on that condition that I consented to its being undertaken at


14 Qtd. in Robert Herrick, “A Visit to Henry James,” *Yale Review* 12 (1923): 733, 735, original emphasis.
And as already noted, James claimed that revising *The American* was a means of making its unrealistic story “artfully pass for” reality. Yet James’ admission of a need to make the unrealistic “pass” as real simultaneously reveals that James keenly wished to downplay the false reality of his novel (“the way things don’t happen”) and reflect more accurately the external reality he knew (“the way things do”).

In focusing solely on questions of aesthetics, then, critics have neglected the extent to which James’ revisions underscore his greater attentiveness in 1907 to wider social, cultural, and economic matters—all of which intersect in the sort of intermarriage that James refuses to allow in *The American* but that, in his preface, he admits really would happen. I propose that it is just this attentiveness that informs and motivates James’ revision of *The American*. The revised novel demonstrates an understanding of what I shall call the emerging global cultural economy, an understanding that simply was not possible when James wrote the original version of the novel. Specifically, I argue that James’ regret over the “queer falsity” of his portrayal of the Bellegardes’ attitude toward Newman amounts to an admission on James’ part of misreading Euro-American relations in 1877. What this “misreading” amounted to, however, was really a different reading in 1907—a newly global reading that had been made possible by all of the conditions that I explored in the previous chapter. With his additional thirty years’ experience living as an American in Europe, James revised *The American* in order to downplay the earlier version’s insistently symbolic depiction of a chasm existing between the two cultures. Coming in the wake of his 1904 return to the United States after a twenty-year absence, the revised version also reflects James’ awareness that his native country had emerged as a global power, with values and interests that increasingly

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15 Herrick 731.
intersected with those of Europe. James’ concepts *romantic* and *real* should therefore be read as avatars for his shift in thinking from the merely *international* to the *global*. Thus I contend that James’ evolving aesthetic sensibility was imbricated in broader cultural and socio-economic changes occurring worldwide at the turn of the twentieth century and that, without abandoning its “international theme,” the 1907 version of *The American* provides an account of American identity and status in a newly global community.

As noted above, *The American* is often regarded as the first “international novel,”16 and the rise of the international novel as a distinct literary genre is one of the features of Roland Robertson’s “take-off phase” of globalization.17 In this sense, James not only observed the emergence of globalization but also participated in it by writing *The American* itself. In juxtaposing national identities and, even more importantly, in allowing this juxtaposition to drive both the novel’s plot and thematic concerns, the international novel encourages readers to reconsider their own national identity in relation to other nationalities. Oscar Cargill drives home the importance of such juxtaposition in his definition of the genre: “An international novel is one in which a character, usually guided in his actions by the mores of one environment, is set down in another, where he must employ all his individual resources to meet successive situations,

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16 See especially Oscar Cargill’s “The First International Novel,” *PMLA* 73.4 (1958): 418-25. In point of fact, as Cargill notes, William Dean Howells “ascribed the invention of this type of fiction to the Baroness Tautphoeus,” an obscure English writer whose novel *The Initials* was published in 1850 (418). Cargill also mentions Howells’ own *A Foregone Conclusion* (1874), a novel that James reviewed. Ultimately, Cargill dismisses both of these earlier candidates, calling *The American* “the prototype” (424). Cargill’s certainty notwithstanding, there are other potential choices. In *Globalization and the Nation-State* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), Robert J. Holton selects Jules Verne’s *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) for the honor (see p. 46), and as Christof Wegelin demonstrates in “The Rise of the International Novel,” *PMLA* 77.3 (1962): 305-10, cases could be made for Nathaniel Parker Willis’ *Paul Fane* (1857) and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun* (1860). Frankly, it is less important to my argument that any single writer “invented” the international novel than that the international novel became an identifiable genre during the latter half of the 19th century and that James became one of its leading practitioners.

and where he must intelligently accommodate himself to the new mores, or, in one way or another, be destroyed.”¹⁸ The larger global context, then, is the genre’s raison d’etre, and the genre itself emerges, at least in part, because of another contributing factor of globalization: the rise of an international tourism industry and what Christof Wegelin calls the new “phenomenon” of “the American in Europe.”¹⁹ Moreover, The American exemplifies the genre’s practice of establishing national identity through contrast in the way that it reifies American national identity. By employing the definite article in the very title of his novel, James invites his readers to view Newman not just as a representative U.S. citizen but as the representative U.S. citizen. Thus in addition to the symbolic weight Newman’s every action carries, his conduct embodies the behavior of all Americans. Newman’s individual gaucheries, James implies, stand in for the gaucheness of his entire nation, just as his nobility and naivety also stand in for whatever nobility and naivety is to be found in the American people.²⁰ Yet James’ portrait of national character makes no sense except within the novel’s international context. Had Newman remained in the United States to carry out the wheeling and dealing he abandoned when he left for Europe, the novel’s title would have made little sense—except perhaps as a condemnation of American business practices along the lines of William Dean Howell’s The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885). In transporting Newman to Europe, James emphasizes his character’s national identity above all else; in Europe,

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¹⁸ Cargill 419.

¹⁹ Wegelin 307. Wegelin goes on to note that “government statistics […] record a steep rise in trans-Atlantic travel by U.S. citizens beginning about 1860” (307). No doubt the rise of the tourism industry was a necessary condition of possibility for many of James’ novels, but these novels are no mere travelogues.

²⁰ The significance of James’ decision to use the definite article in the title was not lost on contemporary reviewers, many of whom were displeased by the implications, as Martha Banta has demonstrated. See esp. pp. 23-26 in her introduction to New Essays on The American (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).
Newman becomes the American rather than the businessman or the Civil War veteran. In other words, Newman’s American-ness is constituted in contradistinction to the Bellegardes’ (and most of the other characters’) European-ness.

Nevertheless, neither the “international theme” nor individual international novels are globalization itself; they represent merely one important engine of globalization. In fact, in employing juxtaposition as their means of developing plot, international novels rely primarily upon comparing and contrasting only two nations or national cultures rather than spinning a more multidirectional global web of cultural exchange.

Furthermore, in practice, international novels all too often limit themselves to juxtaposing only European culture with American culture and thus, as recent scholars have pointed out, employ the word international in an overly restricted—and often misleading—way. Eva Zetterberg Pettersson, for example, makes the valid objection that “the designation ‘international’ is actually a misnomer since the genre is not concerned with the encounter with all foreign countries but almost exclusively with the American encounter with Europe. On closer scrutiny, ‘international’ refers to the particular relationship between America and Europe.”

That objection depends largely upon which texts count as international novels. Were Wegelin, Cargill, and other critics to include works by Jules Verne and Rudyard Kipling alongside the novels of Henry James and Edith Wharton, then our conception of the international novel might be somewhat broader. In order to understand the importance of James’ revisions to The American and the evolution in his thinking from a merely two-directional international mode into a much more dynamic, multidirectional global mode, it is essential to adopt the lens of global theory. Thus

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James’ aesthetic explanation and justification of his revisions—moving from “romantic” to “real”—represent an emerging global consciousness, one that is attuned to intersection and web-like interconnection as well as to juxtaposition and contrast. What we find in the revisions to The American, in short, is a newly global aesthetic.

A side-by-side comparison of the two novels reveals how James went about rendering the “situation and subject” of The American global, though the very first revision that appears in the later edition of the novel is not particularly arresting. In the second sentence of the first paragraph, James changes “the gentleman in question” to “our visitor.”  Many of the revisions throughout the novel are similarly minor, and some readers who are familiar with the density of James’ later prose may be surprised to learn that some revisions serve to tighten individual paragraphs. For instance, the first paragraph shrinks from 362 words in the earlier version to 355 words in the New York Edition. As the novel progresses, however, the alterations become increasingly more significant, often making later paragraphs longer by several sentences. (Indeed, so substantial is the cumulative effect of James’ revisions that no definitive catalog of all the differences between the two editions has yet been made; certainly, nothing as systematic

as F.O. Matthiessen’s study of the revisions of The Portrait of a Lady currently exists.\textsuperscript{23} And I in no way pretend to offer such a catalog here.)

The first truly significant alteration to the text appears in the first sentence of the second paragraph of the novel, and it supplies a striking illustration of how James’s revisions also serve to mute the original version’s emphasis on national contrasts and to acknowledge closer alignment between American and European values, views, and modes of expression. In both versions of this passage, which begins the first detailed description of the novel’s protagonist, James immediately draws attention to Newman’s identity as an American. The 1877 edition reads, “An observer, with anything of an eye for national types, would have had no difficulty in determining the local origin of this undeveloped connoisseur, and indeed such an observer might have felt a certain humorous relish of the almost ideal completeness with which he filled out the national mould. The gentleman on the divan was a powerful specimen of an American” (N17-18). Already the novel’s insistence upon deriving conflict from juxtaposing “national types” is apparent, with James employing the adjective \textit{national} twice. In 1907, however, James removes \textit{national} altogether, thereby deemphasizing the role of the nation itself in determining a person’s identity: “An observer with anything of an eye for local types would have had no difficulty in referring this candid connoisseur to the scene of his origin, and indeed such an observer might have made an ironic point of the almost ideal completeness with which he filled out the mould of race. The gentleman on the divan was the superlative American” (O17-18). James’ decision to replace “national types”

with “local types” is prescient in terms of how he seems to anticipate the dialectical relationship between “local” and “global.” More significantly, however, this particular revision also depoliticizes Newman’s Americanness by associating its obviousness with the happenstance of birthplace (“scene of origin”) and ancestry (“mould of race,” with the word race being equivalent to lineage in this instance). With this early revision, then, James reinforces the importance of the definite article in the novel’s title by transforming Newman from “a powerful specimen of an American” into “the superlative American.” The more mature James is even more intent upon establishing Newman as the ne plus ultra of Americans.

Several critics have gestured toward the need for just this sort of global reading of James’ novels. John Carlos Rowe’s essay “Henry James and Globalization” is perhaps the most notable effort to reframe Jamesian criticism along this global line, though Rowe himself provides only a few cursory examples of what such analysis might entail. In particular, Rowe aims to shift discussion from a primarily literary understanding of James’ cosmopolitanism (i.e., the “international theme”) to a more widely applicable appreciation of James’ engagement with the early manifestations of globalization. As Rowe points out, “James was a witness to and participant in the early stages of today’s globalization wherein second-stage modernization, characterized by Taylorism and Fordism, developed together with the consolidation of the British Empire in its growing competition with lesser European imperial powers and the emergence of the United States and Japan as colonial forces, if not outright imperial powers.”24 That James was “witness” to the early stages of globalization becomes apparent when we stop to consider that he lived through most of the events that took place during the period Robertson

labels the “take-off phase” of globalization (c. 1870-1925): the invention of the telephone, radio, and motion pictures; the creation of the Olympic Games and other global competitions; the widespread adoption of “world time” and the Gregorian calendar; the First World War; and so forth.25 Likewise, James’ 1904-05 return to the United States occurred shortly after the events that transformed the country into a global power, including the Spanish-American War and the formulation of the Open Door Policy. James even dined with President Theodore Roosevelt less than eight months before Roosevelt negotiated the Treaty of Portsmouth between Russia and Japan, a diplomatic triumph that would win Roosevelt one of the earliest Nobel Peace Prizes (another of Robertson’s “global competitions”). James’ awareness of America’s increased power and international prestige is apparent in The American Scene (1907), the record of James’ return visit to his homeland. “James represents in The American Scene the shift in global power from Europe to America, with respect to both political and cultural economies,” asserts Rowe. “Even as he criticizes American cultural deficiencies and capitalist excesses, James still takes pride in the growing centrality of the American as the type of the cosmopolitan, as the Italian had been in the Quattrocento and the Englishman in the Victorian era.”26 Not coincidentally, James composed The American Scene and revised The American concurrently, and I shall discuss how these two texts inform one another in more detail below.

According to Rowe, however, James was also a “participant” in the emergence of globalization, and for Rowe, this participatory role is most fully manifested in James’

25 Robertson 59. I discuss Robertson’s Minimal Phase Model of Globalization more fully in the preceding chapter.

26 Rowe 212.
preoccupation with the problems and opportunities associated with the rise of global capitalism and the spread of U.S. influence abroad. Explicit references to colonialism may be rare in James’ novels, but in focusing on the increased mobility of America’s economic elite as well as their aspirations for the sort of status and legitimacy that only their brushes with high culture could bring them, “James consistently implicates culture in the work of imperial expansion and domination.”

In particular, Rowe argues that “James’ famous international theme frequently enacts new U.S. will-to-power in the polite drawing rooms, public gardens, galleries, and artists’ workshops of American expatriates in Italy, where they have traveled to study how to recapture the glory that was Rome and forget just what horrors are inscribed dimly on those pillars and capitals in the Forum and the Colosseum.”

Rowe’s understanding of globalization itself, however, is somewhat limited. For instance, he defines globalization as “a process of modernization traceable to the European desire to ‘discover’ new lands.” As I established in the introduction, conflating globalization with modernization and westernization elides non-modern, non-western contributions to the processes of globalization, such as the spread of Islam. Nevertheless, extending Rowe’s outline of what global theory might contribute to James scholarship, I do suggest that much of James’ fiction, including *The American*, can be viewed as an examination and critique of the links that are forged between the consumption of European history and culture and the extension of American imperialism.

At the start of *The American*, for example, Christopher Newman, whose spectacular

27 Rowe 208.

28 Rowe 206.

29 Rowe 205.
business success James characterizes first as “an intensely Western story” and, in the revised version of the novel, as “a tale of the Western world” (N31; O33), approaches his sojourn in Europe as a process of acquisition. He relies primarily on his purchasing power to obtain what he wants: French lessons, copies of the Old Masters’ paintings, a wife. Newman may have renounced his cut-throat business practices by the time he arrives in Paris, but he has renounced neither the resulting wealth nor the sense of entitlement that this wealth gives him. The novel, as Rowe puts it, reveals “the legacy of Eurocolonialism […] in the figure of the cosmopolitan capitalist.”

Over the course of the novel, however, James transposes Newman’s biography from “an intensely Western story” to a form of critique; *The American*, as James originally conceived it, is about what Newman cannot acquire, despite his enormous wealth. In a sense, Newman encounters an economy he is unable to comprehend because money alone cannot procure for him his most desired objects of value (a wife and entry into Europe’s aristocratic society).

Newman’s frustration at encountering a different means of valuation reveals an alternative understanding of economics on James’ part: what scholars now term *cultural economy*. While several recent critics have invoked Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *cultural capital* in their discussions of James’ fiction, cultural capital, which Bourdieu identifies as socially valued forms of knowledge, is only one element within the much broader and more dynamic framework of cultural economy. Broadly speaking, cultural

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30 Rowe 206.

economy refers to “the processes of social and cultural relations that go to make up what we conventionally term the economic.” More specifically, the still emerging field of cultural economy acknowledges that cultural and economic practices are embedded in one another and examines the cultural facets and implications of economic activity (and vice versa). Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke describe cultural economy this way:

This particular understanding of economics as ‘culture’ focuses attention on the practical ways in which ‘economically relevant activity’ is performed and enacted. It serves to show, in other words, the ways in which the ‘making up’ or ‘construction’ of economic realities is undertaken and achieved; how those activities, objects and persons we categorize as ‘economic’ are built up or assembled from a number of parts, many of them supplied by the disciplines of economics but many drawn from other sources, including, of course, forms of ostensibly non-economic cultural practice.

At least in part, therefore, cultural economy accounts for how and why societies ascribe both monetary and non-monetary values to cultural objects and practices that do not otherwise appear to possess clear economic functions. As such, cultural economy seems an eminently suitable framework for studying James’ fiction, for although James repeatedly and perhaps even pointedly refuses to supply hard economic data about his characters (the mechanics of Newman’s business success are deliberately vague in both

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versions of *The American*, as is the nature of the industry that gives rise to the Newsome family fortune in *The Ambassadors*), few authors have been more concerned with the valuation of art and historical objects, the hierarchy of status, and the details of conspicuous consumption.

Newman himself presents a textbook illustration of Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift’s central argument regarding cultural economy: that “the pursuit of prosperity must be seen as the pursuit of many goals at once, from meeting material needs and accumulating riches to seeking symbolic satisfaction and satisfying fleeting pleasures.”34 The desire for the less tangible goals of “symbolic satisfaction” and “fleeting pleasures” is precisely what motivates Newman’s journey to Europe in the first place. James writes that “Christopher Newman’s sole aim in life had been to make money; what he had been placed in the world for was, to his own perception, simply to wrest a fortune, the bigger the better, from defiant opportunity. […] He had won at last and carried off his winnings; and now what was he to do with them? He was a man to whom, sooner or later, the question was sure to present itself, and the answer to it belongs to our story” (N32). To Tom Tristram, a fellow American and former friend Newman meets in Paris, Newman confides that he is “sick of business” and has “money enough” (N35). Now, he announces, “I have come to see Europe, to get the best out of it I can” (N33). Then, simultaneously acknowledging the limits of money’s power yet dismissing any doubts of his ultimate success, Newman adds, “Didn’t I say I wanted the best? I know the best can’t be had for *mere money*, but I rather think money will do a good deal” (N35, emphasis added). Newman’s pursuit of—and belief that he can obtain—this intangible “best,” which for him represents learning, cultivation, status, and eventually a family

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34 Amin and Thrift xiv.
(Amin and Thrift’s “symbolic satisfaction”) but which exists somewhere other than in America, precipitates the novel’s plot and sets off what James had originally intended to be an exploration of contrasting societal values. Thus reading *The American* in light of cultural economy alerts us to James’ attentiveness to the circulation of forms of cultural and symbolic capital that takes place on a global stage. A national economy, where Newman excels, is not the only or even the most important source of valuation for James.

At first, it may seem somewhat anachronistic to employ a relatively recent term like *cultural economy* when discussing James and *The American*, but scholars have traced the roots of the field as far back as Adam Smith, whose *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) links economic value to moral value (i.e., social or cultural norms) and actually predates his more influential *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), as Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift helpfully remind us. Amin and Thrift further suggest that a nascent form of cultural economy has always remained present within and occasionally in opposition to the more dominant discourse of political economy, emerging at times in the writings of Smith, Karl Marx, Thorstein Veblen, and F.W. Taylor. Du Gay and Pryke extend this list to include the works of Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, whose inquiry into the relationship between taste and social class in *La Distinction* (1979) surely has much in common with James’ novels. The most appropriate point of comparison for *The American*, however, is perhaps to be found in the works of Veblen, who was a contemporary of James’ and who, as Geoffrey Hodgson

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35 Amin and Thrift xvi.

36 See pp. xv-xviii in Amin and Thrift.

37 See pp. 9-11 in du Gay and Pryke.
points out, was heavily influenced by the writings of Henry’s elder brother William.\textsuperscript{38}

Indeed, Veblen’s descriptions of “conspicuous consumption” and “conspicuous leisure” in his \textit{Theory of the Leisure Class} (1899) find their literary analogues within the social milieu of many of James’ novels. Like Newman, James’ heroes are frequently independently wealthy and therefore part of Veblen’s “leisure class.” Many of them are free to take long vacations abroad (an example of “conspicuous leisure”) or to purchase goods and services for no other reason than the simple fact that they can—just as Newman commissions functionless and apparently inferior copies of Old Masters’ paintings from Noémie Nioche (an example of “conspicuous consumption”).

Even more relevant to Newman’s plight is Veblen’s 1898 essay “Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?” Cited by Amin and Thrift in their genealogy of cultural economy, Veblen’s essay explicitly refuses to separate culture from economics; Veblen writes: “Economic interest has counted for much in shaping the cultural growth of all communities. […] There is, therefore, no neatly isolable range of cultural phenomena that can be rigorously set apart under the head of economic institutions, although a category of ‘economic institutions’ may be of service as a convenient caption.”\textsuperscript{39} More importantly, as far as James’ treatment of his characters is concerned, Veblen notes, “The economic life history of the individual is a cumulative process of adaptation of means to ends that cumulatively change as the process goes on,

\textsuperscript{38} In chapters 7 and 8 of \textit{The Evolution of Institutional Economics: Agency, Structure and Darwinism in American Institutionalism} (London: Routledge, 2004), Geoffrey Hodgson provides an extensive discussion of the influence of William James’ pragmatist philosophy and instinct-habit psychology on Veblen. Also worth noting is Louis Menand’s observation in \textit{The Metaphysical Club} (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001) that Veblen had been a graduate student alongside John Dewey at Johns Hopkins University, where Veblen (but not Dewey) had taken a year-long course with Charles Sanders Peirce (p. 305).

\textsuperscript{39} Thorstein Veblen, “Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?” \textit{The Place of Science in Modern Civilization and Other Essays} (New York: B.W. Heubsch, 1919) 76-77. See pp. xvi-xvii in Amin and Thrift for their references to this particular essay.
both the agent and his environment being at any point the outcome of the last process. His methods of life to-day are enforced upon him by his habits of life carried over from yesterday and by the circumstances left as the mechanical residue of the life of yesterday. Recognizing that economics is an ongoing social process that results directly from the relationship between a person and his or her environment, Veblen calls attention to the importance of habit. A person’s economic well-being, like that of Newman’s, only comes about through a certain degree of comfort with a particular social environment. Each change in that environment requires a response from the person, and economic life continues only through a process of continuous negotiation and renegotiation. It follows, therefore, that a complete change in environment, such as the one James forces Newman to undergo when he leaves America and travels to Europe, would present a disjuncture with the “cumulative process of adaptation” experienced by a person up to that point. The “habits of life” Newman developed in America, in other words, may not “carry over” in Europe. At least, that is Newman’s dilemma—and the cause of conflict—in *The American* as James originally conceived it. As already indicated, however, James’ views had changed drastically when he embarked upon his plan of revision, and in the following pages, I will demonstrate how James altered the 1907 version of this novel to downplay the unrealistic aspects of its plot and align it more closely with the realities of the global cultural economy he was witnessing emerge.

But first, I wish briefly to explain what I mean by the “global cultural economy.” I borrow the concept from Arjun Appadurai, who describes it as “a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-

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40 Veblen 74-75.
For Appadurai, disjuncture is the global cultural economy’s defining characteristic, arising as it does from “the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.” While economic forces of globalization (multinational corporations, the worldwide circulation of goods and products, etc.) tend to eliminate cultural difference by giving all societies a relative sameness, they simultaneously provide local forms of cultural expression with new resources and technologies, which are then “indigenized” and reshaped to suit the needs and tastes of the local community. Thus besides assigning culture itself a privileged role in the processes of globalization, operating variously in concert with and in resistance to economic factors, Appadurai underscores the fact that disjuncture occurs because of an underlying tension between similarity and difference. In a global cultural economy, national forms of cultural valuation must coincide as well as deviate with one another, and it is this tension between agreement and variance that, in his preface, James suggests he failed to account for in the marriage plot of The American.

What James perceived as a failure, however, may have been due to the nascence of the global cultural economy in the 1870s and to his own position, at the time he began writing The American, as a relatively new transplant to Europe. For one thing, although James had spent several years of his childhood in Europe and had already toured the continent twice in adulthood, he had only just decided to relocate permanently to Europe.

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42 Appadurai 32.

43 Appadurai 32.

44 I discuss the relationships between cultural and other dimensions of globalization more thoroughly in my introduction.
when he began the novel in 1875. Perhaps not unlike Newman, then, James was most impressed by the differences between Europe and America and less attuned to the similarities. In his preface, James recalls that, although the original idea for the novel had come to him while he was still residing in the United States, he had “dropped” it, only to experience its “resurrection” shortly after he had moved to Paris: “Paris had ever so promptly offered me […] everything that was needed to make my conception concrete.”

As James settled down in Europe, he became more attentive to the intersections of American and European interests and values, and other critics have observed such shifts in focus over the course of James’ career. For instance, Eva Zetterberg Pettersson notes that, “while James’s early international stories like Roderick Hudson, The American, or Daisy Miller construct the usual opposition between America and Europe, later texts like The Wings of the Dove, The Ambassadors, and The Golden Bowl problematize it [and] his depiction of the confrontation with European culture becomes gradually more multifaceted.”

John Carlos Rowe similarly remarks that James eventually “refuses to worship either European cultural history or American futurity but sees them instead as parts of the same cultural history.” Just as significantly, as James was maturing artistically and intellectually, the United States was developing into an international power. The thirty-year evolution in James’ attitude toward The American, in other words, runs parallel to the growing intersection of America’s cultural and economic values with those of Europe. James’ aesthetic sensibilities, including his notion of what

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45 James, Preface 3.

46 Zetterberg Pettersson 53.

47 Rowe 208.
counted as “real” or “false” about *The American*, thus may be said to have emerged alongside of the global cultural economy.

Perhaps the most striking result of this evolution in James’ thinking is his treatment of Christopher Newman. In the revised version of *The American*, Newman becomes a more mature, more sophisticated, even more likable character. Through James’ revision to the opening of the novel, as noted above, Newman becomes a “candid connoisseur” of paintings rather than an “undeveloped” one, suggesting that James himself had grown to view Newman in a far more positive light by 1907. Furthermore, in the New York Edition, Newman’s age rises from thirty-six to forty-two-and-a-half, which allows James to remove any stigma attached to Newman’s wealth, which itself swells exponentially, by clarifying that Newman made his fortune before the Civil War rather than during the era of the “robber barons” afterwards. Just as he expands Newman’s economic capital in 1907, so too does James expand Newman’s cultural capital. The frequency with which Newman utters Americanisms like *I guess* and the introductory interjection *well* may increase dramatically—in the revised version, he announces, “I really kind of pine for a mate” (O47), a line that is entirely absent from the 1877 edition. Nevertheless, James reduces Newman’s boorishness overall. When arranging for French lessons with M. Nioche, for example, Newman originally took them up impulsively, as if on a lark: “‘Oh yes, I should like to learn French,’ Newman went on with democratic confidingness. […] ‘But if you learned my language, why shouldn’t I learn yours?’” (N25) But the later Newman is more serious and thoughtful about the matter: “‘Oh yes, I should like to converse with elegance,’ Newman went on. […] ‘If you could catch on at all to our grand language—that of Shakespeare and Milton and Holy Writ—why
shouldn’t I catch on to yours?” (O26) This particular revision also subtly emphasizes both the fact that Newman is familiar with Shakespeare, Milton, and the King James Version of the Bible and the fact that he is aware that Americans share in the cultural and linguistic traditions of Europe. Likewise, Newman not only takes his French lessons more seriously, but he apparently learns the language much faster in the New York Edition. We even find him engaging in clever puns. “‘Come,’ said Newman, ‘let us begin’” becomes the more impressive “‘Allons, enfants de la patrie [Come, children of the fatherland],' said Newman; ‘let’s begin!’” (N54; O59)—indicating that Newman knows at least some of the lyrics of his instructor’s national anthem.

Several of Newman’s other rough edges receive polishing, too. He becomes less strident and less ethnocentric in his patriotism. For example, when irritated by Tom Tristram’s criticisms of the United States, the 1877 version of Newman responds arrogantly by swearing “that they were the greatest country in the world, that they could put all Europe into their breeches’ pockets” (N40). His 1907 self merely speaks “up for them quite as if it had been Fourth of July” (O43), an expression of pride that does not necessarily entail comparative evaluations. Gone, too, are Newman’s other slightly xenophobic generalizations; James entirely removes Newman’s condescending opinion that “all Frenchman are of a frothy and imponderable substance” (N95; absent from O105). Similarly, Newman’s appreciation for high culture increases dramatically.

Before the revisions, his attitude toward the art and architecture he takes in while touring the Continent is largely dismissive. In a letter to Mrs. Tristram, he writes, “Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Italy—I have been through the whole list, and I don’t think I am any the worse for it. I know more about Madonnas and church-steeples than I
supposed any man could” (N75). After James’ revisions, however, that same passage reads, “Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Italy—I’ve taken the whole list as the bare-baked rider takes the paper hoops at the circus, and I’m not even yet out of breath. I carry about six volumes of Ruskin in my trunk” (O82). If the 1907 Newman is actually reading those volumes of Ruskin, then he is a mental heavyweight in comparison to his former self; at the very least, his mind is more open and more probing.

On the whole, then, James’ revisions serve to make Newman a more serious protagonist, one who can hold his own among Europe’s aristocratic elite because he is now competent enough to appreciate what they hold dear. In other words, we see James endowing this American with a mindset more closely aligned with that of the European milieu he infiltrates. Newman now values what they value. This closer alignment—or at least the softening of contrast—is reflected in the shifting attitudes of other characters toward Newman. Instead of referring to Newman playfully as “horribly Western,” Mrs. Tristram now calls him “beyond everything a child of nature” (N39; O42). This more positive comment on Newman’s rough edges suggests that they have less to do with where he comes from than with a certain leniency in his education, and in alluding to William Wordsworth with the newer appellation, Mrs. Tristram both indicates that Newman possesses enough knowledge and taste to understand her reference and announces that those rough edges are an asset rather than a liability.

Claire’s perception of Newman undergoes a similar change in the revised version, and her more positive attitude toward her suitor seems to strengthen their relationship. Indeed, Claire is given what might be James’ most remarkable addition to the dialogue, a

48 See, for instance, Wordsworth’s “To a Young Lady, Who Had Been Reproached for Taking Long Walks in the Country,” among others.
new evaluation of Newman that, as one critic puts it, “has no parallel in the original”
edition.⁴⁹ Whereas in the earlier version, Claire pays Newman the doubtful compliment
that he is “dismally inoffensive,” 1907’s Claire more emphatically states: “You’re easier
than we are, you’re easier than I am, and I quite see that you’ve reasons, of some sort,
that are as good as ours. [...] It’s rather disappointing not to have anything to show you
or to tell you or to teach you, anything that you don’t seem quite capable of knowing and
doing and feeling” (N184; O214). What we have in the New York edition, then, is a
meeting of equals, a convergence between representatives of two cultures that might
approach life differently but are equally “good” and “capable” in each other’s eyes. In
other words, in giving Claire and Newman mutual respect for one another and cultural
and intellectual equality in the revised version of the novel, James creates a new global
culture to which both of these characters can belong. Despite coming from seemingly
different backgrounds, their tastes, styles, values—in short, their ways of interacting with
the world—converge in a newer and more flexible global consciousness and set of
practices. James drives home this convergence in the New York Edition by emphasizing
the fact that, to Newman’s delight, Claire begins to adopt some of his Americanisms:

1877  1907

“As regards your mother and your brother,” Newman added, “there is only
one point upon which I feel that I might quarrel with them. I don’t ask them to sing
my praises to you, but I ask them to let you alone. If I thought they talked ill of me to
you, I should come down upon them.”

“As regards your mother and your brother,” he added, “there’s only one point
on which I feel that I might quarrel with them. I don’t ask them to sing my praises
to you, but I ask them to let you alone. If I thought they talked against me to you at all
badly”—and he just paused—“why I’d

⁴⁹ Max F. Schulz, “The Bellegardes’ Feud with Christopher Newman: A Study of Henry James’s Revision
“They have let me alone, as you say. They have not talked ill of you.”

“In that case,” cried Newman, “I declare they are only too good for this world.” (N16)

She reassured him. “They’ve let me alone, as you say. They haven’t talked against you to me at all badly.”

It gave him, and for the first time, the exquisite pleasure of her apparently liking to use and adopt his words. “Well then I’m ready to declare them only too good for this world!” (O185)

By changing “talked ill of me to you” to “talked against me to you at all badly,” James adds yet another colloquialism to Newman’s vocabulary, which in turn makes Claire’s willingness to “adopt his words” more indicative of her responsiveness to Newman’s character. She even becomes more assertive in their relationship; elsewhere, when breaking the news of her family’s opposition to their union, she takes his hand rather than vice versa: “but she checked him, pressing the hand that held her own” becomes “but she checked him, pressing the hand of which she had possessed herself” (N213; O249).

While this newfound assertiveness on Claire’s part may make her inability to stand up to her mother and brother less credible than before—she is already a widow, after all—it underscores Newman’s charisma. He seems to have won her heart, despite the presence of eligible European bachelors, such as Lord Deepmere.

Further cementing Newman’s cultural savvy in 1907, James also reframes the other key relationship in the novel; Newman’s friendship with Claire’s younger brother Valentin also warms immensely, as nearly every study of James’ revisions has noted. In the earlier version, for example, James writes, “During the next three weeks Newman saw [Valentin de] Bellegarde several times, and without formally swearing an eternal friendship the two men established a sort of comradeship” (N95). In 1907, James revises
that passage this way: “During the next three weeks they met again several times and, without formally swearing an eternal friendship, fell, for their course of life, instinctively into step together” (O105). Like Mrs. Tristram and Claire, Valentin is also given a new line of dialogue in the revised version that paints Newman in a better light. He states, “I shall have had a greater sense of safety with you than I have perhaps ever known in any relation of life” (O101; absent from N92). Their intensified relationship helps James downplay the earlier version’s repeated emphasis on Newman’s inability to fathom foreign customs. When the two men debate Newman’s chances of winning Claire, for instance, Newman is much quicker on the uptake regarding his lack of an aristocratic title:

1877

“Well, for instance you’re not, as we call it, if I’m not mistaken, ‘born.’”

“Why, you are not noble, for instance,” he [Valentin] said.

“The devil I am not!” exclaimed Newman.

“Oh,” said Bellegarde, a little more seriously, “I did not know you had a title.”

“A title? What do you mean by a title?” asked Newman. “A count, a duke, a marquis? I don’t know anything about that, I don’t know who is and who is not. But I say I am noble. I don’t exactly know what you mean by it, but it’s a fine word and a fine idea; I put in a claim to it.”

1907

“Well, for instance you’re not, as seriously, “I didn’t know you had—well, your quarterings.”

“Why, you are not noble, for instance,” he [Valentin] said.

“The devil I am not!” exclaimed Newman.

“Oh,” said his friend a little more seriously, “I didn’t know you had—well, your quarterings.”

“Ah, your quarterings are your little local matter!” (O117)

Newman still dismisses the objection that Claire’s nobility will stand in his way in 1907, but he has grown sophisticated enough to know what Valentin means when referring to
quarterings, a term in heraldry. Furthermore, he is confident enough in his own social status not to lay claim to nobility but to dismiss it as a “local matter,” which in turn echoes James’ revised first description of Newman as a “local” rather than a “national” type. And in 1907, Valentin seems more inclined to agree with him. James removes from this same conversation an exchange that suggests Valentin himself may object initially to Newman as a potential brother-in-law. When Newman asks for confirmation that he is “not good enough” for Claire, Valentin quickly gives it: “Brutally speaking—yes!” (N105) In the revised version, however, we find Valentin telling Newman that he would make “as good a prince as another” (O118).

Finally, retouching the sections of the novel where Newman and Valentin interact, particularly chapters VII and VIII, allows James to continue deemphasizing the importance of national contrasts to their relationship. In the revised version, Valentin’s role as a French foil to the American Newman is less pronounced, with James cutting down on a number of references to Newman’s Americanness in these two chapters. For example, in the 1877 version, when Valentin asks if Newman is enjoying his stay in Paris, James writes, “Like any other good American, Newman thought it as well not to truckle to the foreigner. ‘Oh, so-so,’ he answered” (N91). In 1907, that response is simply “‘Well, I’m keeping my head’” (O100). Significantly, the figure of Valentin also lets James switch from an essentialist view of national identity to a pragmatist one worthy of his brother William. In 1877, Valentin is “a foreigner to his finger-tips” (N89), implying that his foreignness (i.e., his Frenchness) is commensurate with his body. In 1907, however, he is “a foreigner to the last roll of his so frequently rotary r” (O98),
suggesting that foreignness is now the result of something one *does* or *says* rather than something one *is*.

The recasting of the novel’s protagonist and his relationships with other characters is all the more striking when we consider that, despite James’ extensive revisions, both versions of *The American* adhere to the same plot. Christopher Newman, the impoverished-orphan-turned-leading-industrialist, still abandons his business out of disgust with own increasingly cut-throat practices, and he still travels to Europe to expand his horizons and fulfill his empty life. In both editions, Mrs. Tristram introduces him to Claire de Cintré, and Newman and Claire subsequently develop genuine affection for one another. The outcome also remains the same. Despite the fact that Newman would make an excellent match for Claire, their union is aborted in 1907, just as it was in 1877. Intimidated by a mother and elder brother who oppose the marriage, Claire cannot stand up for herself, and to escape their control, she enters a Carmelite convent.

Yet what motivates the Bellegardes’ opposition in 1907 becomes more ambiguous and less clearly defined than it was in the earlier edition. Before, the Bellegardes simply believed that, despite all his money, Newman was not good enough. In the New York Edition, their standards are less explicitly stated. Max Schulz has suggested that the Bellegardes’ personal animosity toward Newman is grounded upon the revised Newman’s greater self-assurance and increased success with their social circle, which arise “as a natural right of his abilities and accomplishments.”50 Between 1877 and 1907, Newman changes from being merely oblivious to the social niceties of the Bellegardes’ milieu to feeling positively entitled to belong to that milieu. Thus it becomes Newman’s “air as of not having to account for his own place in the social scale” rather than his

50 Schulz 51. See also pp. 45, 47, and 52.
“tranquil unsuspectingness of the relativity of his own place in the social scale” that is “irritating” to Urbain de Bellegarde, Claire’s older brother (O174, N152). Perhaps more to the point, the Bellegardes’ animosity may emanate from their recognition that Newman represents not just America but that the arrival of people like him in Parisian society signals the inevitable triumph of democratic capitalism and their own irrelevance. For a nobleman like Urbain de Bellegarde, who in both versions believes firmly in “the divine right of Henry of Bourbon, Fifth of his name, to the throne of France” (N 153, O176), Newman likely represents what James calls in _The American Scene_ “the monstrous form of Democracy, […] the huge democratic broom that has made the clearance and that one seems to see brandished in the empty sky.”

When James revised _The American_, he capitalized on this fact, and at least one revision emphasizes Urbain’s distaste at the inevitable supremacy of this democracy that Newman represents. From simply “holding his breath so as not to inhale the odour of democracy” in 1877, 1907’s Urbain “could but hold his breath so as not to inhale the strong smell—since who liked such very strong smells?—of a democracy so gregarious as to be unable not to engender heat and perspiration” (N153, O175, original emphasis). James’ decision to retain the novel’s original setting—Paris in the late-1860s, in the closing years of the Second Empire—gives this particular revision an even sharper edge. As a Bourbonite, Urbain may not approve of Napoleon III, but the advent of the Third Republic in 1870 and the even more radical Paris Commune of 1871 would dash whatever hopes a real-life Bellegarde might harbor for a return to monarchy.

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51 Henry James, _The American Scene_, in _Collected Travel Writings: Great Britain and America_ (New York: Library of America, 1993) 401. Later in this chapter, subsequent quotations from this text will be cited parenthetically.
Despite these changes in the Bellegardes’ attitude toward Newman, their interactions remain much the same, suggesting that James considered revising the characters, style, and tone of the novel far more important than altering its overarching plot. Eventually, Newman obtains a note written by Claire’s late father that reveals that Madame de Bellegarde (Claire’s mother) either murdered or allowed the marquis (Claire’s father) to die. Once again, the final third of the novel transforms from comedy-of-manners into character study and morality tale. Both versions end, of course, with Newman’s redemption and James’ refusal to give his readers the expected happy ending that is typical of these comedies. After briefly attempting to blackmail Claire’s family into letting the marriage go on, Newman decides against exposing their dark secret. Although doing so would give him the satisfaction of seeing them shunned by society just as they have shunned him, Newman refuses to demean himself by stooping to the Bellegardes’ level of pettiness. Instead, he casts the incriminating note into a fire in the final chapter of each edition, with Mrs. Tristram, the person who instigated the whole affair, as Newman’s only audience.

It is here, however, at the very end of the novel, that James’ most discussed revision appears. After Newman casts the note into the fire in the earlier version, Mrs. Tristram suggests that the Bellegardes have won because his action is precisely what they would have expected him to do, which leads Newman to turn “instinctively”—and perhaps regretfully—to the fire to see if the note is still there (N309). In the revised edition, on the other hand, Mrs. Tristram does not needle Newman. Instead, she rises from her chair, takes and kisses Newman’s hands, and remarks that “I needn’t tell you at this hour how I’ve felt for you. But I like you as you are” (O363). Then the novel
concludes with her lament for “poor, poor Claire!” (O363)\textsuperscript{52} Like many of the other revisions, this one portrays Newman in a far better light. His possible regret at burning the note is gone, and in its place is Mrs. Tristram’s affirmation of his goodness. In other words, Newman’s action is not undercut in the New York Edition; he is no longer a dupe, and his act of selflessness is allowed to retain its dignity. Nevertheless, many critics remain unmoved by the revised ending, dismissing it as overly melodramatic.\textsuperscript{53} Such concern with the question of whether this particular alteration improves or hurts the novel is emblematic of the approach that most other studies of the novel’s revisions take, with critics more or less evenly divided between which version is more coherent and unified in its vision—in short, which version is preferable or “better.”

The problem with such back-and-forth squabbling is that the critics involved tend to seal off their aesthetic evaluations of the novel and James’ evolution as an artist from important cultural and historical questions instead of showing, as I do here, how deeply imbricated the two issues really are. Robert Herrick set the tone as early as 1923, when he lamented, “One wishes that […] ‘The American’ might have escaped the too eager brush of the Re-toucher” and concluded that James’ revisions to the early novels amounted to a “fatal re-drawing.”\textsuperscript{54} Since then, a number of critics have attempted to second-guess James. No less a James scholar than Leon Edel remarked, “The late revisions may be interesting to study for the light they throw on the novelist’s creative

\textsuperscript{52} Some of my students have referred to this altered finale as “creepy”—a response that is similar to, if not as sophisticated in its articulation as, many critics’. In “Between Communion and Renunciation: Revising The American,” Henry James Review 22 (2001), Naomi E. Silver describes Mrs. Tristram’s behavior as “at once motherly and seductive” (294).


\textsuperscript{54} Herrick 733, 740.
process; but they are extremely artificial” in The American.\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, The American occupies a unique place in James scholarship; more articles, essays, and chapters have been dedicated to cataloguing and analyzing the changes James made to this novel than to any other of his revised works. By my count, at least eleven different critics have published analyses of the differences between the two versions,\textsuperscript{56} and that’s not counting broad examinations of James’ revisions for the New York Edition as a whole or general interpretations of the novel that reflect on some key differences in passing.\textsuperscript{57} For those critics who view the revised version as an improvement, the appeal of learning what drove James in 1907 to make such drastic changes to the 1877 original is entwined with the allure of finding a key to the entire thirty-year arc of James’ artistic evolution. Philip Horne, the most recent critic to take this tack, writes, ‘The history of the ‘growth’ may be James’s personal history as a writer—the development of his style over the years; but it may also be the process by which the revisions came into being. This growth of the


immense array of revised terms takes place in the act of revision, in the reseeing of old stories ‘in other words.’” 58 And a few pages later: “There is an incremental relation and re-relation of expressive elements, progressively prompting and shifting and metamorphosing as each makes and settles into its place in the whole, altering that whole, but as part of a single evolution, each new link connecting with something in the old matter to form a continuity of intention.” 59

More recently, however, debates over the perceived superiority of either version have largely vanished from critical analyses. In her 2001 essay “Between Communion and Renunciation: Revising The American,” the most recent examination of the novel’s revisions, Naomi E. Silver ignores questions about James’ evolving aesthetic sensibility altogether, focusing instead upon James’ shifting ethical position. In fact, most James scholars seem to have accepted James Tuttleton’s claim that, “whatever one may think of James’s revisions for the ‘New York Edition,’ it is clear that the 1907 edition of The American is so extensively revised that it is a substantially different book from the novel James composed in the mid-1870s.” 60 Of course, the implications of viewing the two editions as distinct works are far-reaching. Scholars have always needed to exercise a certain degree of caution when selecting a reprinted edition of one of James’ early novels to work with, lest they face the embarrassment of mistakenly citing one of James’ revisions as an example of his early style. There is, however, a significant difference

58 Horne 163.

59 Horne 182-83.

between early and late works and early and late versions of a single work. Should we now read the New York Edition of The American alongside other late works, such as The Ambassadors and The American Scene, rather than alongside early works, such as The Europeans and (the unrevised version of) Daisy Miller?\(^6^1\)

To answer this question, I now turn to the relationship between the revised version of The American and James’ other late works—a relationship so far overlooked by nearly all previous analyses of the novel’s revisions but one that helps explain how James became more conversant with the emerging global cultural economy and how that greater knowledge stimulated James to revise his early novels in order to accommodate new readings of those works.\(^6^2\) In other words, to trace down what is “global” about the later James’ aesthetics, I examine the process by which he revised his early novels to fit his new understanding of the world. Thus in a sense, I suggest that understanding the major historical and cultural shifts that James takes part in and the emergence of a global consciousness that his writings—and revisions—both reflect and contribute to involves attentiveness to such seemingly unimportant details as altered articles, adjusted adjectives, and other literary emendations as it does attentiveness to the sorts of changing population patterns and routes of immigration that the next chapter will examine.

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\(^6^1\) We may very well need to ask ourselves what constitutes “knowing” The American at all, which in turn raises pedagogical questions about which version of the novel to teach in classrooms and why. Should undergraduates be made aware of the differences between the two editions, and should graduate students be required to study both editions (and perhaps both editions of the other significantly revised novels)?

\(^6^2\) Some studies of The American have examined its relationship with James’ other early writings, and in her introduction to New Essays on The American, Banta even compares it with James’ 1914 memoir Notes of a Son and Brother, though not in relation to the revisions. The essays contained in Henry James’s New York Edition go some way toward correcting this oversight, though only Ross Posnock’s “Breaking the Aura of Henry James” discusses The American Scene extensively; see pp. 35-38. Horne discusses The American Scene in his third chapter, “Confidence in Revision” (pp. 47-99), though he remains interested primarily in James’ looks backward into the past.
In his 1984 book *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons*, Hershel Parker took all previous commentators on James’ revisions to task for ignoring “even the simplest biographical questions, such as what order James worked in,” and for not asking “what the chronological relationships were between James’s revising of his works and his writing of the prefaces for the volumes in which those works appeared.”

Although he is overly dismissive of those previous studies (taken together, Isadore Traschen’s three essays on the revisions to *The American* constitute a thoughtful and largely consistent, though not definitive, examination of the revisions) and either overlooked or ignored James Tuttleton’s brief history of the text in the Norton Critical Edition of the novel, Parker had a point. For instance, no analysis of the revised ending of *The American* has drawn what seems to me a fairly obvious comparison between its finale and those of *The Ambassadors* and “The Jolly Corner” (1908). Published during a five-year time-span that also included James’ rewriting of *The American*, these two late works end with a similarly ambiguous relationship between a rather dense American man whose eyes are opened through travel and a very sensible American woman who serves as the man’s chief confidante. The revised incarnations of Christopher Newman and Mrs. Tristram thus parallel Spencer Brydon and Alice Staverton in “The Jolly Corner” and Lambert Strether and Maria Gostrey in *The Ambassadors*. Parker proceeded to put his money where his mouth was, though. In a separate essay entitled “Henry James ‘In the Wood’: Sequence and Significances of His Literary Labors, 1905-1907,” he reconstructed a detailed chronology of the thirty-month period between June 1905 and December 1907.

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63 Parker, *Flawed Texts* 107.
that comprised the most complicated phase of James’ work on the New York Edition.64 Together, Tuttleton’s “Note on the Text” and Parker’s outline clarify the otherwise rather convoluted history of the novel.

When most critics talk about his revisions to the novel, they typically refer to the alterations James made when he was preparing it for the New York Edition. In point of fact, those revisions were merely the last and most significant in a series of revisions that occurred at intervals over the course of three decades. For one thing, as Oscar Cargill points out, *The American* is itself a reworking of the plot of *Home of the Gentry* (sometimes translated as *A Nest of Gentlefolk*, 1859) by Ivan Turgenev, an author James greatly admired and met shortly after moving to Paris in 1875; Turgenev’s novel also ends with its hero’s love interest joining a convent.65 James started his novel only a few weeks after settling down in Paris. When the first installments were rejected by *The Galaxy*, James sent them to William Dean Howells, who agreed to publish the novel in *The Atlantic Monthly*. *The American* appeared in that magazine in twelve installments between June 1876 and May 1877; however, James did not complete the novel until early 1877, well after the first few installments had already appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* and shortly after James had relocated from Paris to London. Thus James was composing the novel as it was being published, and he had no opportunity to proofread the material before it appeared in print. The first book edition was published by James Ripley Osgood

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64 Hershel Parker, “Henry James ‘In the Wood’: Sequence and Significances of His Literary Labors, 1905-1907,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38 (1984): 492-513. Except when noted otherwise, this brief summary is a condensation of Tuttleton’s “Note on the Text” and those portions of Parker’s log that relate directly to *The American* and *The American Scene*. Readers interested in further information should consult those texts; however, Parker’s chronology should be complemented with the more detailed one Philip Horne supplies in his appendix to *Henry James and Revision*. Horne covers the totality of James’ involvement with the New York Edition between April 1900 and January 1912 (pp. 323-57).

65 Cargill 421.
and was released in April 1877. According to Tuttleton, “there is no evidence to suggest that James […] prepared corrected copy for this first book edition.”\(^{66}\) When pirated copies of the novel appeared in Britain in 1878 due to weak copyright laws, James was troubled by their textual corruptions, and he arranged for an authorized English edition, which was published by Macmillan in March 1879. The 1879 Macmillan edition marked the first time that scholars are certain James reviewed galley proofs of the novel, and while there are relatively few variants between Macmillan’s and Osgood’s editions, it is for this reason that the 1879 Macmillan is widely accepted as the definitive early version of *The American*.

Between 1879 and the New York Edition, *The American* reappeared twice more, though in radically different guises. First, in 1883, Macmillan included it among a set of James’ collected novels. Again, Tuttleton notes that “there is no evidence to suggest that James played a role in the preparation of the 1883 text,” and although there are some 800 variants between the 1879 and 1883 editions, all but one are accidentals.\(^{67}\) Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, when James began revising the novel for the New York Edition, he utilized a copy of the 1883 edition. More significantly, however, James returned to *The American* in the early 1890s, when he adapted it into a play. In many ways, the changes that James eventually made to the story for this adaptation are even more radical than the revisions that appear in the 1907 edition of the novel. At first, James merely reshaped the existing plot and characters into a four-act drama, but Edward Compton, who produced the play and starred as Newman, complained about the gloominess of the ending and

\(^{66}\) Tuttleton 313.

\(^{67}\) Tuttleton 315.
prodded James into writing a new fourth act. James reluctantly complied, supplying a happy ending in which Claire and Newman are allowed to marry and Valentin, who is killed in a duel in both versions of the novel, survives. Other than James’ desire for success on the stage and his rather low opinion of theater audiences, there seem to be no overriding or aesthetically coherent reasons for these major changes, and they do not make it into the New York Edition. Ironically, the changes do reflect the happy endings that were tacked on to several unauthorized translations of the novel that appeared in Germany and elsewhere in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Equally ironic is the fact that the revised stage version of The American gave James his greatest theatrical success, though that success was modest at best.

When James eventually rewrote The American for the New York Edition, the process was much longer and more arduous. James began that process as early as October or November 1905, and at various times, his work on The American overlapped his labors on Roderick Hudson, The Portrait of a Lady, and The Princess Cassamassima as well as his composition of The American Scene, which he began in earnest in August 1905. By March 1906, James finished and submitted the revised version of Roderick Hudson to Scribner’s but continued working on The American. In May 1906, he set The American aside to work on proofs of The American Scene, and the following month saw him submit the revised version of The Portrait of a Lady and return the proofs of the revised Roderick Hudson. In August, James completed and submitted the prefaces for Roderick Hudson and The Portrait of a Lady, liking them so much that he decided to continue producing prefaces for his other works. By November 1906, he finished and

submitted the revisions for the first half of *The American*, not completing and submitting
the second half and the preface until February of the following year. By the time he
finished his work on *The American*, James had already begun revising *The Princess
Cassamassima*, and he submitted the first volume of that novel in early March 1907. He
corrected proofs for *The American* in late April and for *The Princess Cassamassima* in
early May. In July 1907, he corrected the proofs of the prefaces for *Roderick Hudson*,
*The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The American*, having already begun revising *The Tragic
Muse* but not yet written the preface for *The Princess Cassamassima*. By October 1907,
James realized that he would never be able to write his envisioned second half of *The
American Scene*, but he seems to have decided that the revisions and prefaces were an
adequate trade-off. In December of that year, Scribner’s sent him complimentary copies
of the first two volumes of the New York Edition, which contained *Roderick Hudson* and
*The American*.

No previous analysis of James’ revisions of *The American*, however, has taken
this brief history into account or inquired as to how James’ other literary activities at the
time informed the novel’s alterations.\(^69\) Of course, it was not uncommon for James to
return multiple times to a single novel; S.P. Rosenbaum informs us that James revised
*The Ambassadors* three times in a span of about six years, including once for the New
York Edition, though none of these revisions were as extensive as the revisions to James’
earliest novels.\(^70\) Nevertheless, the fact that James took fifteen months to ready *The

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\(^69\) The extensive chronology of his appendix notwithstanding, Philip Horne fails to discuss this larger context in his chapter on *The American*, though his first chapter examines this context in relation to the New York Edition as a whole. Neither Hershel Parker nor any of the contributors to *Henry James’s New York Edition* analyze this particular novel’s revisions extensively.

American for the New York Edition is particularly striking when we stop to consider that he was capable of drafting even longer novels in less time. There can be little doubt that he took both his efforts and the novel itself very seriously. Just as important is that James’ rewriting of The American overlapped and continued on immediately after his efforts to write and see The American Scene through publication. As I suggested earlier in this chapter, we should view The American Scene and the revised edition of The American as informing one another, each being the direct result of James’ 1904-05 return to the United States. (James finalized arrangements for the New York Edition during his trip.) The American Scene sheds further light on James’ revisions to The American, for it records his realization of his native land’s emergence as a global power in his absence.

To be sure, in The American Scene, James does not entirely abandon his descriptions and analyses of national contrasts in favor of a vision of global homogeneity. As with many travelogues, much of the book is dedicated to cataloguing differences: different ways of life, opposing sets of values, and so forth. In drawing attention to James’ awareness of an emerging global cultural economy, therefore, I wish to emphasize that the convergence of national values was—and continues to remain—gradual and that James’ later writings expand upon and problematize, without wholly discarding, his earlier concepts of how culture functions at the international level. After all, even in its revised form, The American ends without rapprochement, despite Christopher Newman’s status as a more serious contender for Claire’s hand in 1907. Likewise, The American Scene still echoes another, much earlier work of nonfiction by James in its decrial of America’s lack of history and high culture and Americans’ lack of discrimination; in Hawthorne (1879), written very shortly after the first version of The American, James
excuses the “extraordinary blankness [and] curious paleness of colour and paucity of detail” that characterize Nathaniel Hawthorne’s American diaries in contrast to his “warmer” and more detailed European diaries as the result of the absence of “items of high civilization” in America at the time.\textsuperscript{71} But whatever James’ opinions regarding the perceived shortcomings of American culture nearly thirty years later, \textit{The American Scene} certainly displays no “paucity of detail.” Its sheer length alone—some 150,000 words and presumably only half the length of the project James originally conceived—surely indicates that James now felt that the topic of America was anything but “blankness.”

On the contrary, James freely admits that his fascination with his homeland had intensified during his twenty-year absence. In what is perhaps the most confessional passage in \textit{The American Scene}, James writes:

It was “Europe” that had, in very ancient days, held out to the yearning young American some likelihood of impressions more numerous and various and of a higher intensity than those he might gather on the native scene; and it was doubtless in conformity with some such desire more finely and more frequently to vibrate that he had originally begun to consult the European oracle. This had led, in the event, to his settling to live for long years in the very precincts, as it were, of the temple. (654)

Echoing the converging tastes and values that place Claire and Newman on equal footing in the revised version of \textit{The American}, James here suggests that transforming from a merely American status into a global sensibility involves learning how to “vibrate” more intensely, not simply collecting bits of knowledge. But the longer James had resided in Europe, the more had that “higher intensity” gradually worn off. “The European

\textsuperscript{71} Henry James, \textit{Hawthorne} (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1879) 42-43.
complexity,” he continues, “working clearer to one’s vision, had grown usual and
calculable. […] Romance and mystery—in other words the amusement of interest—
would have therefore at last to provide for themselves elsewhere” (654-55, original
emphasis). James’ emphasis of the word amusement is perhaps unfortunate, suggesting
that he is little more than a dilettante, but it is his use of the word complexity that really
matters, insofar as it implies that whichever “elsewhere” James selects would have to
equal or supersede the complexity that James had already mastered in Europe. As we
know, James selected America: “It was American civilization that had begun to spread
itself thick and pile itself high, in short, in proportion as the other, the foreign exhibition
had taken to writing itself plain; and to a world so amended and enriched, accordingly,
the expatriated observer, with his relaxed curiosity reviving and his limp imagination
once more on the stretch, couldn’t fail again to address himself” (655). Ironically for the
man who wrote disparagingly of his own country’s culture in Hawthorne, returning to the
nation he had forsaken so many years ago serves as a means of aesthetic rejuvenation
(“reviving” his “relaxed curiosity” and “stretching” his “limp imagination”), and this
renewal is possible because that nation has “amended and enriched” itself. In other
words, James finds his own artistic regeneration in the “spread” of “American
civilization.” And this is James writing in 1905, shortly after he had returned to Britain
and as he was embarking upon the New York Edition, perhaps the most notable outcome
of this regeneration. James must have felt his trip justified very quickly after he arrived
in the United States because he began detecting differences everywhere, but here again,
James problematizes these differences by acknowledging that “to be on the lookout for
differences was, not unnaturally, to begin to meet them just over the border and see them
increase and multiply” (397). His various encounters with difference in America, therefore, may be just a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For James, however, the greatest challenge to his own preconceived notions about national identity appears in the form of the many thousands of immigrants who had made their home in America during his absence. Their presence and the ethnic diversity they bring obsess James throughout the four chapters he devotes to New York City. His concerns over these immigrants become most acute as he recounts his visit to Ellis Island, already the most famous point of entry for immigrants of the period. James describes the scene as a “visible act of ingurgitation on the part of our body politic and social” and imagines that, like himself, “any sensitive citizen who may have happened to ‘look in’ […] comes back from his visit not at all the same person” (426). Shaken to its core is his certainty in what makes an American an American. “One’s supreme relation, as one had always put it,” James writes, “was one’s relation to one’s country—a conception made up so largely of one’s countrymen and one’s countrywomen” (427). With his visit to Ellis Island, however, “the idea of the country itself underwent something of that profane overhauling through which it appears to suffer the indignity of change” (427). These immigrants have literally displaced James; their influx into the country occurred after his own expatriation. But their presence also overturns James’ belief that ethnic, social, and cultural homogeneity forms the foundation of national identity—what he calls “the luxury of some such close and sweet and whole national consciousness as that of the Switzer and the Scot” (428, original emphasis). These immigrants are—or shortly will become—Americans, too, and native-born Americans must “surrender and accept the [new] orientation” of nationality (427). James’ vision is not very different from
Woodrow Wilson’s, though at first James is far less thrilled to realize that, as Wilson put it in the speech that opened the preceding chapter, America is “compounded of the nations of the world.” Eventually, James takes comfort in realizing that immigration has always been integral to American history: “Who and what is an alien, when it comes to that, in a country peopled from the first […] by migrations at once extremely recent, perfectly traceable, and urgently required?” (459) Yet James is nagged by a lingering suspicion that these immigrants, poor and crude though they may be, are no less cosmopolitan than he, the son of privilege. “Foreign as they might be, newly inducted as they might be,” he notes, “they were at home” (460, original emphasis). What James seems to recognize, as the next chapter will explore more fully in the works of other writers, is that immigrants comprise a type of global citizenry, capable of being “at home” even in their foreignness, and that immigration is itself a contributing factor to globalization.

James undercuts national contrasts in other ways, too. In particular, he exhibits a tendency to relate what he finds to be different in America with what he is already familiar in Europe. For instance, when walking the streets of New York, a city much transformed during his absence, his thoughts go “straight to poor great wonder-working Émile Zola and his love of the human aggregation, the artificial microcosm, which had to spend itself on great shops, great businesses, great ‘apartment-houses,’ of inferior, of mere Parisian scale,” and he wonders, “What if Le Ventre de Paris, what if Au Bonheur des Dames, what if Pot-Bouille and L’Argent, could but have come into being under the New York inspiration?” (424) This new New York dwarfs even Paris in the material it might supply writers, and James assumes that Zola’s novels would be grander still had
Zola only been able to write them in—and about—New York. Later, when James bemoans the bourgeois tastes of his fellow countrymen, he finds solace in reminding himself that his “vision has a kind of analogy; for what were the Venetians, after all, but the children of a Republic and of trade?” (507) This Venetian analogy seems to have struck James as particularly appropriate because he returns to it in his chapter on the Bowery. “As the Venetian Republic, in the person of the Doge,” he writes, “used to go forth, on occasion, to espouse the Adriatic, so it is quite as if the American, incarnate in its greatest port, were for ever throwing the nuptial ring to the still more richly-endowed Atlantic” (525). Here, James is referring once again to the immigrants who had transformed the ethnic and cultural character of the city, but the images of trade and overseas expansion this passage simultaneously connotes drive home the fact that America, like Venice, was a republic that had acquired an empire. Indeed, when James finally arrives in Washington, he remarks on how that city’s features “all more or less majestically [play] the administrative, or as we nowadays put it, Imperial part” (633, emphasis added).

The city of Washington, with its manifestations of newly attained power, presents James with the greatest number of convergences and potential convergences between America and the more established imperial powers of Europe. The architecture and landscape of Capitol Hill, for instance, provide evidence of “the democratic assimilation of the greater dignities and majesties” of the Roman model (650, original emphasis). Even when James notes that the similarities between America’s capitol and the capitols of Europe are as yet merely superficial—“Washington talks about herself, and about almost nothing else; falling superficially indeed, on that ground, but into line with the
other capitols. London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, goodness knows, talk about themselves: that is each member of this sisterhood talks, sufficiently or inordinately, of the great number of divided and differing selves that form together her controlling identity’” (635-36)—he never doubts the inevitability of American hegemony. Commenting on the ostensible “historic void” out of which U.S. power has sprung, he worries:

The danger “in Europe” is of their having too many things to say, and too many others to distinguish these from; the danger in the States is of their not having things enough—with enough tone and resonance furthermore to give them. What therefore will the multitudinous and elaborate forms of the Washington to come have to “say,” and what, above all, besides gold and silver, stone and marble and trees and flowers, will they be able to say it with? (648, emphasis added)

James ends his chapter on Washington with the haunting image of three Native Americans “dispossessed of forest and prairie” (652). Just as clearly as the “immaculate” streets of the city or the buildings on Capitol Hill, they offer physical proof of America’s emergence as an imperial power; for James, whose mind was “fed betimes on the Leatherstocking Tales,” their presence confirms that America, like the empires of Europe, has strode “the bloody footsteps of time” (652-53). That James himself was haunted by these three Native Americans is evinced by the fact that he returns to them three chapters later, in the penultimate paragraph of The American Scene. In a rather extraordinary moment of identification with their plight that perhaps grows out of his own sense of having been “dispossessed” by immigrants, James takes his American readers to task for not making that bloody imperial legacy amount to something more than it does:

If I were one of the painted savages you have dispossessed […] beauty and charm would be for me in the solitude you have ravaged, and I should owe you my grudge for every disfigurement and every violence, for every wound with which you have caused the face of the land to bleed. No, since I accept your ravage,
what strikes me is the long list of the arrears of your undone. [...] You touch the
great lonely land—as one feels it still to be—only to plant upon it some ugliness
about which, never dreaming of the grace of apology or contrition, you then
proceed to brag with a cynicism all your own. (734-35)

In light of this meditation on the violence that has been suppressed in official and quasi-
official accounts of American history, such as the Leatherstocking Tales, some of James’
revisions to *The American* take on a slightly sinister tone. I shall conclude with one such
alteration that appears in the first chapter of the novel.

In both versions of *The American*, James withholds his protagonist’s name for
several paragraphs after Newman’s initial description, allowing himself to drive home the
symbolism of the name with a joke. While making arrangements with Noémie Nioche
for copies of the artworks that surround them in the Louvre, Newman presents her with
his card. The changes that James makes to their ensuing exchange reveals as profound a
shift in his thinking about Euro-American relations as the one he discusses more directly
in the preface to the novel:

1877
And she took it and read his name:
“Christopher Newman.” Then she tried to
repeat it aloud, and laughed at her bad
accent. “Your English names are so droll!”
“Droll?” said Mr. Newman,
laughing too. “Did you ever hear of
Christopher Columbus?”
“Bien sûr! [Of course!] He
invented America; a very great man. And
is he your patron?
“My patron?”

1907
And she took it and read his name:
“Christopher Newman.” Then she tried to
repeat it aloud and laughed at her bad
accent. “Your English names are not
*commodes* [easy] to say!”
“Well, mine’s partly celebrated,”
said Mr. Newman, laughing too. “Did you
never hear of Christopher Columbus?”
“Bien sûr! He first showed
Americans the way to Europe; a very great
man. And is he your patron?”
“Your patron-saint, in the calendar.”

“Oh, exactly; my parents named me for him.” (N21)

“My patron?”

“Your patron saint, such as we all have.”

“Oh, exactly; my parents named me after him.” (O21)

In both versions, James sets up his punchline through slippage. Either Noémie genuinely does not know who Christopher Columbus was, or more likely, she is unable to communicate precisely what it was Columbus accomplished. Either way, her mistaken assumption that Columbus is Newman’s patron saint makes it clear that our Christopher is as much on a voyage of discovery as his more famous namesake.

James’ revision of Noémie’s muddled description of what Columbus did, however, is even more suggestive. In 1877, James was content to create humor out of Noémie’s confusion of the verbs invent and discover. Her confusion invites readers to consider momentarily the idea that America is a construction, a country that has been “invented” as opposed to one that has come into being organically through ethnic and linguistic homogeneity. (This implication would align James with his contemporary Ernst Renan, whose views on nationality and the nation-state were discussed in the preceding chapter.) In 1907, James’ humor results from Noémie’s inversion of direct and indirect objects. She should have said that Columbus “first showed Europeans the way to America.” Thus the joke remains an outgrowth of the vagaries of grammar, as highlighted by the conversation of two people who do not share the same mother tongue, but the implications of the revised sentence are richer, especially when considered in light of James’ comments on the plight of Native Americans in The American Scene. After all, in a very real sense, Columbus did show (Native) Americans the way to—and the ways of—Europe. He both transported captive American Indians back to Europe and laid the
foundation for the genocidal policies of European (and U.S.) imperial administrators.

Newman’s facetious admission that Columbus is his patron saint is therefore also an admission that he is the beneficiary of the bloody imperial legacy that Columbus founded and James, in *The American Scene*, denounces through his own identification with the three Native Americans he encountered in Washington.

Finally, on an even more basic level, Noémie’s new response also evokes an image of transatlantic exchange: that the way from Europe to America is simultaneously the way from America to Europe. Consequently, while her answer may not be technically correct, it is entirely appropriate to the larger issues that concern James. The ramifications of Newman’s presence in Europe, including his effect on the lives of Claire and other Europeans, reveal that the United States has its role to play on the international stage, too. America, James demonstrates, is not simply an extension of Europe, nor does history and culture flow one-directionally westward. At the same time, however, the fact that Noémie can confuse two continents, let alone two individual countries (she does assume at first that Newman is English because of his name), indicates how difficult it is to sustain simple national binary values in James’ fiction. Both of these factors—the increased international importance of the United States and the convergence of national values—become more prominent in *The American* as a result of James’ revisions. In the end, the world of the revised version of the novel is more than either “real” or “romantic.” Like the world surrounding Henry James himself in 1907, it is global.
Chapter 3: Circulating America: Abraham Cahan, Knut Hamsun, and a Global Perspective on the Immigrant Experience

“What, oh, what again, were he and his going to make of us?” – Henry James

As indicated in the preceding chapter, several passages in The American Scene (1907) are dedicated to Henry James’ attempts to come to terms with the changes to American society and culture that the vast influx of immigrants had caused during his twenty-year absence from the United States. In particular, an encounter he has with an Armenian immigrant in the New Hampshire countryside leads James to consider what he calls “the great ‘ethnic’ question”: “What meaning […] can continue to attach to such a term as the ‘American’ character?” Eventually, as I pointed out, James takes solace in the fact that the United States and its culture have been “from the first” the products of migration, but he remains troubled by his realization that these recent immigrants possess a cosmopolitanism equal to his own, that they are fully capable of being “at home” even in their foreignness. Part of this cosmopolitanism James attributes to large and seemingly self-sufficient immigrant communities already in place in major U.S. cities. He observes:

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2 James 455-56.

3 James 459-60.
There awaits the disembarked Armenian, for instance, so warm and furnished an Armenian corner that the need of hurrying to get rid of the sense of it [his ethnicity] must become less and less a pressing preliminary. The corner growing warmer and warmer, it is to be supposed, by rich accretions, he may take his time, more and more, for becoming absorbed in the surrounding element, and he may in fact feel more and more that he can do so on his own conditions.⁴

James’ supposition that immigrants like the Armenian he meets in New Hampshire possess such a powerful degree of control over their own assimilation into their newly adopted country is in and of itself an extraordinary reading of the process of Americanization. It is worth remembering that James published The American Scene only one year before the premiere of Israel Zangwill’s play The Melting Pot (1908), which argued for complete assimilation even to the point of sacrificing one’s own ethnic, cultural, and religious heritage. James’ assertion that immigrants can and do approach assimilation largely on their own terms challenges the assumption that Americanization is—or should be—a fundamental goal of immigrants residing in the United States.

Later in The American Scene, James’ recognition that immigrants make up a global citizenry becomes still more far-reaching. After watching a Yiddish theater company perform, James comments on the linguistic inventiveness of the boss of the company and realizes that immigrant communities are never merely absorbed into the larger American culture but that they instead contribute to its continued formation and circulation. In the passage that provides the epigram for this chapter, James writes of his encounter with the Yiddish theater impresario:

What remains with me is this expression, and the colour and the quality of it, and the free familiarity and the ‘damned foreign impudence,’ with so much taken for

⁴ James 458.
granted, and all the hitches and lapses, all the solutions of continuity, in his inward assimilation of our heritage and point of view, matched as they were, on our own side, by such signs of large and comparatively witless concession. What, oh, what again, were he and his going to make of us?\(^5\)

By drawing attention to the likelihood that, just as he is trying to make sense of the culture of these immigrants, they will “make” something new “of us,” James acknowledges that the processes of immigration, assimilation, and Americanization work in more than one direction. In other words, as immigrants adapt themselves to their new environment, taking on the linguistic and social characteristics of the United States, they simultaneously produce changes within the culture of that environment. Their presence and activities here are enough to remake “us”; their Americanization is, in a sense, a re-Americanization of native-born U.S. citizens.

Recent literary scholars have become extremely attentive to these particular effects of immigrants upon American society and culture at the turn of the twentieth century. In his groundbreaking 1985 study *Beyond Ethnicity*, for instance, Werner Sollors placed what were then ordinarily marginalized ethnic texts at the center of the American literary tradition by examining how they highlight “the conflict between contractual and hereditary, self-made and ancestral, definitions of American identity—between *consent* and *descent*—as the central drama in American culture.”\(^6\) For Sollors, ethnic literatures are “codes for socialization [both] into ethnic groups and into America.”\(^7\) The constructions of ethnicity in such texts thus serve to explore and critique

\(^5\) James 525-26, original emphasis.  
\(^6\) Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 5-6, original emphasis.  
\(^7\) Sollors 11.
the constructions of American national identity. Immigrant texts in particular are predominantly about becoming American, and in drawing attention to the difficulties and ambivalences of assimilation, immigrant writers underscore the fact that Americanization frequently involves both inclusion into and exclusion from national and other communal and familial forms of belonging—as well as a form of exile from a homeland that is absent physically but present culturally. Whereas Sollors’ analysis of the immigrant experience focuses largely on the point of view of immigrant authors themselves, Walter Benn Michaels has examined the anxieties of immigration as experienced by native-born observers. In *Our America*, Michaels concentrates on what he terms “nativist modernism,” which is the discursive attempt to revise “categories of collective identity—and, in particular, of collective national identity—[…] in terms of familial relations (as opposed, say, to economic relations or regional or even generational relations).”

Consequently, “nativist modernism” serves to racialize American identity as white, based on familial descent. For adherents to this ideology, immigrants represent the ultimate impossibility of Americanization because being American is something that a person is born into rather than taught. Michaels then goes on to explore how this ideology drives modernist authors’ treatment of race and ethnicity, revealing a shift away from the racial hierarchies of Progressive-Era politics and into forms of exclusion through the commitment to preserving difference. More recently, in *Barbarian Virtues*, Matthew Frye Jacobson has drawn attention to the important relationship between immigration and overseas expansion. “As modern American nationalism took shape within an international crucible of immigration and empire building,” Jacobson argues, “American

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integration into the world economic system in this period of breathtaking industrialization exposed a rather profound dependence upon foreign peoples as imported workers for factories and as overseas consumers of American products.\(^9\) Jacobson then demonstrates how the incursion of immigrants provided not only an economic basis for U.S. strategies of imperialism through their labor but also intellectual and symbolic ones by providing Americans with a means of conceptualizing—and hierarchizing—a variety of non-Anglo-Saxon peoples.

While Sollors, Michaels, and Jacobson have made significant contributions to our understanding of the extent to which immigrants have influenced American history and culture, what remains largely absent from their and other scholars’ studies of immigrant literatures is the global nature of the immigrants’ own experiences and perspectives. Indeed, although Sollors, Michaels, Jacobson, and other literary scholars have provided thorough and thoughtful readings of the give-and-take relationship between newly formed ethnic communities and the larger American culture in which they became embedded, these scholars still tend to privilege the experiences of immigrants who underwent the process of naturalization. Jacobson’s attentiveness to the implications of immigration for U.S. international policy notwithstanding, these scholars have overlooked many of the transnational dimensions of immigration, including the global networks that many immigrant communities maintained in order to preserve a means of returning, physically as well as culturally, to their homelands. In short, by focusing on the problems and debates surrounding the question of Americanization, these scholars inadvertently reinscribe the traditional model of assimilation: as a one-way process that

involves moving from some other country and settling permanently in the United States. In fact, not all immigrants remained in America for the rest of their lives. Many returned to their homelands temporarily or permanently, after achieving or failing to achieve a variety of goals in America. These immigrants, sometimes called *sojourners* or *birds of passage*, carried their experiences in—and memories of—America back with them, and even those immigrants who stayed and eventually naturalized as U.S. citizens often maintained close and sophisticated ties of travel and communication with their homelands.

Scholars within other fields, such as history, sociology, and cultural studies, have been somewhat more attentive to the transnational dimensions of immigrant networks and communities, and while they have rarely focused upon the literary labors of the immigrants they study, they do provide important social and historical context. Sociologist Orlando Patterson, for example, has identified a phenomenon that he calls the “migration system,” which is “any movement of persons between states, the social, economic, and cultural effects of such movements, and the patterned interactions among such effects.” 10 By definition, these systems follow specific routes of migration and thus extend beyond national borders, often encompassing multiple countries or regions of countries. They also frequently result in ethnic and cultural enclaves in major cities, such as the Armenian “corners” that Henry James mentions in *The American Scene*. Patterson himself locates such a system—the emerging West Atlantic system—around the present-day Caribbean, with Miami serving as a major hub for immigrants (both legal and illegal), refugees, and migrant workers from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Columbia, and

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Mexico, and elsewhere—many of whom intend to return eventually to their respective homelands. While Patterson’s West Atlantic system is a relatively new instantiation of the transnational formations of immigrant communities, Nancy Foner argues that such “transnationalism is not new” but is in fact a continuation of ongoing historical processes.¹¹ Specifically examining Jewish and Italian immigrant communities in New York between 1880 and 1923, Foner reveals how those immigrants “maintained extensive […] transnational ties and operated in what social scientists now call a transnational social field” through regular communication, business transactions, return visits, and so forth.¹² And as I shall discuss more fully below, various historians have demonstrated through statistical analysis that return migration was as common a goal for many immigrant groups as assimilation. By far, however, the most famous and influential literary-cultural study of the intellectual exchange across and throughout such a “migration system” or “transnational social field” remains Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*, which examines the history and culture of the African diaspora. While the African diaspora’s most salient historical feature was its *enforced* migration, which distinguishes it from most other migrant experiences, Gilroy’s focus on “the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artifacts” remains a model of transnational literary analysis.¹³

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¹² Foner 356.

Taking these transnational considerations into account, I propose an alternative model for reading immigrant texts in this chapter, focusing on immigration itself as a process of circulation rather than absorption. Specifically, I argue that these texts reveal the vital role immigrants played both in the emergence of globalization and the globalization of America and that, by establishing and maintaining transnational networks, immigrant communities in the United States facilitated—and, at times, challenged—the worldwide spread of American capitalism and culture. This model of circulation therefore extends the multidirectionality of immigration, which James underscores in his question of what immigrants were “going to make of us,” to an even broader, worldwide stage by focusing on how immigrants simultaneously “remade” American culture at home and helped disseminate particular conceptions of American culture abroad. In the following pages, I examine two authors for what they reveal about the international circulation of American money, products, and culture that resulted directly from the establishment of global immigrant communities and networks at the turn of the twentieth century: Abraham Cahan, who chose to remain in the United States and whose *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) remains one of the classic novels of immigration, and Knut Hamsun, whose own attempts to settle in the United States met with failure and who later wrote a series of critical studies of the shortcomings of American society and culture, including most notably *On the Cultural Life of Modern America* (1889).\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{14}\) While these two authors inhabited a specifically European-oriented migration system, this model of circulation can be extended to include other migration systems as well. For example, José Martí, a contemporary of both Cahan and Hamsun and an author whose work I hope to explore in a future project, inhabited a migration system that encompassed Cuba, Spain, New York City, and most of Latin America.
In order to understand the critical importance of such immigrant texts to the globalization of America, it is also necessary to understand the full impact that the massive waves of immigration had on the United States at the turn of the century. Henry James was hardly alone in contemplating the social and cultural ramifications of this influx of immigrants. In fact, from 1880 onwards, Americans began framing immigration as a national problem and discussing it as never before. In 1882, for example, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first of what would become a series of ever more restrictive anti-immigration laws that culminated in the Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924. In 1885, as I have already discussed more fully in the first chapter, Josiah Strong singled out immigration as the first and most pressing of the seven “perils” he identified as threatening American society in *Our Country*. Although Strong himself refrained from suggesting that immigration needed to be curtailed, Nathaniel Shaler, a professor of paleontology and geology at Harvard and an adherent of Social Darwinism, felt no qualms about doing so in an 1893 *Atlantic Monthly* essay entitled “European Peasants as Immigrants,” one of the first explicitly anti-immigration screeds of any importance in American history. Unambiguously tying the issue of immigration to assumptions about a nation’s need for racial and ethnic purity, Shaler claimed, “We have suffered grievously from the folly of our predecessors in recklessly admitting an essentially alien folk into this land. […] They [our predecessors] have imperiled the future of their own race in the land best fitted for its nurture. […] A true democracy cannot be maintained in the presence of a large alien class.”15 Among the many implications of Shaler’s argument was the belief that national identity and a democratic form of government are possible only through racial and ethnic homogeneity. Citing as

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evidence the recent disenfranchisement of African-Americans through Jim Crow legislation in the South, Shaler contended that the introduction of diversity into a community compels the already established members of that community to “maintain their authority in a forcible way.”

“History makes it plain,” Shaler continued, “that a race oligarchy almost inevitably arises wherever a superior and an inferior variety of people are brought together.” As far as Shaler was concerned, the “superior” variety of people in the United States were not just white but “the Aryan variety of mankind” (by which he meant those Americans descended from Northern European or Germanic peoples). In other words, Shaler sought to limit American identity to those citizens who happened to descend from English and German settlers and, perhaps in a pinch, immigrants from the Scandinavian countries. In identifying America as a “land best fitted” for Aryan peoples, Shaler racialized the nation and suggested that some races and ethnicities were simply incapable of becoming part of the body politic. The final implication was, of course, that the body politic ought to begin excluding them by preventing them from immigrating into the country in the first place.

If James, Strong, and Shaler exhibited greater degrees of ambivalence, anxiety, and outright hostility toward immigrants than did earlier American writers, such as

16 Shaler 647.

17 Shaler 647.

18 Shaler 655. Previous anti-immigration movements, such as the formation of the American (or Know Nothing) Party in the 1840s and 1850s, resulted as much from religious as racial anxieties; were often directed at very specific groups of immigrants, such as Irish or German Catholics, rather than multiple nationalities; and usually achieved little success. Shaler brought the debate into a major mainstream magazine and introduced into the equation the more complex terminology of late-nineteenth-century race-science, which I shall discuss more fully in the next chapter.
Benjamin Franklin and Margaret Fuller, it is important to remember that James, Strong, and Shaler were witnessing one of the greatest mass migrations in human history. Between 1881 and 1924, an explosion of migration took place, with literally millions of Germans, Italians, Scandinavians, and Eastern Europeans making new homes for themselves in the United States. While foreign-born immigrants had always comprised a sizeable portion of the population, especially after hundreds of thousands of Irish and Chinese immigrants had flooded into the country during the 1840s and 1850s, the total number of immigrants rose dramatically during the final two decades of the nineteenth century. For example, between 1845 and 1851, during and immediately after the Irish Potato Famine and shortly after the Taiping Rebellion began in China, the estimated number of immigrants entering the United States was 1,776,752. Thirty-five years later, during the relatively more stable 1880-1886 period, the estimated number of immigrants had more than doubled to 3,767,143, despite the fact that immigration from China was almost entirely halted from 1882 onwards. In 1905, while Henry James was revisiting his homeland, the one-year total surpassed one million immigrants for the first time in U.S. history; when James made his visit to Ellis Island, well over 2,000 immigrants were entering the country each day. This spike in the total number of immigrants certainly mattered to men like Strong, who emphasized both the importance

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19 See Franklin’s 1784 pamphlet Advice to Such as Would Remove to America, in which he identifies the willingness to work as the only necessary qualification for citizenship. See also Fuller’s “American Literature: Its Position in the Present Time, and Prospects for the Future,” from her collection Papers on Literature and Art (London: Wiley & Putnam, 1846), in which she singles out—and welcomes—racial and ethnic diversity as the chief source of difference between American and British cultures.

20 Unless otherwise specified, the statistics I cite throughout this chapter are derived principally from volume 1 of The Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present, Millennial Ed., ed. Robert Barde, Susan B. Carter, and Richard Sutch (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), esp. pp. 523-43. This five-volume work draws together and synthesizes information from various federal institutions, including the U.S. Census Bureau, which itself published the 1975 edition of this work.
of population size and, as previously demonstrated, the fact that “numbers tell.”

The demographics of the United States were indeed changing in observable ways, with a greater number of immigrants from a wider range of countries arriving than ever before. Particularly troubling to Shaler and Strong was the increase in the number of immigrants from Southern and Eastern, as opposed to Northern and Western, Europe. In short, the population of the United States was becoming increasingly more diverse, and immigration was playing its part in globalizing the nation and its culture, as James’ descriptions of Armenian communities in New Hampshire and Yiddish theaters in New York reveal. Fears within some quarters that these demographic shifts indicated that America was in the process of becoming foreign to itself were perhaps to be expected.

Not all Americans shared these fears, however; in fact, some welcomed what they perceived to be the increased levels of cosmopolitanism that immigrants were injecting into American society. Perhaps the most celebrated illustration of this alternative viewpoint remains Randolph Bourne’s 1916 essay “Trans-National America,” which unreservedly celebrates the diversity that the thirty-five-year influx of immigrants had brought to the United States. In many respects, Bourne’s concept of a “trans-national America” is very much in tune with Woodrow Wilson’s vision of the United States as “the mediating Nation.” Like Wilson, Bourne finds political empowerment for the American people in the nation’s newfound diversity. Moreover, Bourne suggests that such diversity has provided the United States with the means of achieving a goal for

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21 Josiah Strong Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1885) 166. For a fuller discussion of Strong’s argument, please see the latter half of my first chapter.

22 It is worth noting here, however, that, since the U.S. Census Bureau began recording the number of foreign-born members of the population in 1850, that number has never accounted for more than twenty percent of the total population. The percentages have, in fact, remained more or less stable over the past 150 years. Thus it would seem that the sheer number and variety of immigrants, rather than the proportion of the population those immigrants made up, stimulated Strong’s, Shaler’s, and James’ concerns.
which the international community had been striving for decades: a fully realized cosmopolitan identity. Bourne writes:

In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation. […] What we have achieved has been rather a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogenous peoples under the sun.\(^{23}\)

In other words, Bourne views America as an exemplary model of peaceful and multiethnic cooperation, a society that offers an alternative to the history of nationalist-driven conflict that was continuing to engulf Europe in war and strife. (Bourne’s essay was, of course, published as the First World War was raging but while the United States was still neutral.)

What distinguishes Bourne’s “trans-national America” from Wilson’s “mediating Nation,” however, is that Bourne’s model does not subsume immigrants themselves into a larger national entity. On the contrary, Bourne challenges assimilationist assumptions that “mere participation in the political life of the United States must cut the new citizen off from all sympathy with his old allegiance” and that “the immigrant whom we have welcomed escaping from the very exclusive nationalism of his European home shall forthwith adopt a nationalism just as exclusive, just as narrow, and even less legitimate because it is founded on no warm traditions of his own.”\(^{24}\) Instead, Bourne suggests

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\(^{24}\) Bourne 260.
wider acceptance of “dual citizenship,” which transforms “masses of aliens, waiting to be
‘assimilated,’ waiting to be melted down into the indistinguishable dough of Anglo-
Saxonism” into “threads of living and potent cultures, blindly striving to weave
themselves into a novel international nation, the first the world has seen.” Thus rather
than calling for complete assimilation and an end to “racial momentum,” as Wilson does,
Bourne identifies ethnic and cultural diversity as the key constitutive characteristic of a
globalized nation, wherein citizens may legally—and even necessarily—hold multiple
national sympathies and allegiances. In Bourne’s model, the nation-state assumes the
status of a forum, a meeting-place of various cultures where nationalistic “wills-to-power
are turned […] into learning how to live together.”

The optimism of this last point is no doubt an outgrowth of Bourne’s own
pacifism, a feature of his writing that will be explored more fully in the Coda of this
project; however, Bourne takes pains to clarify that the implications of his argument are
immediate and not merely utopian. Echoing the distinction between terms (historical
conditions) and relations (consciousness of those conditions) drawn by William James,
whose writings had influenced Bourne’s thinking tremendously, Bourne claims that his
global vision already exists and that it only remains for Americans to recognize and
embrace the fact: “Already we are living this cosmopolitan America. What we need is
everywhere a vivid consciousness of the new ideal.” The reward for doing so, in
Bourne’s opinion, is not just the political empowerment of the nation that Wilson

25 Bourne 261.
26 Bourne 261.
27 Bourne 263-64. As noted in my introduction, William James makes his distinction between terms and
relations in “A World of Pure Experience”; see p. 42 in Essays in Radical Empiricism (1912; Lincoln:
Nebraska UP, 1996). For James’ influence upon Bourne’s thinking, see pp. 401-03 in Louis Menand’s The
envisioned, but also, crucially, the empowerment of the citizens themselves—both politically and creatively. Bourne concludes that “the attempt to weave a wholly novel international nation out of our chaotic America will liberate and harmonize the creative power of all these peoples.” There are, then, both individual and cultural components to Bourne’s vision of a “trans-national” America, and it is Bourne’s acknowledgement of the interplay between the two—as well as the potential aesthetic payoff of such “creative power”—that separates his essay from the more monolithic insinuations of Wilson’s speech.

Among the most notable aesthetic rewards that resulted from individual Americans maintaining multiple national sympathies and cultural practices are the novels and short stories that were written by immigrant authors, and of these immigrant texts, Abraham Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* ranks as perhaps the most sophisticated exploration of the sort of “trans-national” American identity that Bourne describes. First published in 1917, near the tail end of the great wave of immigration, Cahan’s novel provides a retrospective look back at the entire period through the eyes of its titular protagonist. Levinsky, who narrates his own life story, is born in 1865 into the Jewish community of Antomir, a town in what is now modern-day Lithuania but was then part of czarist Russia. After the deaths of his mother and father, he emigrates from Europe to America in 1885 and begins to work his way up the social and economic ladder by entering New York City’s burgeoning garment industry. Embracing the philosophies of assimilation and free-market capitalism, Levinsky eventually achieves spectacular business success, becoming on the surface a textbook example of the triumph of Americanization and the attainability of the American Dream. At the same time,

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28 Bourne 263, emphasis added.
however, Levinsky repeatedly acknowledges how unhappy he is, despite his wealth and success, and how much he regrets having lost contact with his ethnic and cultural heritage. The novel opens and closes with Levinsky conceding that all of his accomplishments have come at the expense of having to conceal his “inner identity,” his past and his status as a Jew and an immigrant. (The distinction between Levinsky’s “inner” and “superficial” identities echoes “all the hitches and lapses” Henry James observed in the Jewish theater boss’ “inward assimilation of our heritage and point of view.”) It is, in fact, this enforced rupture in the continuity between Levinsky’s past and present that has led many critics to read the novel primarily as a critique of the doctrine of assimilation, a process that, in effect, forces Levinsky—and other immigrants like him—to be inauthentic to half of his identity as a Jewish-American and thereby prevents him from achieving full self-realization. There is, however, much more to the novel than the element of critique.

Perhaps the most beguiling aspect of The Rise of David Levinsky is how Cahan, who was a committed socialist at the time he wrote the novel, manages to make his protagonist, who is fairly cut-throat in his business practices, so sympathetic, insightful, and even likable. Indeed, Levinsky seems to provide Cahan with a means of


30 See, for instance, pp. 168-73 in Sollors. Similar arguments may be found in Donald Weber’s “Outsiders and Greenhorns: Christopher Newman in the Old World, David Levinsky in the New,” American Literature 67.4 (1995): 725-45; and Nancy von Rosk’s “‘Go, Make Yourself for a Person’: Urbanity and the Construction of an American Identity in the Novels of Abraham Cahan and Anzia Yezierska,” Prospects 26 (2001): 295-335. Weber’s article in particular is worth noting here, since he examines several of the same texts I do in this chapter and the previous one, namely James’ The American and The American Scene, Bourne’s “Trans-national America,” and Cahan’s The Rise of David Levinsky. Weber’s interest, however, lies primarily in how The American prefigures the themes of loss and displacement that Cahan and other ethnic American writers picked up and made their own; his approach is not explicitly global. Nevertheless, he selects The Rise of David Levinsky for one of the same reasons I do: because it “best exemplifie[s] the master narrative of early immigrant fiction” (p. 732).
demonstrating the extent to which immigrants, particularly Jewish immigrants like Levinsky and Cahan themselves, have helped shape American society for the better. Speaking of himself and his colleagues, Levinsky proudly points out that, collectively, they had marked the advent of the Russian Jew as head of one of the largest industries in the United States. Also, it had meant that as master of that industry he had made good, for in his hands it had increased a hundredfold, garments that had formerly reached only the few having been placed within the reach of the masses. Foreigners ourselves, and mostly unable to speak English, we had Americanized the system of providing clothes for the American woman of moderate or humble means. [...] We had done away with prohibitive prices and greatly improved the popular taste. Indeed, the Russian Jew had made the average American girl a ‘tailor-made’ girl. [...] The average American woman is the best-dressed average woman in the world, and the Russian Jew has had a good deal to do with making her one. (432-33)

Levinsky takes delight in knowing that he and his fellow immigrants have assimilated so well into their adopted country that they, in turn, have contributed to the efficiency of American business, the growth of the American economy, and the comfort of the American lifestyle. Although “foreigners” themselves, they have helped realize the American capitalist system, even to the point of “Americanizing” an entire industry.

Whatever qualms Cahan might have had over his fellow immigrants’ contributions to rampant American-style capitalism, he seems to share Levinsky’s equal delight in how Jewish immigrants have helped develop and expand New York, the city where Cahan himself resided. “Men like Volodsky,” writes Levinsky, with hosts of carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers—all Russian or Galician Jews—continued to build up the Bronx, Washington Heights, and several sections of Brooklyn. Vast areas of meadowland and rock were turned by them, as by a
magic wand, into densely populated avenues and streets of brick and mortar. Under the spell of their activity cities larger than Odessa sprang up within the confines of Greater New York in the course of three or four years. (500)

So massively have these Jewish newcomers transformed the city that Levinsky drives the point home by playfully calling the city’s five boroughs “the five Ghettos of Greater New York” (452). Even more importantly, Cahan has Levinsky conclude his story by singling out the contributions of Jewish immigrants like Cahan himself to the cultural life of the United States. Specifically, Levinsky admits that “I envy far more than I do a billionaire [...] the Russian Jew who holds the foremost place among American songwriters and whose soulful compositions are sung in almost every English-speaking house in the world” (517). Here, of course, Levinsky is alluding to Irving Berlin, whose influence on American popular music from the composition of “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” (1911) onwards would be immeasurable. By drawing attention to the fact that Berlin’s music is “sung in almost every English-speaking house in the world,” however, Levinsky also underscores the extent to which America’s immigrant culture has spread internationally. In coming to embody American popular music as much as any other composer had done before him, Berlin provides perhaps the most spectacular example of the potentially global dimensions of immigrant culture. But there are other instantiations of these global dimensions throughout the novel, and it is this global perspective—what Orlando Patterson might call the “migration system” (or what Nancy Foner might call the “transnational social field”) that is evidenced by the novel—to which I now turn.

In the biography he imagines for the Armenian he encounters in New Hampshire, Henry James acknowledges the existence of readymade Armenian communities within the United States. Whether the newly arrived Armenian immigrant is already aware of
their existence or merely stumbles upon them, James never makes clear and perhaps simply did not know. In *The Rise of David Levinsky*, however, Abraham Cahan indicates that, even if a particular immigrant had no specific personal ties to the United States, that immigrant probably had general communal or ethnic ties already in place. When Levinsky arrives in New York in 1885, he finds a thriving community of Russian Jews who speak his language, take him under their wing, and initiate him into the garment industry and the benefits of rapid Americanization. Toward the end of the novel, even after Levinsky has ruthlessly cut many of his former friends and associates out of his life, he still maintains social ties with other immigrants from his hometown: “We mostly spoke in Yiddish, and our Antomir enunciation was like a bond of kinship between us” (497). Yet as an orphan, Levinsky clearly has no family connections of any kind in America; he starts out only vaguely aware of the existence of Jewish communities there, and he more or less happens to stumble upon them after he arrives. On the day of his arrival, it suddenly occurs to him to worry: “How was I going to procure my sustenance on those magic shores?” (87)

Nevertheless, it is apparent that some knowledge—or at least some conception—of America is circulating in Antomir before Levinsky decides to emigrate and that he absorbs this knowledge for several months before he makes his decision. In fact, a full fifteen percent of the novel’s length (including four of its fourteen books) takes place in Antomir, and Levinsky does not begin thinking seriously about emigration until Book III. These early sections covering Levinsky’s youth in the old country obviously serve as a contrast to the change in course his life takes in America, but they also give the novel a geographical and even a topographical complexity. If information about recent émigrés
is somehow trickling back across the Atlantic to Antomir and influencing decisions made there, then the process of migration has created a connection between the two locations. Specifically, the twenty-year-old Levinsky already understands that America offers an avenue of escape from the increasingly violent anti-Semitic pogroms that were sweeping across Russia following the 1881 assassination of Czar Alexander II. “Over five million people,” Levinsky says of the pogroms, “were suddenly made to realize that their birthplace was not their home. [...] Then it was that the cry ‘To America!’ was raised. It spread like wild-fire, even over those parts of the Pale of Jewish Settlement which lay outside the riot zone. This was the beginning of the great New Exodus that has been in progress for decades” (60-61). For the young Levinsky, however, America offers more: “The United States lured me not merely as a land of milk and honey, but also, and perhaps chiefly, as one of mystery, of fantastic experiences, of marvelous transformations. To leave my native place and to seek my fortune in that distant, weird world seemed to be just the kind of sensational adventure my heart was hankering for” (61). Thus it seems that Levinsky has been acquiring multiple pieces of information about America while still remaining in Antomir: it is a place of greater freedom, peace, and stability; a means of achieving social and economic security; and an opportunity for adventure and self-transformation.

After Levinsky has resettled in New York, the novel supplies several illustrations of how immigrants, including those from Antomir, maintained ties with their homelands that involved communication, money, and even politics. For instance, once he has become wealthy, Levinsky joins and donates to the “new Antomir Synagogue” in New York, which serves immigrants from his hometown (378). But this “new” synagogue’s
connections to the old one do not exist in name only; the routes of exchange between New York and Antomir are strong enough to enable the newly formed congregation to bring a “celebrated” cantor from the old country: “The contract that had induced him to come over to America pledged him nearly five times as much [as he had earned in Antomir]. Thus the New York Sons of Antomir were not only able to parade a famous cantor before the multitude of other New York congregations, but also to prove to the people at home that they were the financial superiors of the whole town of their birth” (380). That Levinsky and the other members of his congregation were able to hire and transport this cantor indicates that they could conduct business across national borders; that they can boast of luring him away from Antomir indicates that at least some of them remain in communication with friends and family members who have stayed there. Later on, Levinsky considers fulfilling a promise he had made to his boyhood friend Naphtali “to send him a ‘ship ticket’” once Levinsky had earned enough money (389), and although Levinsky never keeps his promise, the fact that both Levinsky and Naphtali would think of the idea suggests that it was a fairly common practice for one successful immigrant to pay for another’s immigration and that this practice was already known in European Jewish communities like Antomir by the time Levinsky leaves.

Such connections with the homeland apparently extended well beyond friendship and religion. In the novel, Levinsky also recalls how several left-leaning intellectuals within the Jewish immigrant communities of New York took part in or otherwise supported socialist political activities in czarist Russia, including the Russian Revolution of 1905. “The revolutionary movement was then at its height in Russia,” Levinsky remarks, “and the Jews were among its foremost and bravest leaders” (372). He then
goes on to claim that it was just this relationship between Jewish intellectuals and Russian revolutionaries that led to the pogroms of the 1880s, which “the Government inspired and encouraged quite openly” (372). This repressive atmosphere in turn serves to stimulate “the great emigration of Jews to America,” to radicalize even more Russian Jews, and to gain sympathy and support for both the Jewish and socialist causes in Russia (372). *The Rise of David Levinsky* thus reflects Cahan’s understanding of the cyclical nature of radical politics as well as the effects of local and national politics upon human migration, while also revealing how migration systems can elevate local or national political crises onto the geopolitical stage when immigrants themselves raise awareness of those crises elsewhere. Indeed, it is worth noting that socialism was a transnational movement at the turn of the twentieth century, and Cahan, who was a socialist himself, takes pains to establish both its transatlantic dimensions and the Jewish ethnicity of many of its leaders. Thus in his novel, Cahan links immigration and socialism, the two most important global currents in his own life, even though they do not converge in the capitalist Levinsky.

Levinsky’s involvement with these Jewish socialists, both in New York and in Europe, is limited, but one of these activists, a woman named Matilda, turns out to be a former love-interest of Levinsky’s. (Before Levinsky sets sail for America, Matilda gives him five dollars to help him land on his feet in New York.) Still, Levinsky is aware that New York serves as an important hub for the socialist movement. At least one “socialist Yiddish daily” advertises meetings for “an organization of Russian revolutionists” in New York, and Levinsky knows that political refugees from Russia frequently speak at those meetings in order to raise funds for further revolutionary activities in the homeland:
“From time to time some distinguished revolutionist would be sent to America for subscriptions to the cause. […] They were here, not as immigrants, but merely to raise funds for the movement at home” (372-73, emphasis added). In this way, Cahan, who founded and edited the “socialist Yiddish daily” Forward and whose political sympathies at the time certainly lay with socialist revolutionaries, draws attention to the global circulation of American money as well as to the presence of an internationally inflected and politically active intellectual movement among New York’s Jewish-American communities.

However tenuous it might be, Levinsky’s involvement with these socialists also reveals just how dynamic his particular immigrant community is and how complex the migration system that connects his community with Jewish communities in Russia must be. Levinsky’s acknowledgement that some of the Jews with whom he comes into contact in New York are merely travelers who have come to the United States “not as immigrants” but for very specific, short-term goals underscores an important feature of migration systems: the phenomenon of return migration. Quite simply, not all persons who moved along migratory routes or belonged nominally to immigrant communities fit the classic profile of an immigrant seeking a new life and a permanent home in America. Many “immigrants” eventually returned to their homelands, either planning to do so all along after having made their fortunes or encountering unexpected problems that necessitated their return, such as illness or even simple homesickness. If The Rise of David Levinsky provides an account of how immigrants who settled permanently in the United States remained in contact with their homelands and established specific strategies and routes for bridging the distance between the two locations, then what of the
experiences and perspectives of those persons who underwent the equally global phenomenon of return migration? Having examined the global dimensions that are immanent within what is often regarded as one of the classic texts of immigration and Americanization, I now turn to an important but relatively neglected aspect of the American immigrant experience that no less emphatically reveals the constitutive relationship between migration systems in the late-nineteenth century and the emergence of globalization and, by extension, the globalization of America.

The phenomenon of return migration would appear to be one of the great unexplored dimensions of the immigrant experience, perhaps due to the myopia of American exceptionalism. If the numbers compiled by the Office [later Bureau] of Immigration are correct, then the rate of return migration was extremely high during the years that mark the height of European migration to America. Between 1908, when the government began recording the number of emigrants leaving the United States, through 1913, the year before the outbreak of World War I, an estimated 5,490,877 immigrants entered America, while an estimated 1,760,429 emigrants exited the country, making the rate of return roughly thirty-two percent. This statistic is borne out by historians who have studied return migration of specific nationalities. For instance, the estimated rate of return migration ranged from about twenty percent for the Scandinavian countries to perhaps as much as fifty percent for Italy.  

These numbers suggest that a much broader

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understanding of turn-of-the-century cosmopolitanism than what we tend to assume is in order, and they help explain why Henry James was taken aback by the sophistication and self-assurance of the well-traveled immigrants he encountered. If working-class migrants were capable of traversing oceans on multiple occasions, then they certainly could lay as much of a claim to the title cosmopolitan as did travelers from more privileged backgrounds, such as James himself. Moreover, the high rates or return migration would indicate that these people probably had a considerable impact upon their home cultures once they returned. In the case of the Scandinavian countries, with their relatively small populations, how could some 400,000 returning emigrants not affect the local culture and influence their neighbors’ perceptions of the United States? In short, the phenomenon of return migration provides a potentially very rich historical example of cultural globalization.

This potential importance was not lost on Randolph Bourne; he addresses the phenomenon of return migration explicitly in “Trans-National America.” Unsurprisingly for a writer who proposes a policy of “dual citizenship,” Bourne views return migration as yet another instantiation of the sort of cosmopolitanism his essay extols. Indeed, Bourne takes pains in “Trans-National America” to counteract those politicians and writers who “stigmatize the alien who works in America for a few years and returns to his own land, only perhaps to seek American fortune again”; according to Bourne, to adhere

follow Baines’ lead and usually refer to the phenomenon as return migration; Nugent uses the phrase birds of passage, and Spellman the term sojourners. For a list of historians who analyze the rates of return migration by nationality, please consult either of Baines’ bibliographies. Of particular note is Caroli’s extensive study Italian Repatriation from the United States, 1900-1914 (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1973).

32 In Emigration from Europe, Baines estimates that 2,000,000 Scandinavians moved to America before 1914. If his earlier estimate that twenty percent of them eventually returned is correct, then those return migrants numbered roughly 400,000. See pp. 39-40. I have singled out the Scandinavians here because I focus specifically upon Knut Hamsun throughout the rest of this chapter.
to this point of view is “to think in narrow nationalistic terms” and “to ignore the cosmopolitan significance of this migration.” Bourne’s argument for allowing and even encouraging return migration hinges upon the phenomenon’s global dimensions. Specifically, he claims that return migrants will help spread American culture, values, and social practices throughout the world and that doing so will make the world a better place. Utilizing some of the same religious rhetoric that Josiah Strong and W.E.B. Du Bois do and perhaps anticipating parts of Marcus Garvey’s argument, Bourne writes:

The returning immigrant is often a missionary to an inferior civilization. […] They return with an entirely new critical outlook, and a sense of the superiority of American organization to the primitive living around them. This continued passage to and fro has already raised the material standard of living in many regions of these backward countries. […] America is thus educating these laggard peoples from the very bottom of society up, awakening vast masses to a new-born hope for the future.

For Bourne, then, immigration and return migration is a key part of the United States’ rise to a position of international prominence and power. Far from simply helping transform America into a truly “trans-national” nation by introducing—and weaving together—multiple cultures and national loyalties, immigrants also participate actively in extending American culture abroad by physically carrying it back with them to their homelands. Thus like Du Bois and once again unlike Wilson, Bourne frames this particular “problem” as an opportunity to empower both the nation (through greater

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33 Bourne 261-62. Bourne is not constructing a straw man here. In Crossings, Walter Nugent demonstrates just how “gravelly unsettling” these “birds of passage” were to many government policymakers (p. 157). In 1911, for example, the Dillingham Commission issued a report to the Senate that identified the transience of “new” immigrants (i.e., those from Southern and Eastern Europe) as a key reason for passing more restrictive anti-immigration legislation; these more transient immigrants were assumed to be uninterested in contributing to the ongoing stability of American society. (See pp. 159-60 in Nugent.)

34 Bourne 262, emphasis added.
influence in other countries) and the individual immigrant (through greater personal mobility). And rather than viewing the various migration systems that extended across the United States at the turn of the century as a threat to national unity, as Nathaniel Shaler might, Bourne views them as a means of remaking other nations in America’s own “trans-national” image.

There is, of course, some difficulty in establishing exactly what information these “birds of passage” circulated about America once they returned to their respective homelands. As historian Betty Boyd Caroli points out in her study of Italian repatriation, very few return migrants published accounts of their American experiences because many of them were illiterate, and those who did, while often highly educated, were rarely professional writers. Thus the writings by return migrants that do exist are simultaneously atypical of the experiences of the unskilled laborers who made up the majority of all immigrants and unlikely to have been read by wide audiences in their respective homelands. That is not to say that such texts are useless, uninformative, or entirely unrepresentative of most return migrants’ impressions of the United States; however, a survey of such literature extends far beyond the purview of this chapter. Instead, I now turn to the writings of perhaps the most prominent professional writer who underwent the process of return migration and who went on to record his experiences and impressions of America for his fellow countrymen: the Norwegian Nobel laureate Knut Hamsun.

Hamsun makes for a particularly salient point of comparison with Abraham Cahan and other classic immigrant authors of American literature because, like them, Hamsun established his literary identity through his writings about American culture.

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35 Caroli, Italian Repatriation 75.
(Cahan, however, wrote *The Rise of David Levinsky* and many of his other texts in English, while Hamsun wrote almost exclusively in Norwegian or Danish. Thus whereas Cahan’s intended audience was American, Hamsun wrote primarily for his fellow Scandinavians. *On the Cultural Life of Modern America*, for instance, was an outgrowth of a series of lectures Hamsun delivered in Copenhagen in 1888-89 and was therefore never intended for American consumption.) Quite literally, in fact, the writer permanently adopted the name *Hamsun* in 1885, after a typographical error led to the accidental omission of the letter *d* from an essay on Mark Twain that he had signed *Hamsund.* More importantly, however, Hamsun signaled what he considered to be his formal entry into the Norwegian literary community with *On the Cultural Life of Modern America*, the first book that he published under his new name. Even his most famous work, *Hunger* (1890), bears traces of his immigrant years; the inspiration for that heavily autobiographical novel was the months Hamsun spent living hand-to-mouth in Christiania [now Oslo] between his two sojourns in America, and like the author himself, *Hunger*’s protagonist ends his suffering only when he decides to leave the country in the final chapter of the novel.

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Moreover, while Hamsun’s later career as one of the principal European architects of literary modernism and his iconoclastic attitude toward culture may separate him from the majority of immigrants of the period, the general outline of his experiences seem fairly representative of that of many Scandinavian immigrants. Hamsun, who came from a poor rural area of Norway, first immigrated to the United States in 1882 in order to escape physical labor and put his education to better use. Like many Scandinavian immigrants, Hamsun benefited from a well-established migration system between the Scandinavian countries and the American Midwest. Hamsun’s elder brother had already moved to Elroy, Wisconsin, and Hamsun even convinced the Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who had visited America himself, to write a letter of recommendation for him. Hamsun resided in various towns and cities in Wisconsin and Minnesota for two years, never quite finding a niche for himself, until a serious illness forced his return to Norway in 1884. Two years later, in 1886, Hamsun once more decided to try his luck in the United States, though Richard Nelson Current suggests that Hamsun immigrated this time with the intention of returning to Norway again after having earned enough money to finance his literary career. Whatever Hamsun’s goals were, his second trip was no more financially rewarding than the first, and he returned to Norway for good in 1888, more or less completely disillusioned by his experiences in the United States and with the assumption that America was a land of opportunity for all.

*On the Cultural Life of Modern America* and the other writings that resulted from Hamsun’s immigrant experiences reflect this disillusionment, and they could be read in

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37 Hamsun’s *Hunger, Mysteries* (1892), and *Pan* (1894) must be counted among the first fully-realized modernist novels.

38 Current 7.
part as words of warning to future or potential emigrants not to expect too much out of America. Indeed, Hamsun seems almost to be writing against the subgenre of emigration literature that was beginning to emerge among Scandinavian writers at the turn of the twentieth century. In his conclusion to *On the Cultural Life of Modern America*, Hamsun comments sarcastically on a trope that was beginning to emerge: “When really free writers in this country have a hero whom they wish well but who has come to grief in his native land because he is a freethinker and a liberal, they send him to America in the last chapter of their book. There is elbowroom there!” Nothing could be farther from Hamsun’s mind than accepting the implications of this cliché uncritically. Nor does Hamsun wish to serve as the sort of “missionary” for “the superiority of American organization” that Bourne imagines of return migrants; the “new critical outlook” with which Hamsun returns to Norway is aimed squarely at American society itself. *On the Cultural Life of Modern America* is, in fact, a sharp critique of American culture (or, more precisely, what Hamsun perceived as the lack thereof) and a vitriolic condemnation of what he viewed as most Americans’ blind commitment to patriotism, capitalism, and religious experience. For Hamsun, America is ultimately “a nation of patriots hostile to foreigners, a people without a national literature or art, a corrupt society, a materialistic mode of life, and flourishing inanity!” (139)

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39 Probably the most famous practitioners of this subgenre are the Norwegian-American Ole Rølvaag, whose best-known work, *Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie* (1927), is a compilation—and translation—of two earlier books that Rølvaag originally wrote in Norwegian, and the Swedish Vilhelm Moberg, who published a four-novel cycle that is known collectively as *The Emigrants* (1949-59).

40 Knut Hamsun, *The Cultural Life of Modern America*, ed. and trans. Barbara Gordon Morgridge (1889; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1969) 139. I cite the title of Morgridge’s edition as it appears on the title page; however, a more accurate translation is *On the Cultural Life of Modern America*, which is how I refer to the text throughout this chapter. Subsequent citations are made in the text.
Yet there is more to Hamsun’s grouses than mere sour grapes over his own disappointed expectations or, as some critics have proposed in light of Hamsun’s later collaboration with the Germans during their occupation of Norway in the early 1940s, some sort of anti-capitalist, anti-democratic, and proto-fascist political project.\footnote{Perhaps the most prominent recent pundit to adopt the latter position has been Ann Coulter in “Kissing Cousins: NY Literati and Nazis,” \textit{FrontPage Magazine} 20 March 2003, 20 Sept. 2007 <http://frontpagemag.com/Articles/Read.aspx?GUID={2D82380A-1E60-4ACB-9D45-36472D877496}>. Coulter’s essay is a response to—and largely a mischaracterization of—Simon Schama’s historical overview of anti-American sentiment among European artists and intellectuals, including Hamsun, in “The Unloved American: Two Centuries of Alienating Europe,” \textit{The New Yorker} 10 March 2003: 34-38. In his introduction, Current refutes this too-easy coupling of Hamsun’s early anti-Americanism with his later status as a quisling, noting that Hamsun’s attitude toward America eventually mellowed with age (see pp. 10-13). Since Hamsun wrote most of the texts I am examining here before Adolf Hitler was born, I take the view that they have little to do with either National Socialism or Hamsun’s later unfortunate choices. Nevertheless, Hamsun’s collaboration remains a complicated and highly contested issue. Traditionally, his admirers have sought to exonerate Hamsun by pointing out that the author was over eighty when Germany invaded Norway in 1940 and that, as a lifelong devotee of German art and culture, he grossly misjudged what the Nazis stood for; the Swedish director Jan Troell espouses this point of view in his film \textit{Hamsun}, perf. Max von Sydow, Bayerischer Rundfunk et al, 1996. This particular explanation is not unlike those offered for Ezra Pound’s and P.G. Wodehouse’s equally misguided actions during the Second World War.} Barbara Gordon Morgridge argues persuasively that \textit{On the Cultural Life of Modern America} should be viewed as a riposte to \textit{The Innocents Abroad} (1869), Mark Twain’s equally iconoclastic skewering of European pretensions and American perceptions of high culture. Morgridge claims that Hamsun’s “aesthetic appreciation and receptivity [of Twain’s] comic style of hyperbole, paradox, and wit […] helped to shape the tone and treatment of his American experiences in \textit{Cultural Life.”}\footnote{Morgridge, “Editor’s Introduction” xxvi.} Hamsun’s other writings certainly bear this assertion out. Of all the American writers Hamsun discusses, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, Twain earns Hamsun’s fullest respect. In his essay on Twain, Hamsun calls him “the greatest and most popular representative of American humor writing” and both “artistically secure” and “\textit{fair} in his
It is also possible that Hamsun felt a personal connection with Twain, having met Twain after one of Twain’s lectures and, as noted above, permanently adopting the name *Hamsun* after publishing his essay on Twain.

Hamsun claims to draw the line at Twain’s travel writing, however, specifically singling out *The Innocents Abroad* and citing what he considered Twain’s lack of experience with European high culture as “poor qualification for rightly judging the conditions and human beings of Europe.”

Nevertheless, in *On the Cultural Life of Modern America*, Hamsun is guilty of taking on the very same tone for which he criticizes Mark Twain in his essay on the humorist: being “poised to make fun of everything that was foreign to him,” driving “his hosts to despair,” confusing historical figures with one another, and relying on “iconoclasm” and “polemic” to make his points. Indeed, what irritates Hamsun about *The Innocents Abroad* is precisely what many readers may find irritating about *On the Cultural Life of Modern America*; Hamsun’s book is a highly idiosyncratic, satiric, and impressionistic example of literary reportage, with an almost gleeful disregard for context or factual accuracy. For instance, Hamsun regularly misquotes newspaper and magazine articles and even confuses President Zachary Taylor with the journalist Bayard Taylor, even as he takes Twain to task for confusing “Catherine with Maria de Medici and Raphael with Rubens.”

To read *On the Cultural Life of Modern America* for an objective description of living

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44 Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 51.

45 Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 52-54.

46 Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 52. Morgridge provides an extensive catalogue of the inaccuracies of *On the Cultural Life of Modern America* in the endnotes to her translation of the book; see pp. 147-66.
conditions in the United States, however, is to miss the point. Instead, Hamsun is cannily inviting his readers to compare his writing with Twain’s, while simultaneously defusing potential criticisms of his book’s slipshod research. Apparently, contemporary Norwegian reviewers picked up on both points; many acknowledged the suspect nature of Hamsun’s anecdotal evidence but still praised the author’s literary gifts, and several expressed admiration for the effectiveness of Hamsun’s American-style satire and self-promotion.\footnote{Morgridge excerpts several contemporaneous reviews of Hamsun’s book and the lectures upon which it was based in her introduction; see pp. xx-xxiv, xxix-xxx. It seems that iconoclasm was one of Hamsun’s chief strategies for gaining attention during his early career, and he sometimes wrote just as disparagingly of established Norwegian literary figures, including Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who had written a letter of recommendation for Hamsun. In the introduction to his translation of Hamsun’s \textit{Pan} (1894; New York: Penguin, 1998), Sverre Lyngstad mentions an 1891 lecture in which Hamsun attacked Henrik Ibsen’s plays while Ibsen himself sat in the front row. Although neither Ibsen nor Bjørnson seem to have taken these attacks very seriously, Lyngstad notes that, on this occasion, several newspaper editors criticized Hamsun for “using Yankee methods to promote his own career” (p. vii). It seems, then, that some of Hamsun’s fellow Norwegians were savvy enough to recognize and criticize some of the values and practices of American culture that were beginning to spread globally through returning migrants like Hamsun.}

Drawing attention to Hamsun’s indebtedness both to Twain’s literary style and, more generally, to recognizably American forms of self-promotion should not, however, serve to downplay the content of Hamsun’s writings about America. In this regard, both Mogridge and, to a lesser extent, Current go too far in attempting to defang \textit{On the Cultural Life of Modern America} for American readers. At times, of course, some of Hamsun’s criticisms are trite and unoriginal even for a late-nineteenth-century European writer, as is his conclusion that America lacks a rich culture and unique art because the nation has no “long history behind it—a history that had given the people their characteristic stamp, that, in a word, had endowed the nation with an original intellectual heritage of its own” (15). Here, Hamsun relies on the tired stereotype that “no cultural individuality has yet taken root [and] no distinctive intellectual character has yet taken
shape” in America because it is a “pioneer society” (15). Such assertions are relatively benign and easily dismissed. More problematic, however, is that Hamsun occasionally takes a view of immigration that is worryingly similar to that taken by Nathaniel Shaler and other proponents of Anglo-Saxonism. In his first piece of writing about America, an 1885 essay entitled “From America,” Hamsun predates Shaler’s “European Peasants as Immigrants” by eight years in warning of “the danger that arises from the mixing of different kinds of people in a free, uncontrolled, capricious environment.”

Indeed, Hamsun’s characterization of his fellow immigrants is even more condescending than Shaler’s—Hamsun calls them “diseased and degenerate human raw material”—and he is more explicit than Shaler in calling for America to put “a timely stop to immigration, or at least [to put] some restrictions on it.” It is worth noting that, unlike Shaler, Hamsun bases his objections on perceptions of class rather than of race; what concerns him is that the majority of immigrants in America are made up of “the dregs of the European population,” people who were incapable of contributing to the cultural life of their own countries in any meaningful way.

And his attitude seems to have changed somewhat over time. Four years later, in On the Cultural Life of Modern America, Hamsun writes, “The proposals to restrict immigration rest on shaky ground” (13). In particular, Hamsun rejects the claim that immigrants are overcrowding the United States: “The land is not all taken. That is a pretext and a joke” (13, original emphasis). The real cause for anti-

48 Knut Hamsun, “The American Character,” in Knut Hamsun Remembers America 17. Despite editor Richard Nelson Current’s unexplained change, the essay’s original title was indeed “Fra Amerika” (“From America”).


50 Hamsun, “The American Character” 18. Hamsun was not entirely free from racial prejudices, though. After noting that it was “inhumanity [that] stole [Negroes] away from Africa,” he goes on to dismiss African-Americans as a “nascent human form” and to express distaste at the thought of miscegenation in On the Cultural Life of Modern America (p. 144).
immigrant sentiment in America, Hamsun writes, is that “foreign labor can neither be acknowledged as necessary nor recognized as superior to the country’s own” (13).

At other times, however, Hamsun makes a number of insightful and sometimes biting observations about American materialism and ethnocentrism. For example, he abhors America’s preoccupation with business and making money, and he attributes the rapidity with which many immigrants Americanize themselves to an economic cause:

The same family that lived on two crowns a day here [in Norway] needs a dollar and a half a day there, and for the great majority it takes considerable doing to get hold of this dollar and a half; it really keeps you whirling to earn that money. […] Their inner calm is gone, but they have grown active; suddenly they have grown very light-footed. A sojourn in America is very definitely an effective stimulant; people’s minds and energy are set in motion. But one grows active and light-footed from the instant one steps ashore and starts to earn money for one’s first meal—long before coming into contact with political freedom in the Republic. (6)

According to Hamsun, then, Americanization is principally about achieving economic stability, not gaining an appreciation for democracy. But if the trade-off for becoming American is losing one’s “inner calm,” then the process is not worth the effort for Hamsun. There is no time for reflection when one is constantly “whirling,” and it is partly this constant bustle that prevents Americans from establishing the rich cultural traditions that flourish in the less money-obsessed European societies. Even worse, in Hamsun’s opinion, is the fact that Americans’ exaggerated patriotism makes them unwilling to learn a different way of life from Europe or elsewhere. He describes such national arrogance this way: “There is one country, America; anything beyond this is no good. Nowhere on earth is there such freedom, such development, such progress, and such intelligent people as in the land of America. A foreigner often feels wounded by
this hulking smugness” (8, original emphasis). Again relating the effect of this patriotism on immigrants like himself, Hamsun remarks that Americanization is really a byproduct of needing to accommodate oneself to Americans. The immigrant “tries to become an American as best he can. […] He learns the formal aspects of Americanism rapidly; he learns to speak English, he learns to wear his hat tilted over his right ear, he learns to surrender himself in every way according to the external patterns of behavior that characterize the Yankee in his own land. Then American national pride has reached fulfillment: there is one more American in America” (8). Americanization is, in effect, loss of individuality.

What is particularly striking about Hamsun’s depiction of Americanization is the degree to which it takes on the characteristics of a malignant force that spreads from person to person, threatening to level differences of habit in order to produce social uniformity. Indeed, in his essay “From America,” Hamsun explicitly compares Americanization to a disease, remarking that Americans themselves “suffer from a national mania, an incurable disease, one that keeps spreading.” In this passage, however, Hamsun is discussing the threat that Americanization poses not just to Norwegians who relocate there, but also to Norwegians who remain at home. America, Hamsun notes, already “provides Europe with its best instruments for dentists, midwives, and hospitals. Indeed, when it comes to applied science or technology, the United States is ahead of all other countries.” In other words, Hamsun specifically links the spreading “national mania” of Americanization with the global reach of American capitalism and

51 Hamsun, “The American Character” 21. In my coda, I examine the relationships between disease, national identity, and globalization more extensively.

52 Hamsun, “The American Character” 21.
culture. This coupling of the processes of Americanization and globalization is what makes Hamsun’s writings about America—and his status as a returning migrant—particularly relevant to the study of the history of globalization. Ultimately, his writings serve not only as words of warning to future Norwegian emigrants or as American-influenced satire, but also as a calculated attempt to challenge and resist the global spread of American capitalism and culture. In a sense, Hamsun utilizes one global network (the migration system that exists between Scandinavia and the American Midwest) to undermine another (the routes of exchange that help spread American products and culture), and Hamsun circulates a particular conception of America in order, paradoxically, to stave off its further spread. That his efforts remain in interactive relation with the processes of globalization demonstrates that globalization is not solely an American phenomenon; as suggested in the introduction to this project, some processes of globalization emerge alongside of—and even in contradistinction to—Americanization.

It is, in fact, because Hamsun understands the global implications of American attitudes and actions that he harps so extensively upon Americans’ xenophobia and ignorance of the rest of the world. America, he recognizes, is “the world’s greatest and richest country.” And he acknowledges that the United States is beginning to occupy an increasingly important position on the international stage. “There is a greater crossing of cosmopolitan elements [in America],” he observes in On the Cultural Life of Modern America, “than in any other country in the world” (16). Yet Americans themselves remain “systematically aloof,” refusing to engage in dialogue with the nations they are coming into contact with (16). More troubling to Hamsun is their seemingly total lack of

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53 Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 46.
awareness of the world outside of their own borders. Writing years before the Jewish and Armenian immigrants that Cahan and James describe had been able to reshape American culture, Hamsun laments:

Unfamiliarity with foreign peoples and foreign achievements is one of the national vices of the American people. […] The authorized geography in [their] schools is American geography; the authorized history is American history—all the rest of the world is included in a mere supplement of a couple of pages. […] American children grow up with no other knowledge of the world than what they have learned about America. (9)

This willful ignorance on the part of the American people frustrates Hamsun precisely because of the United States’ importance and power. In his opinion, no sense of international context guides the decisions of U.S. policymakers or businessmen, and Americans are reshaping the world in their own image with little regard for the cultures they are eradicating elsewhere.

Hamsun’s criticisms of Mark Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad* are likewise the outgrowth of his unwillingness to allow an American author to represent or, more accurately, to rewrite his own European heritage. “To go to Europe and be a critic,” Hamsun writes of Twain, “requires other qualifications than his energy and generally sound instincts.”54 Instead, turning the tables on the American, Hamsun exoticizes Twain and his culture, thereby reducing him to little more than a local colorist:

He is to be fully trusted only when he is dealing with the mining regions, where rich ores lie underfoot, where men shoot each other for sport, and where they fight their way through the impartial air, between outlaws and Indians, over ice fields and deserts. Here he is at home. […] His powers of invention, boundless imagination, and original style are precisely the qualities that are needed here.

54 Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 54.
They are less useful when it comes to studies of Greek antiques or European theories of government.\textsuperscript{55}

In a sense, Hamsun is attempting to render both Twain and the national culture that Twain represents local rather than universal. What Twain knows about, where he is “at home,” is within America’s borders. He may write perceptively and entertainingly about rough-and-tumble mining towns and frontier life, Hamsun argues, but he has no business forcing other countries and cultures to fit within his limited worldview. When writing about European cultures, Twain carries his typically American ignorance of those cultures with him, and Hamsun is quick to link this ignorance with the narrow-mindedness that European immigrants encounter in America. Twain’s contact with Europeans on their own ground is characterized by “exactly the same kind of ignorance that foreigners suffer from when they go to America.”\textsuperscript{56} To Hamsun, then, Twain’s travel writing represents the extension of Americanization beyond the United States’ own borders. Carrying his American attitudes with him as he travels and attempting to reduce European culture into something that his American readers will understand, Twain embodies the encroachment of an American cultural imperialism that Hamsun actively resists here and in his other early writings about America.

After 1890, however, explicit references to America become rare in Hamsun’s writings. Returning emigrants do appear as characters in several later novels that are set in Norway, including \textit{Vagabonds} (1927), \textit{August} (1930), \textit{The Road Leads On} (1933), and \textit{The Ring Is Closed} (1936), and although Hamsun pokes fun at them for the Americanisms that they have adopted, these characters are generally likable. For the

\textsuperscript{55} Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 54.

\textsuperscript{56} Hamsun, “Mark Twain” 53.
most part, the social criticisms that appear in these novels are directed at Norway itself, not America. By the time he published his last book, a memoir entitled *On Overgrown Paths* (1949), Hamsun’s retrospective attitude toward his sojourn in the United States had mellowed to such an extent that the only negative comments he can muster is of the homesickness he felt and of his preference for the company of other, equally homesick immigrants. Hamsun did, however, produce one more significant essay about America in his old age, a 1928 newspaper article entitled “Festina Lente.” More than any other of Hamsun’s later writings, this one indicates the degree to which his views on America had softened over the years. He comments without irony on “the Americans’ great helpfulness, their sympathy, their generosity” and claims, “To my dying day I will treasure what I learned during my two stays there, and I will always cherish the fine memories of those times.”

Nonetheless, in “Festina Lente,” Hamsun remains critical of American materialism and nervous of America’s long-term impact upon European culture and society. Indeed, Hamsun’s vision of the future is one of America’s ever-expanding economic and cultural hegemony: “God is forgotten, the almighty dollar seems to be taking His place, and machinery provides no relief to the soul. […] In the face of these conditions, America only increases its speed. America will not be stopped by any obstacle, but will move ahead, will force its way. […] We in Europe have the word *Americanism*; the ancients had *festina lente* [hasten slowly].”

By contrasting the Roman philosophy of approaching social change cautiously with the term *Americanism*, Hamsun acknowledges the centrality of the United States to the international community.


58 Hamsun, “Festina Lente” 132.
but also the dangers of other countries adopting American social and cultural practices too quickly. The solution, as Hamsun sees it, rests on American shoulders, and he makes a direct appeal to American readers (for, unlike Hamsun’s other writings about America, “Festina Lente” was translated into English immediately and appeared as an editorial in the 30 December 1928 issue of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*): “No more than any other country on the planet can America stand alone. America is not the world. America is a part of the world and must live its life together with all the other parts.” At once challenging American isolationism and American global hegemony (the United States is neither “alone” nor “the world”), Hamsun calls for dialogue and mutual cooperation. Thus Hamsun, the returning migrant, completes the particular route of circulation he entered over forty-five years earlier; having experienced America firsthand and interpreted those experiences for his fellow Norwegians, he now transmits his particular conception of America back to America itself. He leaves it up to America to respond.

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On May 1, 1904, the Japanese army won a dramatic victory against Russia at the Battle of the Yalu River, the first major land battle of the Russo-Japanese War. Over the next twelve months, Japan would follow up this victory by issuing a series of stunning blows to the Russian army and navy, which in turn precipitated the Russian Revolution of 1905, until Czar Nicholas II was forced to sue for peace. The Russo-Japanese War thus marked the first time in modern warfare that an Eastern nation defeated a Western one, and it helped transform Japan into an imperial power and the first non-Western member of the so-called Great Powers. Just as importantly, however, Russia’s defeat sent shockwaves throughout the Western world, challenging long-held assumptions about the military, intellectual, and cultural supremacy of European (i.e., white) civilization and the inability of non-white peoples to resist, let alone adopt and exploit, Western imperialism. While the status of Russians as Slavs might call into question their “whiteness” in some racial hierarchies, Russia was an established member of the Great Powers and, consequently, a representative of Western imperial hegemony. In The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy (1920), for example, the American anthropologist Lathrop Stoddard waffles between treating Russia as a white nation or as a Slavic one that had betrayed its white heritage; nevertheless, he singles out Russia’s defeat by Japan as a major failure and a dangerous precedent for white civilization. “It was Russian Pan-
Slavism,” Stoddard writes, “which dealt the first shrewd blow to white solidarity. […] Pan-Slavists boldly proclaimed the morbid, mystical dogma that Russia was Asiatic, not European. […] The Russo-Japanese War, that destroyer of white prestige whose ominous results we have already noted was precipitated mainly by the reckless short-sightedness of white men themselves.”¹ In this passage, Stoddard reveals the conceptual crisis into which Japan’s rapid modernization and adoption of Western methods of warfare and imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century threw many Western intellectuals.

At the same time, however, the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War also helped propel the United States into a more central role in the international community, as I mentioned in the first chapter and will discuss in more detail below. One of the key moments in America’s rise to international prominence was Theodore Roosevelt’s negotiation of the Treaty of Portsmouth, which formally ended the Russo-Japanese War and earned Roosevelt the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize. In addition to the prestige that Roosevelt’s mediation brought to American diplomacy (and the territory it gave to Japan), the Treaty of Portsmouth also ratified the secret Taft-Katsura Agreement, in which the United States agreed to recognize Korea as belonging within Japan’s sphere of influence in exchange for Japan’s pledge not to interfere with America’s presence in the Philippines.² Thus the Russo-Japanese War also highlights the closely intertwined

¹ Lathrop Stoddard, The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920) 203. Within racial discourse, the precise status of Slavic peoples is controversial.

² The fact that, by and large, the Japanese public resented Roosevelt’s involvement because they viewed the Treaty of Portsmouth as unfavorable to them, despite their stunning victory in the war, demonstrates just how complicated U.S.-Japanese relations could be. For more detailed perspectives on this history, see Foster Rhea Dulles’ Yankees and Samurai: America’s Role in the Emergence of Modern Japan, 1791-1900 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Raymond A. Esthus’ Theodore Roosevelt and Japan (Seattle: Washington UP, 1966); and the more recent Japan and North America: First Contacts to the Pacific War,
histories of the United States and Japan, which at that time already extended back to 1858, when, with the aid of a U.S. naval squadron, Commodore Matthew Perry signed the Kanagawa Treaty, forcibly opening Japan to trade with the West. More importantly, it also reveals the extent to which America depended upon Japanese imperialism for its own rise to global power at the dawn of the twentieth century; the two nations’ emergence as Great Powers was both simultaneous and reciprocal.

This uneasy relationship between Japan and America also registers in the writings of Jack London, who witnessed the Battle of the Yalu River firsthand as a war correspondent. Immediately following the Japanese victory, London penned what is probably the most famous passage of his war correspondence. Describing an encounter with a group of dejected Russian prisoners of war, he writes:

The sight I saw was as a blow in the face of me. On my mind it had all the stunning effect of the sharp impact of a man’s fist. There was a man, a white man, with blue eyes, looking at me. […] And there were other white men in there with him—many white men. I caught myself gasping. A choking sensation was in my throat. These men were my kind. I found myself suddenly and sharply aware that I was an alien amongst these brown men who peered through the window with me. And I felt myself strangely at one with those other men behind the window—felt that my place was there inside with them in their captivity, rather than outside in freedom amongst aliens.³

The shock (“blow”) that London records here—he, a “white man,” has been rendered “alien” by a situation that leaves him “free” and protected by the very same “brown men” who have imprisoned other “white men”—parallels the “first shrewd blow to white

solidarity” that Stoddard discusses, though London remains sympathetic to the Russian prisoners he encounters. In fact, I suggest that we read London’s use of terms like white and white man—and, to a lesser extent, Stoddard’s use of white solidarity—as avatars for Western modernity. As I explain more fully below, what both London and Stoddard lament is not just the defeat of a particular Western nation or even the defeat of whiteness per se, but rather the defeat of Western modernity by an Eastern nation with its own brand of modernity. In other words, in referring ironically to his “freedom amongst aliens” even though he feels that his “place” is with the Russian prisoners “in their captivity” and their defeat, London attempts to distance himself from a relationship with the Japanese that benefits him in practical terms but that deeply troubles him as a representative of Western civilization. In short, he feels threatened by Japan’s victory, its newfound modernity, and the potential implications of both for the future of America’s interests.

Indeed, the conceptual crisis that London and Stoddard give voice to in their writings, growing as it does out their nation’s mutually beneficial but still extremely uneasy relationship with Japan, might suggest a Pacific Rim variation on Edward Said’s notion of Orientalism, notwithstanding Said’s claim that “to speak of Orientalism […] is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise.” After all, following the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the U.S. acquisition of the Hawaiian and Philippine islands, Japan and America entered into direct and increasingly
intense imperial competition with one another, and attempts to portray Japanese culture as “other” and the Japanese people themselves as non-American increased apace in American public and literary discourse, peaking during the 1940s with the wartime propaganda that helped justify the establishment of Japanese-American internment camps. Understandably, we might be tempted to apply Said’s following description of the discursive practices of Orientalism to American discourse about Japan insofar as it corresponds to the two nations’ struggle for hegemony in the Pacific: “Orientalism,” Said says, “depends for its strategy on [a] flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.”

Nevertheless, Said’s conception of Orientalism is ultimately insufficient to account for the complexity of U.S.-Japanese relations or, even more significantly, for Japan’s historically unique position within the international community, and this insufficiency is distinct from the already well-known general criticisms of Said’s work. As Colleen Lye has pointed out recently, East Asia as a whole has always “signified an exceptional, rather than paradigmatic, Other,” especially in relation to America. Likewise, Rolf J. Goebel notes that, “despite the all-pervasive

5 Said 7, original emphis.

6 Among the most notable critical responses to Said’s Orientalism are Bernard Lewis’ “The Question of Orientalism” and Aijaz Ahmad’s “Between Orientalism and Historicism,” both of which are reprinted in Orientalism: A Reader, ed. Alexander Lyon Macfie (New York: New York UP, 2001). Lewis, one of the modern orientalists whose work Said examines, criticizes Said for a number of omissions and inaccuracies that, Lewis claims, slant Said’s evidence in favor of a predetermined set of beliefs and prejudices. Ahmad, on the other hand, criticizes Said for not properly historicizing his argument and for what Ahmad views as Said’s opportunistic use of certain European thinkers, such as Karl Marx, in support of his claims, despite the fact that many of those thinkers dismissed or ignored non-Western history and culture.

influence of European and American technology, models of democracy, economic structures, literary conventions, and concepts of individual selfhood […], Japan continues to resist our urge to attribute universal validity to Western sociopolitical, philosophical, and aesthetic discourse.”

More to the point, as indicated above, the United States and Japan, despite their growing imperial rivalry as the twentieth century went on, engaged in mutually agreeable empire-building. This relationship between east and west simply does not fit an Orientalist model, which seems, at best, only tangentially relevant and, at worst, entirely inappropriate to Japan. With its long history, seemingly unbroken cultural continuity, and ability to assimilate western technology without abandoning its own social practices, Japan has been the nonwestern nation that most confounds Eurocentric conceptions of “civilization” and “modernity.” As such, Japan presents a political and imperial reality that goes beyond the traditional Orientalist discourse that Said examined.

In this chapter, I explore the confusion and anxiety over the nature of civilization and modernity that Japan’s status within the international community precipitated for Jack London and Lafcadio Hearn, perhaps the two most famous and widely read American authors to visit Japan at the turn of the twentieth century, study Japanese emergence of globalization, our conclusions and lines of argument differ enough to avoid redundancy and instead provide differently inflected studies of a key historical moment in U.S. international relations.


9 I do not wish to suggest that Said’s arguments are entirely unfounded or irrelevant. In providing a cultural and ideological history of Western Europe’s encounters with the Islamic cultures of North Africa and the Middle East, *Orientalism* remains a central text in postcolonial studies and still has much to say about the assumptions and prejudices that frame the Western world’s conception of—and dealings with—the Near and Middle East. I merely wish to acknowledge its limitations and challenge some of its universalizing tendencies. Not all non-Western encounters with the West are the same.
culture, and write about their experiences and impressions.\textsuperscript{10} Both Hearn and London presented themselves—and were widely accepted—as experts on Japan; therefore, they provide especially important case studies of American attitudes towards Japan at key moments in each nation’s history. Besides underscoring the United States’ unique and sometimes paradoxical relationship with the Empire of Japan, however, London and Hearn also highlight an alternate means of studying the history of U.S.-Japanese relations to the one proposed by Said. I suggest that London and Hearn present us with a nascent recognition of what may be called “alternative modernities.” This recognition emerges in both men’s writings not only when each one immersed himself fully and sometimes painfully in Asiatic culture, but also and even more importantly at key moments in Japan’s move toward modernization, including that nation’s development into a major imperial power in East Asia. To be sure, London and Hearn responded in markedly different ways to their recognition of alternative modernities; Hearn embraced it, finding in Japanese culture a more effective means of coping with modernity, whereas London rejected it, attempting to allay his own anxieties by retreating into a position of presumed moral, rather than cultural, superiority as a white man. Even so, both writers reached their respective conclusions by following the same form of racialist logic, a logic that could reconcile their lifelong experiences of western modernity with their observations of what seemed to them an exemplary counter-modernity in action.

\textsuperscript{10} A third notable American visitor to Japan at the turn of the twentieth century was the art historian Ernest Fenollosa, who, like Hearn, taught for a time at Tokyo Imperial University. Although not a popular writer like London and Hearn and although largely forgotten today, Fenollosa did much to preserve and popularize Chinese and Japanese visual art in the West, and his writings influenced both Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats after his death. A fine introduction to Fenollosa’s biography and work is Lawrence W. Chisolm’s \textit{Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture} (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963).
Before going further, it is important to clarify what precisely such thorny terms as *racialism* and *alternative modernities* mean and how they relate to one another, if at all. Racialism, we must be clear, is not the same thing as racism. As Anthony Appiah has pointed out, racialism is a “presupposition” of racism, but the discrimination that characterizes racism is not necessarily found in the doctrine of racialism; instead, according to Appiah, racialism is the view that “there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race.”\(^{11}\) The ideology of racialism dominated nineteenth-century conceptualizations of nationhood and culture and led to a number of pseudo-scientific attempts to classify the world’s peoples into distinct races, each with its own supposed essential characteristics and dispositions.\(^{12}\) These attempts to categorize individuals racially could—and often did—lead to organizing them further into hierarchies, in the mistaken belief that some races possessed inherent traits that rendered them superior to others; however, it was also possible for a person who subscribed to racialism to believe that, again according to Appiah, “provided positive moral qualities are distributed across the races, each can be respected, can have its ‘separate but equal’ place.”\(^{13}\) For instance, no less a civil rights activist than W.E.B. Du Bois himself subscribed to racialism. In his 1897 essay “The Conservation of Races,” Du Bois writes, “What is the real distinction between these nations [i.e., races]? […]


\(^{13}\) Appiah, “Invention of Africa” 13.
These eight great races of to-day follow the cleavage of physical race distinctions. [...] Yet no mere physical distinctions would really define or explain the deeper significances—the cohesiveness and continuity of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences."14 Clearly, then, racialism was a pervasive and primarily descriptive worldview that did not necessarily entail a set of prescriptive rules for social behavior.

Alternative modernities, on the other hand, is an idea expounded by the philosopher Charles Taylor at the conclusion of his influential essay “Two Theories of Modernity.” In this essay, Taylor describes two ways of understanding the rise of modernity: culturally and aculturally. The acultural explanation takes a culture-neutral view of progress, assuming that the road to modernity is universal and that all cultures must eventually follow the same path. Variations among cultures equate to different positions along the same path, with some cultures having reached farther distances than others. Taylor rejects this explanation, claiming that “what this view reads out of the picture is the possibility that Western modernity might be powered by its own positive visions of the good, that is, by one constellation of such views among available others. [...] What gets screened out is the possibility that Western modernity might be sustained by its own spiritual vision.”15 In other words, an acultural understanding of modernity tends to read the Western experience of modernity as universal, thereby eliding non-Western experiences of modernity and imposing inappropriately uniform standards for


evaluating “progress.” The cultural theory of modernity, however, is founded upon the realization that social change is tied to culture-specific values and practices. Thus according to Taylor, “a cultural theory supposes the point of view in which we see our own culture [as] one among others” and which in turn leads to a fuller appreciation of “the full gamut of alternative modernities […] in different parts of the world.”

The similarities between Taylor’s culture-specific view of modernity and Appiah’s description of historic forms of racialism are striking. Both ideologies presuppose that a given social group’s values, practices, and ways of understanding itself and its relationship to other social groups are unique and nontransferable because they have evolved within a specific context. In other words, a social group (whether defined as a race or nation by racialist discourse or as a culture by Taylor) is unique because it possesses a unique and continuous history. I would hasten to add that there are significant differences, too. For one thing, racialist discourse carries with it all the baggage of the nineteenth century’s largely discredited race-science, some of which informed the writings of Nathaniel Shaler that appeared in the previous chapter. The conception of alternative modernities, on the other hand, is an outgrowth of Taylor’s own multicultural values and his ties with philosophical communitarianism, which emphasizes the dialectical relationship between an individual’s understanding of his or her own identity and that person’s membership with a given social group as well as the link between a person’s sense of identity and sense of ethics. Likewise, I disagree with

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16 Taylor 21, 25.

those right-wing attacks on political multiculturalism that often uncritically and unfairly conflate multiculturalism and nineteenth-century racialism. Multiculturalism and, by extension, the notion of alternative modernities are concerned primarily with political pluralism and empowerment through recognition of—and respect for—cultural differences. What I am suggesting here, however, is that, far from being bad or simply racist, racialism can lead, under certain circumstances, to the recognition of a close cousin of multiculturalism: Taylor’s concept of alternative modernities. As suggested above, we can see the workings of this logic in the writings of Jack London and Lafcadio Hearn, though the two men reached different conclusions about the place of Japan in the international community. London employed racialism in order to warn Americans of the danger that Japan’s alternative modernity posed to U.S. imperial interests in the Pacific, while Hearn embraced that same alternative modernity to criticize what he viewed as the failures and shortcomings of American society and culture. That two such different responses could exist side by side reveals that Americans living in the early twentieth century had access to a much wider range of possible attitudes towards Japan than the one Said characterizes categorically as “consequently racist, imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.”

Appiah outlines several dangers that result from using forms of collective identity to guide ethical or political action, including most notably what Appiah calls the “politics of compulsion” (116). It is worth mentioning that Taylor ran for the Canadian House of Commons on four occasions during the 1960s, the same decade that Canadian politics brought the word *multiculturalism* into common parlance. In the latter volume, however, both Taylor and Appiah level several pointed criticisms at certain simplistic tendencies in contemporary discussions of multiculturalism.

18 I would stop short of suggesting that, in tracing the genealogies of racialism and of multiculturalism, we might find that they overlap, though I do think that such a historical study would be worthwhile.

19 Said 204.
Properly speaking, Jack London’s experience with Japanese culture did not take place primarily in Japan. In fact, the total duration of London’s stay in Japan was about two weeks—from January 25 through February 7, 1904. London had been hired by William Randolph Hearst to cover what would become the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, and he was eventually attached to the Japanese army in Korea. By this time, London was one of the most famous and highest-paid authors in America. He had already published *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *The People of the Abyss* (1903), and he had just completed *The Sea-Wolf* (1904) a few weeks prior to setting sail for Yokohama. Thus persuading London to write for the San Francisco * Examiner* must have seemed quite a coup for Hearst. As war correspondence, however, the articles that London finally produced were widely regarded as failures, even by London himself. They describe surprisingly little action and offer very little insight into the strategy of the Japanese army. London himself ascribed these shortcomings to the amount of censorship he encountered, and there is some truth to his claim. The Japanese military did indeed restrict foreign journalists’ access to information to a degree that many were unused to.\(^{20}\) But much of the blame certainly rests upon London, too. From his own letters and articles, it is clear that he lacked patience in his dealings with the sometimes indirect manners of his Japanese hosts, and he seems to have reveled in his own sarcastic persona, which clearly did not endear him to the Japanese authorities. Taking pride in what he considered his self-reliance, he also describes traveling on his own initiative only to fall

behind his fellow correspondents. In terms of journalistic skill, London also exhibits an almost naïve inability to write around the Japanese censors, and he comes nowhere close to the sort of genuinely newsworthy detail, such as troop movements and dispositions, that readers typically expect from war correspondence. Still, London’s coverage of the Russo-Japanese War possesses ongoing significance because of the uniqueness of his position as a prominent American observer of a war of imperialism fought between two other global powers, not necessarily because of his accuracy as a reporter.

London’s correspondence also reflects just how significant and deeply affecting the outbreak, prosecution, and result of the Russo-Japanese War was for the rest of the Western world in 1904 and 1905, even though the wars of the past century have somewhat lessened and obscured much of the initial impact of that war. Beyond establishing Japan as a dominant power in East Asia, the Russo-Japanese War marked the first occasion in modern history in which a European power suffered a decisive military defeat at the hands of an Asian nation. “The ramifications of Japanese victory over Russia in 1905,” David Wells and Sandra Wilson remark, “thus ranged from a fundamental change in the balance of power in Asia to a clear challenge to prevailing notions of white, European superiority throughout the world.”21 This “challenge to prevailing notions of white, European superiority” was what London registered most keenly in his correspondence, but some of the other important outcomes included the Russian Revolution of 1905 and, as has already been noted, the emergence of Theodore Roosevelt as a major diplomat. Additionally, many historians cite the Russo-Japanese

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War as an important precursor to the mechanized warfare of World War I, and there are striking parallels between Japan’s surprise attack on the Russian navy during the Battle of Port Arthur (February 8-9, 1904), which occurred before both sides issued official declarations of war on February 10, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The war itself was fought over control of Korea, Manchuria, and the important port city of Port Arthur [now Lushun], all of which Russia had begun to occupy in the late 1890s to forestall Japanese expansion. After the naval attack on Port Arthur, the Japanese army launched a quick campaign through the Korean peninsula, across the Yalu River, and into southern Manchuria. It was this campaign that London accompanied during the spring of 1904.

London’s attitude going into the war is rather puzzling. It seems clear that he expected it to be something of an adventure, and he may have viewed it as a temporary escape from the strained relationship with his first wife Bessie, whom he had left in the summer of 1903 but would not divorce until the fall of 1904. So eager was he to set sail for Asia, in fact, that he left America before proofreading copy of *The Sea-Wolf* from either Macmillan or *Century Magazine*, which was serializing the novel, though he apparently waited long enough to decide that Hearst’s was the “best offer” he received.

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23 A note on place names: Whenever possible, I follow London’s and/or Hearn’s usage and spelling. In those instances where confusion may ensue, I place the current name in brackets.
In some of his earliest letters to his mistress and future second wife, Charmian Kittredge, and occasionally in his articles, he expresses concern that he is going to miss out on the action, as he had when the Boer War ended in 1902 before he could reach South Africa. In a letter to Charmian dated January 21, while London was still aboard the *S.S. Siberia*, he writes, “I hope the war isn’t declared for at least a month after I arrive in Japan—will give my ankle a chance to strengthen” (6). As that letter indicates, London was plagued by health problems throughout the winter, and one senses that the hypermasculine author may have taken on the role of war correspondent as a means of proving his continued vigor and allaying his fear of “getting old” (5). (London celebrated his twenty-eighth birthday while en route to Yokohama.) At any rate, London seems to have been so self-absorbed upon his arrival in Japan that he was oblivious to the seriousness with which the Japanese were determined to conduct the war.

His very first article for Hearst (written February 3) illustrates just how much he misunderstood what was expected of him and how dismissively he tended to treat the Japanese authorities. While waiting in Moji, Japan for transportation to Chemulpo [Inchon], Korea, London took a few photographs, not realizing that Moji was a restricted area and that photography there was forbidden. “Great excitement ensued,” according to London:

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24 Hendricks and Shepard 3. London left the task of proofreading to two friends, Charmian Kittredge and the poet George Sterling.

25 During his time in Korea, as throughout his career, London took numerous photographs, some of which were meant to be printed alongside his articles but ultimately did not appear. Although not widely available at present, London’s photography deserves further study. A few of London’s Korean photographs appear in Jeanne Campbell Reesman’s “Marching with ‘the Censor’: The Japanese Army and Jack London, Author,” *Jack London Journal* 6 (1999): 135-74. In her attempt to rehabilitate London’s reputation, however, Reesman mistakenly dismisses the distinction between racism and racialism as “relatively minor” (137, n. 4).
Captains, lieutenants and ordinary policemen all talked at once and ran hither and thither. [...] The populace clustered like flies at doors and windows [of the police station] to gape at the ‘Russian spy.’ At first it was all very ludicrous—‘capital to while away some of the time ere my steamer departs,’ was my judgment; but when I was taken to an upper room and the hours began to slip by, I decided that it was serious. (27)

Despite London’s realization of the seriousness of his position, his account of his subsequent interrogation remains comic in tone, stressing what London perceived to be the absurdity of the situation. For instance, he takes delight in recording the following piece of advice he received from an interpreter: “Customs different in Japan from America; therefore you must not tell any lies” (31). He also emphasizes his own sardonic, rather condescending attitude by noting the refrain of “traveling to Chemulpo” with which he responded to questions about his intentions, rank, and business (28). A group of Japanese journalists quickly came to London’s aid, persuading the court to release him and return his camera for a nominal fine of five yen. From that point on, however, London’s relationship with Japanese authority figures can only be characterized as strained. He continued to resent the impositions and restrictions placed upon him and ignored them as much as possible. Eventually, in an event in late May that he did not recount in any of his articles, London struck a Japanese groom whom he believed was stealing from him and was placed under arrest. London avoided court-martial only because Richard Harding Davis reported the incident to Roosevelt, who apparently intervened in London’s behalf. London was released a few days later on condition that he return to America, which he did almost immediately.26

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26 See pp. 24-25 in Hendricks and Shepard.
Considering that his time in Asia was book-ended by two such serious encounters with the law, it is little wonder that London left with an overwhelmingly negative view of his experiences there. But it is also unsurprising that the Japanese high command had little interest in accommodating him during the war. Perhaps as a world-famous author London expected too much or was temperamentally unsuited to the demands of journalism? Perhaps he chafed legitimately at the censorship he encountered or the Japanese military’s disregard for his needs as a correspondent? Whatever the reasons, London’s frustrations are reflected in his war correspondence and contemporaneous letters to Charmian. Tellingly, however, the letters and articles themselves reveal that his frustrations were not tied to any one event or series of events. Indeed, what makes reading London’s articles and personal letters particularly interesting is that the sea change in his attitude toward the Japanese seems to have occurred incrementally over the course of about two months rather than all at once. On a very basic level, to read his letters and war correspondence chronologically is to watch his personality change before our very eyes. Far more importantly, these writings also reveal a man whose frame of reference is dislocated, quite literally, when he is plunged by the forces of globalization into a non-white, non-Western context in which he is unable to function.

Exactly how specific London’s knowledge of Japan or, more generally, Asia was in 1904 is unclear. Both Colleen Lye and Jeanne Campbell Reesman have discussed London’s depiction of Asians in the writings he produced after the Russo-Japanese War, including “The Unparalleled Invasion” and “Goliah” (both 1907), The Iron Heel (1908), and The Valley of the Moon (1913). Japan features prominently in the title of London’s first published story, “Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan” (1893), even though its
presence matters very little to the actual narrative. This story—as well as *The Sea-Wolf* (1904)—was no doubt inspired by London’s own experiences aboard the sealing schooner *Sophia Sutherland*, which sailed along the coast of Japan in 1893. In Lye’s opinion, however, “‘Japan’ simply designates the outer horizon of an expansive oceanic world, which is London’s stage for adventure” in his early stories.\(^{27}\) The San Francisco Bay area, where London grew up, possessed a large Asian populace and, according to Reesman, witnessed much racial strife at the turn of the twentieth century, including “burnings of Asian neighborhoods and even the lynchings of Asian men by armed groups of white hooligans.”\(^{28}\) Moreover, ever-stricter immigration laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and an 1894 California law that denied citizenship to Japanese immigrants, specifically targeted Asians.\(^{29}\) Most importantly, London was already familiar with some of Lafcadio Hearn’s books about Japan, citing them prominently in some of his own essays.

Going into the war, however, London’s attitude towards the Japanese was largely positive, even if his first article reveals that it was condescending. Take, for instance, his fourth article, dated March 4 from Seoul, in which we find London’s most undisguised, most rapturous admiration for the Japanese army:

> I doubt if there be more peaceable, orderly soldiers in the world than the Japanese. Our own soldiers, long ere this, would have painted Seoul red with their skylarking and good-natured boisterousness, but the Japanese are not boisterous. They are deadly serious. Yet no one of the civilian population is afraid of them.

\(^{27}\) Lye 12.

\(^{28}\) Reesman 138.

\(^{29}\) John K. Emmerson chronicles some of this legislation in *The Eagle and the Rising Sun: America and Japan in the Twentieth Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1988). See especially p. 47.
The women are safe; the money is safe; the goods are safe. [...] The Japanese are a race of warriors and their infantry is all the infantry could possibly be. (41-42)

These sentiments are echoed in a letter to Charmian dated the same day:

I think as to the quietness, strictness and orderliness of Japanese soldiers it is very hard to find any equals in the world. If it were our boys they would have gone lightheartedly to all the places and we would surely have heard for many a time about them kicking up a row, but such things never happen in Japanese and it is wonderful how they keep so orderly. [...] Japanese is the race who can produce real fighting men, and its infantry is simply superb. (13)

London’s admiration for the prowess of these soldiers is clear; addressing his American audience, he goes so far as to compare them favorably to “our own soldiers,” whose “boisterousness” may very well be “good-natured” but still falls far short of the supreme discipline maintained by the Japanese troops. Of course, in the same article, he goes on to disparage Japanese horsemanship, noting that “their cavalry would appear ridiculous to a western eye” (42). This passing swipe, however, is softened somewhat by London’s conjecture that the relatively small size of Japanese horses may be to blame, and he concludes that “the cavalrmen, afoot or ahorse, are men, and fighting men, and anyway, ere long, they soon may be astride large Russian horses” (42). (It is worth pointing out that, at the time, London was himself an inexperienced rider, and he is likely projecting his own anxieties upon the Japanese cavalry. In his second article, dated February 26, he describes being laughed at when he failed to control a Chinese stallion, and he expresses pride several times at eventually procuring an Australian horse that was previously owned by a Russian minister and that was considerably larger than the other horses in Korea.)
Within the matter of four days, however, London’s attitude sours perceptibly, and he confides to Charmian on March 8, “How the letters [I have received] have roused me up! Furthermore, they have proved to me, or, rather, reassured me, that I am a white man. […] One can scarcely think whiteman’s thoughts” (14). Pinpointing exactly what has so frustrated or disturbed him is difficult. Michael S. Sweeney has suggested that London’s opinions of the Japanese changed once they began restricting and monitoring his movement, but that did not occur until Japanese soldiers detained him in Sunan on March 9, preventing him from reaching the front. 30 Between March 4 and March 8, well before his detention at Sunan, London composed five more articles, each of which reflects his deteriorating respect for Asians in general and Japanese in particular. On March 5, he writes about witnessing both Koreans and Japanese soldiers mistreating their horses. He saves the bulk of his vitriol for Koreans but also indicts Japanese by virtue of their shared status as “Asiatic”:

For the Korean is nothing if not a coward, and his fear of bodily hurt is about equal to his inaction. […] The white man [i.e., London himself] knew nothing about horses, and probably the only thing to be said in his favor was that he was not a Korean. […] The Asiatic is heartless. The suffering of dumb brutes means nothing to him. […] The Japanese may be the Britisher of the Orient, but he is still Asiatic. The suffering of beasts does not touch him. (44, 46-47)

Later the same day but in a different article, London begins to distance himself from his still admiring descriptions of the Japanese army. Note his use of passive voice in the following sentences, which open this article: “The Japanese soldiery and equipment seem to command universal admiration. Not one dissenting voice is to be heard among

30 Sweeney 554. Sweeney is also a little too offhanded in simply labeling London a racist.
the European and American residents in Korea. On the contrary, favorable comparison *is made* with our own troops and the troops of Europe” (47-48, emphasis added).

By March 7, London has adopted a fully racialist attitude, in which the chasm separating each race’s world of experience extends even to horseshoes: “To keep shoes on our horses was the great problem. In the first place, our horseshoes were whiteman’s horseshoes, about which the Korean farmers knew nothing. And as their knowledge of their own kind of shoes was the accumulated wisdom of centuries, it was beyond the wildest flights of imagination to dream that they could learn anything about whiteman’s shoes inside several centuries more” (56). This passage is certainly condescending, since the basis for his complaint is the expectation that Korean farmers should be willing to accommodate his needs rather than *vice versa*; however, London’s comments are not explicitly racist. He does not suggest that a “whiteman’s” horseshoes are inherently superior to a Korean’s. Instead, the “problem” London identifies is the fact that the two races possess equally long and rich traditions of horseshoe-making (“the accumulated wisdom of centuries”) and that he just happened to bring the wrong horseshoes.

But London’s racialism is not limited to his own personal experiences. After recounting his horseshoe problem, he observes, “But horses’ feet were not the only feet that suffered on the Pekin Road. Sore-footed soldiers were pretty much in the evidence. They trailed along for miles behind every marching company and battalion. […] Many of them discarded the army shoe of stiff leather, and went back to their native gear, the soft straw sandal” (57). A few days later (March 13), London returns to this theme, suggesting the following reason for the sore feet: “These men, used to the straw sandal all their lives, had been summoned to join their colors and to incase their feet in the harsh
leather boot of the West. [...] The whole leg and foot action of a man who has worn sandals is different from that which comes of wearing boots. And even if the boots had fitted the feet, the very action of the feet and the legs alone would have chafed and lacerated” (80). Here, London is applying the logic of racialism to the physical experiences and bodily habits of others, and he ultimately arrives at a Lamarckian conclusion about the ways in which cultural practices can shape the physical body. The Japanese soldiers’ feet are sore, he claims, because they have been forced to put on a foreign form of footwear with which they have had no previous experience and to which their manner of walking is indisposed. Just as a society’s method of making horseshoes is based upon skills and techniques that have been passed down within that society (“the accumulated wisdom of centuries”), a people’s manner of walking is determined by the footwear that has traditionally adorned their feet (the accumulated walking of centuries, we might say).

By March 8, the day of the second letter to Charmian quoted above, London has extended this racialist outlook to language and mental processes: “The Japanese interpreter is Asiatic. He no more understands a white man’s mental processes than a white man understands his” (61). What gives London the most anxiety, however, is that he, a “white man,” is in fact beginning to understand “Asiatic” mental processes. Also on March 8, he transcribes a press report from the Japanese army written in broken English, and he writes, “I understand every word of it” (62). Elsewhere, London confesses, “I had become used to a people which was not of my kind. My mind had settled down to accepting without question that the men who fought had eyes and cheek bones and skins different from the eyes and cheek bones and skins of my kind” (106). What we are privy
to, and what makes these articles so powerful to read, is a brutally honest first-hand account of the destabilization of London’s sense of his own racial identity as a “white man.” As we have seen in his letter to Charmian of March 8, London’s belief that he has adopted—at least in part—Asiatic mental processes leads to his complaint that he can “scarcely think whiteman’s thoughts” and to his search for reassurance that he is, indeed, still “a white man.” Two days later, he revisits these concerns with a lengthy discussion of the unease he feels at being able to function within the Korean economy without knowing “what anything costs me—at least in intelligible terms” (72). By “intelligible terms,” London means whatever Korean currency is “equivalent to in terms of American coinage”—something that is “beyond” him (72). In other words, London’s ability to relate his experiences in Korea to terms with which he is already familiar, namely his experiences in “white” America, is gradually breaking down, and his frustrations underscore a key characteristic of globalization: the reformulation of relations or the creation of new relations between already existing entities or, in William James’ language, terms.31 In a sense, London’s journey to Korea, which had been made possible by Japanese imperialist expansion and the reach of the American news media, juxtaposes Japanese and American ways of understanding the world and thus brings two “terms” into “relation” with one another. Perhaps nothing exemplifies this inability to reconcile his experiences in Korea with his experiences in America so much as his observation of the Japanese army’s stunning victory over the Russian army at the Yalu River, an event that shook London’s understanding of modernity itself.

London conceives of modernity as a fall from some sort of superior human condition, as his description of modern combat clearly indicates. “This is modern

31 I discuss the relationship between James’ radical empiricism and globalization in the introduction.
warfare,” he writes somewhat gloomily about the long-range artillery engagements that the Japanese carry out so skillfully, continuing, “But it is long-range fighting which makes modern warfare so different from ancient warfare” (97). Foreseeing a sort of “cold” warfare that primarily involves deterrence, London notes, “Killing decided ancient warfare; the possibility of being killed decides modern warfare. In short, the marvelous and awful machinery of warfare of to-day, defeats its own end. Made pre-eminently to kill, its chief effect is to make killing quite the unusual thing. When the machinery of warfare becomes just about perfect, there won’t be any killing at all” (98). Against this view of war as stalemate, London also envisions another, more threatening aspect of modern warfare: industrialized death. “In ancient warfare,” he writes, “the energy which drove death was generated in a man’s body. […] But to-day the energy which drives home death is generated by the chemists in large factories and must be carted about by the soldiers who are to use it” (78). According to London, these two developments result in a disjunction between a soldier’s experiences on the battlefield and his experiences throughout the rest of his life. As opposed to ancient fighters, for whom warfare was part of everyday life, “the conscript of to-day lives a peaceable, industrious life, and has never heard war’s alarums until the moment he is jerked from out his little pigeon-hole and hurled onto the field of battle” (79). The end result depresses London, for it removes the element of heroism from battle. Modernity has deprived war of its human factor, which is its potential for glory.

The fact that an Asiatic race has embraced this aspect of modernity alarms London. When he witnesses Japan defeat Russia at the Battle of the Yalu River (April 30-May 1), he realizes that Japan has managed not only to modernize its military
successfully without abandoning its own racially specific thought processes and customs but also to deploy that modernized military against a Western power with devastating effectiveness. And as demonstrated in his May 1 article that opens this chapter, this realization throws London into a conceptual crisis, transforming him into “alien” who wishes to share in Russia’s defeat rather than Japan’s victory because Russia is white and Western and Japan is not. By the time he was preparing to return to the United States, London could promise Charmian that “in the past I have preached the Economic Yellow Peril; henceforth I shall preach the Militant Yellow Peril” (24). And this is precisely what London did in his infamous essay “The Yellow Peril,” which although not officially part of his war correspondence was written before he left Asia. In that essay and, as Colleen Lye and Jeanne Campbell Reesman have argued, in portions of his subsequent writings for the next few years, London warned of the threat the potential combination of Japanese military and Chinese economic power posed to American hegemony in the Pacific: “A new competitor,” London writes in his 1909 essay “If Japan Wakens China,” “and a most ominous and formidable one, will enter the arena where the races struggle for the world-market” (361). Yet even while warning Americans of Japan’s ability to turn Western imperialism on its head, London simultaneously attempts to dismiss this anxiety by retreating into a position of moral superiority. So he writes hopefully in “The Yellow Peril” that the “two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race” (i.e., the British and Americans) might “despoil [the Japanese] of his spoils” (346) because “we are a right-seeking race” (349). At this point, of course, it is clear that London has moved beyond a relatively neutral racialist outlook and adopted an outright racist attitude.
In defense of the argument he outlines in “The Yellow Peril” and “If Japan Wakens China,” London marshals the support of Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904). At the time, Hearn was a popular journalist and author, though he has been largely forgotten in recent years. Characterizing him as an “American” author, however, is somewhat problematic. Hearn was born in 1850 on the Greek island of Levkas, the son of an Irish surgeon serving in the British army and a local Greek woman. At the age of nineteen, he moved to the United States, where he lived for the next twenty years. He became a journalist, working first in Cincinnati and then in New Orleans, though he never underwent official naturalization. In 1890, he traveled to Japan on a brief assignment, but he quickly became so enchanted with the country and its people that he decided to stay. He married a Japanese woman and eventually became a Japanese citizen in 1896, taking the name Koizumi Yakumo. He supported himself and his family by teaching English at various Japanese schools and universities, but he made a name for himself between 1894 and his death in 1904 by translating Japanese folk tales and poetry into English and by writing articles and sketches about his experiences for English-speaking readers. Probably his best-known work remains *Kwaidan* (1903), a collection of ghost stories, some of which were turned into a 1964 film of the same name, but he was a popular author throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s, publishing regularly in such high-profile American magazines as the *Atlantic Monthly*. Critical opinion of Hearn’s

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32 A note on proper names: In this chapter, I follow Japanese usage and place the family name (Koizumi) first, but I will continue to call him Lafcadio Hearn, which is the name he used when writing in English.

33 Hearn was by no means the only notable Japanologist writing in English at the turn of the twentieth century, but he was probably the best-known to American readers. I have mentioned the American Ernest Fenollosa in a previous footnote. Three Englishmen, the diplomats William George Aston and Sir Ernest Satow and the philologist Basil Hall Chamberlain, rank among the most distinguished British Japanologists. Chamberlain was a friend and colleague of Hearn’s at Tokyo Imperial University, though the two men became estranged towards the end of Hearn’s life.
work mostly follows that of his earliest champions, including most notably Elizabeth Bisland and Malcolm Cowley, who considered Hearn’s writings about Japan to form his best work. Hearn, however, was an enormously prolific writer, and while in America, he produced twenty years’ worth of writing, some of it comparing favorably with the work of more famous local-color authors, including Hearn’s friend and occasional collaborator George Washington Cable. All the same, Hearn’s reputation has always rested upon his books about Japan, and they were certainly what his contemporary readers, including Jack London, knew him best for.

It is because of Hearn’s status at the time as one of the Western world’s foremost experts on Japanese culture that London calls upon Hearn to back his claim that Asians are ultimately unknowable to Westerners; however, London’s summary of Hearn’s conclusions are, in fact, a mischaracterization. In Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation (1904), the final book Hearn sent to his publisher before he died, Hearn admits that “I cannot understand the Japanese at all.” Yet what Hearn means by that is something akin to the Socratic position that only the person who claims to know nothing really understands anything. Hearn draws attention to his early use of singular present tense (“I cannot”) only to move into plural future tense, arguing that mutual understanding is possible and necessary. “We can know something about Japanese character,” Hearn


35 In A Lafcadio Hearn Companion (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), Robert L. Gale notes that no definitive edition of Hearn’s collected works exists (ix-x). Both Houghton Mifflin’s sixteen-volume The Writings of Lafcadio Hearn (1922) and Hokuseido Press’ eighteen-volume effort (1926-32) are incomplete.

concludes, “if we are able to ascertain the nature of the conditions which shaped it.”  

The potential for mutual intelligibility that London attempts to repress, Hearn wishes to embrace. Indeed, as his biography suggests, Hearn was a consummate cosmopolitan who insisted on signing his English-language publications with a middle name (Lafcadio) instead of his given first name (Patricio, or Patrick), thus emphasizing his hybrid identity. *(Lafcadio* derives from the name of the island where he was born: Levkas or, sometimes, Lefcada.*) As early as 1874, at the age of twenty-four, Hearn could formulate the following statement on the values of pluralism: “The multitude are, therefore, wiser than any man, from the very fact that diverse vocations diversify the gifts and powers of men, and give that variety to character which, securing the world unity in variety, redeems it from the dreariness and desolation of a dead monotony.” This appreciation for the richness that diversity can bring to a society and for the importance of the relations that secure “the world unity” certainly aligned Hearn with both Randolph Bourne’s cosmopolitanism and William James’ radical empiricism and made him an attentive observer of the juxtapositions of various cultures that the emergence of globalization was making possible.

This attitude also prepared Hearn for his later career as a sympathetic interpreter of a non-Western culture for American readers. In particular, an earlier book of Hearn’s entitled *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* (1896) offers an instructive comparison to London’s war correspondence, in part because it was written just after

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37 Hearn, *Japan* 16, emphasis added.

38 His full name was Patricio Lafcadio Tessima Carlos Hearn.

Japan’s previous war of imperialism, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. Like the Russo-Japanese War, this one was fought mainly for dominance over Korea and Manchuria, and just as in the later war against Russia, Japan beat China quickly and decisively. So quickly and decisively, in fact, that Hearn was moved to write that it marked “the real birthday of New Japan.” (And Hearn wrote this before he took Japanese citizenship.)

The Sino-Japanese War—sometimes referred to as the First Sino-Japanese War to distinguish it from the conflict between China and Japan (1937-45) that preceded and overlapped World War II—remains perhaps even more obscure to most Westerners than the Russo-Japanese War, though some historians have argued that Japan’s defeat of China carried more significance than Japan’s later victory over Russia. Certainly, the Sino-Japanese War shifted the balance of power in East Asia from China to Japan and gave Japan the island of Formosa [Taiwan], which at least one Japanese historian in the early twentieth century called “Japan’s first colony.” For reasons discussed above, however, the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War made a far greater international impact.

In retrospect, Hearn’s glorying in Japan’s military victory, as well as in Japan’s increasing militarization, is somewhat unnerving, since he was witnessing and supporting the roots of both Japan’s militarization and Japanese imperialism. For instance, he writes approvingly that Japan’s “educational system, with its twenty-six thousand schools, is an

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41 Probably the two best accounts of this war currently available in English are Stewart Lone’s *Japan’s First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894-1895* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1994) and S.C.M. Paine’s *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003).

42 This appellation appears as the title of Hishida Seiji’s “Formosa: Japan’s First Colony,” *Political Science Quarterly* 22 (1909): 267-81. This title, of course, serves to elide the complex history of Okinawa, which was invaded by Japan in the seventeenth century and became a Japanese prefecture in 1879.
enormous drilling-machine. On her own soil she could face any foreign power” (83). Later, he offhandedly mentions that “free speech was gagged; the press was severely silenced;” but “the government really acted with faultless wisdom” (84). Even after Hearn experiences misgivings when he sees the gaunt, somber faces of a group of returning veterans, he shrugs them off with the remark that “for all of that, the soldiers were better soldiers now” (92). Hearn’s celebratory tone stands in stark contrast to London’s anxiety. Hearn revels vicariously in his Japanese neighbors’ nationalistic pride. For him, as for them, Japan’s spectacular victory proves them the equal of any Great Power. Hearn quotes a Japanese seaman as saying, “The Chinese had European gunners helping them. If we had not had to fight against Western gunners, our victory would have been too easy” (88, original emphasis).

The war’s outcome also proves to Hearn that Japan has modernized its society successfully without sacrificing any essentially Japanese characteristics. Thus can “the glories” of this war be celebrated by what Hearn calls “the various great industries of the country” (81). But while Hearn identifies Japan as a fully industrialized nation, the industries he mentions are typically Japanese: porcelain, lacquer-ware, silk, even chopsticks. In fact, Hearn’s main concern is not that Japan will rival the West imperially or economically, but rather that Japan might become too westernized. And so he warns against “a tendency to hardening,—a danger of changes” (31). These worries were not without warrant in the 1890s. Following the Meiji Restoration (1867-68), which ousted the Tokugawa shogunate and ended Japan’s centuries-old feudal system, Japan entered a
period of rapid modernization and industrialization. Prompted by concern over Japan’s future after the arrival of Perry and the signing of the Kanagawa Treaty, the nobles and politicians who instigated the Meiji Restoration believed that their nation’s survival depended upon its ability to compete economically and militarily with Europe and America and, reflecting an awareness of what John W. Meyer calls isomorphism within the “world society,” its ability to assimilate Western political and social practices.

During the next forty-five years, known as the Meiji period (literally, the “period of enlightened rule”), Japan’s leaders began introducing land reform, compulsory education and military service, representative government, new tax and trade laws, and improved networks of communication and transportation. Most importantly, they also rejected their nation’s former isolationist policies and encouraged contact and trade with the West; by 1902, Japan had entered into an alliance with Britain, and as we have seen, Japan signed the Taft-Katsura Agreement with the United States in 1905. The rapidity with which the Meiji government transformed Japan from an isolated agrarian civilization into a powerful industrial one, however, created considerable concern among many Japanese that the country would lose too much of its cultural identity, as Hearn’s writings clearly demonstrate. Hearn took part in a growing conservative movement in Japanese society that drew attention to the need for preserving as much of Japan’s landscape and native culture as possible. (Indeed, Hearn’s continued popularity among many Japanese readers no doubt is due to his vivid, celebratory descriptions of a countryside still untouched by industrialization and urbanization and the nostalgic glimpses he offers of a Japan that no

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44 I discuss Meyer’s theory in chapter 1.
Thus although we may be tempted at times to write off some of Hearn’s writings as typical Western exoticization of Japan, his motives often arose out of—or coincided with—local Japanese politics and social activities.

Hearn goes to great lengths throughout *Kokoro* to emphasize that he is witnessing a distinctly Japanese strand of industrialization and modernization. In a chapter appropriately entitled “The Genius of Japanese Civilization,” he makes a point of comparing the modernity he experiences in Japan quite favorably to the modernity he knew in the West, which he calls “hard, grim, dumb” and “sinister” (14-15). Hearn’s negative depiction of Western modernity is based on first-hand knowledge, for he was intimately familiar with the seedy underside of industrialization in both Britain and America. Following an eye injury at the age of sixteen, Hearn lived for a time in poverty in London’s squalid East End. Later, after a relative paid his fare to America, he became a newspaper reporter in Cincinnati, where he spent much of his time among black and white working-class communities. Typical of the more sensational American journalism of the 1870s, Hearn’s stories often focused on criminals, prostitutes, and other social outcasts. These early experiences in America left a deep impression on Hearn as a young man, and according to Simon J. Bronner, “America became for Hearn the epitome of the clamor of modernization.”45 For instance, in an 1874 article for the *Cincinnati Enquirer* entitled “Les Chiffonniers,” he recounts a visit to the rag-pickers at the local dump. For Hearn, the conditions in which these people live and work become an urban hell: “A wilderness of filthy desolation walled in by dismal factories; a Golgotha of foul bones and refuse; a great grave-yard for worn-out pots and kettles and smashed glasses, and

45 Bronner 29. Bronner’s introduction contains a brief but excellent biography of Hearn. Its coverage of the period Hearn spent in the United States is particularly informative.
rotten vegetables and animal filth, and shattered household utensils and abominations unutterable.”⁴⁶ Ten years later, when he was living in New Orleans, Hearn’s attitude towards American urban life had not changed. In “The Roar of a Great City” (1884), originally published in the New Orleans Times-Democrat, he envisions the modern city as a “monstrous spider web” and the din of industrial machinery as “the last wail of a dying man, or the shriek of the angel of death as he clasps his victim to him.”⁴⁷ Even four years after Hearn had relocated to Japan, the horrors of Western modernity still haunted him. In “Growth of Population in America,” an article he published in the English-language Kobe Chronicle in 1894, he writes, “Altogether the condition of the working-classes in America has become almost as hard as in any part of Europe, and is going, in all probability to become harder. Unlimited capital and unlimited power to use it, in the hands of a small class, will certainly produce conditions impossible in England or in Germany.”⁴⁸ Hearn plainly shared London’s misgivings about modern life—insofar as he knew it in the West.

The turn toward modernity in Japan, on the other hand, is not accompanied by a fall. Nor, apparently, does it necessarily entail westernization. Instead, Hearn writes in Kokoro:

The land remains what it was before; its face has scarcely been modified by all the changes of [Emperor] Meiji. […] In all the cities, with the exception of the open ports and their little foreign settlements, there exists hardly a street vista suggesting the teaching of Western ideas. You might journey two hundred miles

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⁴⁷ Hearn, “The Roar of the City,” in Bronner, Lafcadio Hearn’s America 229.

through the interior of the country, looking in vain for large manifestations of the new civilization. [...] A Japanese city is still as it was ten centuries ago.” (12)

Like London, Hearn recognizes that Japan has entered modernity without sacrificing its culture-specific values or social practices. Japan remains—for now, at least—fundamentally Asiatic and thus presents a model alternative modernity. The primary reason for Japan’s ability to avoid the pitfalls of Western modernity, Hearn concludes, is the nation’s reliance on small industries rather than “vast integrations of industrial capital” (29). Marveling at the ability of Japan’s textile manufacturers to operate out of modest, preexisting buildings, hence significantly reducing overhead and inefficiency, Hearn claims, “Japan is producing without capital, in our large sense of the word. She has become industrial without becoming essentially mechanical and artificial” (27). The resulting efficiency and mobility of Japan’s small industries, as opposed to the West’s “vast integrations of industrial capital,” is key to Hearn’s optimism regarding Japan’s future. In “Growth of Population in America,” written shortly before Hearn began work on Kokoro, Hearn echoes the logic and concerns of Frederick Jackson Turner and Josiah Strong:

> Within a quarter of a century America has been totally changed. The plains, the prairies of romance, can no longer be said to exist; they are covered with farms, villages, towns, cities. The railroads have not only “built up” the West; they have forced the expansion of industrialism to its utmost limit. [...] Social conditions have hardened and stratified. There are no more chances to make a fortune in a day. Becoming more and more ordered, the West has also become more and more in all things like “the effete monarchies of Europe.”

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But while America’s economic and social prospects are stagnating, Japan’s remain
dynamic. In *Kokoro*, Hearn suggests that this dynamism not only gives Japan the
capacity “to threaten Western manufacturers” (26), but even to “ruin foreign industries of
far vaster capacity” (28). One wonders what London made of the views expressed in
*Kokoro* after his self-professed turn from preaching Economic Yellow Peril to preaching
Militant Yellow Peril!

Hearn’s preaching may carry a very different hue, but his understanding of Japan,
like London’s, is based on racialism. After praising Japan’s progress, Hearn explains its
uniqueness this way: “The explanation is in the race character,—a race character in more
ways than one the very opposite of our own” (30). Hearn is able to read Japan’s recent
modernization as a story of continuity rather than discontinuity. Despite having
“changed the whole political face of the east” and having undergone “the so-called
‘adoption of Western civilization,’” Japan has experienced “no transformation,—nothing
more than the turning of old abilities into new and larger channels” (7-8, emphasis
added). But this continuity between past and present is also what creates the gulf
between East and West: “The more complex feelings of the Oriental have been
composed by combinations of experiences, ancestral and individual, which have had no
really precise correspondence in Western life, and which we [Westerners] can therefore
not fully know. For converse reasons, the Japanese cannot, even though they would, give
Europeans their best sympathy” (10). The Japanese possess their own history and
traditions, which a Westerner like Hearn can never fully share. As Daniel Stempel
astutely observed in his early study of Hearn’s Japanese writings, Hearn’s theory of racial
differences is really grounded upon an understanding of the “acquisition of *cultural* traits
through environmental influence,“ which is precisely the link between racialism and Taylor’s “alternative modernities” I noted earlier: that the uniqueness of specific culture is the direct result of its evolution within a stable environment and its emergence into modernity on its own terms. In Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation, Hearn’s musings upon his own difficulties in mastering spoken Japanese—even after more than a decade of total immersion, his mangling of the pronunciation was notorious—lead him to speculate:

No adult Occidental can perfectly master the language. East and West, the fundamental parts of human nature—the emotional bases of it—are much the same: the mental difference between a Japanese and a European child is mainly potential. But with growth the difference rapidly develops and widens, till it becomes, in adult life, inexpressible. The whole of the Japanese mental superstructure evolves into forms having nothing in common with Western psychological development: the expression of thought becomes regulated, and the expression of emotion inhibited in ways that bewilder and astound. The ideas of this people are not our ideas; their sentiments are not our sentiments; their ethical life represents for us regions of thought and emotion yet unexplored, or perhaps long forgotten.  

In a sense, then, Hearn rejects Woodrow Wilson’s concept of a “mediating nation,” pointing out its impossibility for anyone who subscribes to the philosophy of racialism, but Hearn simply accepts the gulf that such psychological development causes, even taking refuge in it, rather than allowing it to horrify him as it did London. Hearn never faces the sort of anxiety over his racial identity that London does because he realizes that


51 Hearn, Japan 8-9.
he can never actually “go native.”\textsuperscript{52} The “freedom amongst aliens” he discovers is genuine rather than ironic, as it was for London. Hearn is therefore able to embrace Japanese culture and, more importantly, learn from it instead of dismissing it as “Asiatic.” Japan enables him to explore those “regions of thought and emotion […] long forgotten.”

One such lesson that Hearn learns and discusses in \textit{Kokoro} is worth mentioning as a final point of comparison between his views and London’s, for like London, Hearn meditates briefly on the differences between Japanese and Western footwear. Both writers agree that Americans and Japanese behave differently—to some extent, at least—because Americans wear leather shoes or boots and Japanese wear sandals. Hearn writes, “The physical results are not limited to the foot. Whatever acts as a check, directly or indirectly, upon the organs of locomotion must extend its effects to the whole physical constitution” (25). The equation is simple for both men: different traditions of footwear result in different manners of walking, which in turn results in different bodily habits and physical experiences. Unsurprisingly, London comes down in favor of leather boots, ultimately dismissing the Japanese soldiers’ sore feet as “the breaking-in process” (57). The discomfort of learning to wear leather boots was merely part of the process of making them soldiers. Equally unsurprising is the fact that Hearn favors sandals.

Turning London’s logic of masculinity on its head, he considering “the habit of wearing

\textsuperscript{52} Despite the celebratory tone of much of Hearn’s writing about Japan, his personal correspondence often reveals feelings of ambivalence about his life there, as several recent studies have emphasized. See, for example, pp. 145-46, 191-93, 206-07, and 270 of Paul Murray’s \textit{A Fantastic Journey: The Life and Literature of Lafcadio Hearn} (Folkestone, UK: Japan Library, 1993) or “Letter Points to Hearn’s Estrangement with Japan,” \textit{Lafcadio Hearn}, ed. Steve Trussel, 1997, 31 May 2006 <http://www.trussel.com/hearn/letter.htm> (originally published in \textit{The Japan Times} 25 Sep. 1998). Hearn seems to have been a rather cantankerous man in private life, and these expressions of ambivalence generally correspond to unhappy periods in his life, such as his resignation from Tokyo Imperial University in 1903 following an argument over his salary.
leather shoes” to be a sign of the need for “superfluous comforts” (24). He goes on to argue, perhaps not entirely tongue-in-cheek:

> It [the leather shoe] has distorted the Western foot out of the original shape, and rendered it incapable of the work for which it was evolved. […] We have too long submitted to the tyranny of shoemakers. There may be defects in our politics, in our social ethics, in our religious system, more or less related to the habit of wearing leather shoes. Submission to the cramping of the body must certainly aid in developing submission to the cramping of the mind. (24-25)

This example—and perhaps each example Hearn supplies elsewhere—leads him to conclude that life in Japan reveals “the real character of some weaknesses in our own civilization” (26-27). What Japan offers to Hearn, then, is a global perspective, a comparative understanding of the world and its nations and cultures.

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In the years immediately following Hearn’s death and London’s return from the Russo-Japanese War, the primary source of tension between Japan and the United States was immigration. Between December 1, 1905, and November 30, 1906, over seventeen thousand Japanese entered the United States. This surge of Japanese immigrants led to considerable anti-Japanese sentiment, particularly in San Francisco. On October 11, 1906, the San Francisco school board passed a resolution to segregate the city’s public schools and to send all Asian children to a separate Oriental Public School. News of this decision quickly traveled to Japan, where it was decried in the press. In order to save face, Roosevelt, who believed that stronger immigration policies would reduce anti-Japanese feelings along the West Coast, worked to reach an agreement with Japan’s

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foreign minister Hayashi Tadasu. The resulting agreement, known as the Gentleman’s Agreement, ensured that the Japanese government itself would restrict emigration to America. Simultaneously, the Immigration Act of 1907 gave Roosevelt the power to limit the entry of Japanese laborers. Nevertheless, anti-Japanese sentiment remained strong, and two events in San Francisco in 1907 triggered a crisis between the two nations. First, on May 20, a riot broke out, during which a mob attacked a Japanese restaurant and bath house. The riot was widely perceived to be the product of racial strife, and in their attempt to sensationalize the event, Japanese newspapers played up the fact that the police failed to apprehend a single member of the mob. Then, on June 27, the San Francisco Board of Police Commissioners refused to license six Japanese to run employment agencies. This decision was a clear case of discrimination, since four of the licenses were simply up for renewal, and it, too, came to the attention of the Japanese press.

Although official relations between Japan and the United States remained cordial throughout these events, journalists in both countries exaggerated the seriousness of the situation and warned their readers that war-clouds were on the horizon. American readers, who felt threatened by immigrants and Japan’s continued modernization of its military, and Japanese readers, who felt that the U.S.-negotiated Treaty of Portsmouth had robbed their nation of some of its spoils, were equally inclined to believe these reports. Even before the license fiasco of June 27, Roosevelt was persuaded by Alfred Mahan, among others, that boosting America’s naval presence in the Pacific would calm these fears, though William L. Neumann has argued that Roosevelt and Mahan also
hoped to intimidate Japan and deter “any Japanese thought of war.” When plans for the Great White Fleet’s transfer to the Pacific were announced, American newspapers assumed the worst, and Roosevelt was forced to recast the fleet’s purpose as a peaceful circumnavigation of the world. Eventually, Roosevelt sent Taft, then secretary of war, to Tokyo, where Taft helped defuse the crisis in September and October of 1907. When the Great White Fleet reached Yokohama in October of 1908, it was greeted enthusiastically, and the following month the two nations signed the Root-Takahira Agreement, which reinforced the Taft-Katsura Agreement of 1905 and reaffirmed the two nations’ respective spheres of influence in the Pacific.

In responding to the 1907 crisis, Roosevelt apparently based his decisions on the same racialist logic that guided the thinking of Jack London and Lafcadio Hearn. According to Raymond A. Esthus, Roosevelt “deplored the manifestations of anti-Japanese sentiment [but] was in agreement with the Californians that Japanese immigration should be checked. He felt that the Japanese could not be readily assimilated—not because they were racially inferior but because they were racially different.” As a result, official U.S. policy, both foreign and domestic, became an outgrowth of racialism, though it owed more to London’s anxiety-producing vision of racial competition than to Hearn’s more pluralistic conception of cultural cross-pollination. In the minds of the American public, the relationship between Japanese imperialist expansion in the Pacific and inassimilable Japanese immigrants in America was clear and unnerving. For many Americans, the presence of Japanese immigrants in California threatened to make the West Coast foreign to the rest of the nation, thus paving

54 Neumann 127.

55 Esthus 146, original emphasis.
the way for Japan’s total dominance of the Pacific Rim. Perhaps the fullest expression of these fears can be found in Montaville Flowers’ *The Japanese Conquest of American Opinion* (1917). Flowers, a Californian who ran an unsuccessful bid for Congress in 1918, was one of many writers who predicted future war with Japan and opposed granting equal rights to Japanese immigrants on the basis of race.\(^{56}\) Flowers unequivocally proclaimed a connection not only between Japan’s expanding empire and America’s burgeoning Japanese population but also between the racial strife local to California in 1917 and the global impact of the Russo-Japanese War over a decade before. He writes:

> When these Japanese first arrived upon our shores, they were as peaceable and as amicable as any immigrant, and their home government in Japan readily accepted the treatment accorded them. But as they increased in numbers, and especially as their country rose in the rank of nations, their attitude became insistent—almost commanding. [...] Japan] had gradually assumed control of Korea, and she had just whipped Russia! It was then, when Japan, swollen with pride, and conscious of the power of conquest, announced herself as a World Empire, that the Japanese in the United States, although not citizens, began to demand all the rights and privileges of citizens; and it was then that we discovered we have in the United States an acute Japanese Problem.\(^{57}\)

These fears reached a head when, in 1913, the California legislature passed the Webb-Heney Alien Land Act, which barred Japanese from owning land. Tokyo protested this

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\(^{56}\) Others include Homer Lea, whose *The Valor of Ignorance* (1909) predicted that America would lose a war with Japan; Jesse Steiner, who wrote *The Japanese Invasion* (1917); and the already mentioned Lathrop Stoddard. Not all writers were virulently anti-Japanese. Archibald Coolidge wrote a scholarly and levelheaded study of the situation called *The United States as a World Power* (1908). Flowers himself actively writes against Sidney L. Gulick, a former missionary to Japan who wrote the pro-Japanese texts *The American Japanese Problem* (1914) and *American Diplomacy and Asiatic Citizenship* (1918). Easily the most famous and most controversial prophet of war was Billy Mitchell.

measure, leaving Woodrow Wilson, who was more in tune with the anti-Japanese sentiment than Roosevelt had been, with no other option but to reassure Japan by openly opposing the new act. With the outbreak of the First World War the following year, Japan shifted its energies to occupying those Pacific islands formerly held by Germany, thereby avoiding a replay of the 1907 crisis.

As the United States began closing its borders to the nation it had helped open to the West, however, Japan was rejecting its isolationist history and embracing its contact with the West. This historical irony was not lost on Hishida Seiji, an American-educated Japanese historian who, as an apologist for Japanese modernization and imperialist expansion, served as a sort of Asian counterpart to Alfred Thayer Mahan.\(^{58}\) As early as 1905, even before the Russo-Japanese War had officially ended, Hishida was responding directly to Jack London and other prophets of an impending “yellow peril.” “An attempt is made,” he writes, “to create antagonism to [Japan’s] mission in China by invoking the apparition of the ‘yellow peril,’ which is supposed to endanger western civilization.”\(^{59}\) Then, using London’s own language of “Economic Yellow Peril” and Japan “awakening” China, he continues, “From the economic point of view, the ‘yellow peril’ is interpreted to signify that all western trade would be excluded from China should the Chinese, awakened by Japan, develop their industrial resources with ‘cheap labor’ and thus supply themselves” (261). In response to this concern, Hishida points out that the modernization of Japan has, in actuality, made the Japanese “better customers in European and

\(^{58}\) Hishida earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University and often wrote in English. He clearly intended his audience to encompass more than just his fellow countrymen. I discuss Mahan’s writings in my first chapter.

American markets” and predicts that China will follow suit, under Japan’s guidance (262). Hishida also addresses London’s fear of a “Militant Yellow Peril”: “From the military point of view, it is suggested that […] the combination of Japan with an empire of four hundred million people will endanger the western nations just as the Mongol hordes threatened Europe in the thirteenth century” (262). But he dismisses this fear, too, calling attention to the fact that Japan sided with the Western nations against China during the Boxer Rebellion and arguing that his nation would do likewise in the future in order to protect its interests. He then takes a swipe at the parochialism of this sort of thinking and writes, “Modern nations really struggle against universalism in order to preserve their own consciousness. So long as nations have no world-language or world-literature and no universal consciousness of right and wrong, and so long as national patriotism is not converted into world cosmopolitanism, the world peace of universalism cannot come into existence” (266). After that, he concludes almost sarcastically that “the commercial and colonial jealousies attending the imperial expansion of the great powers would be softened by observing the spirit of cosmopolitanism” (272).

Hishida’s goal here is to portray Japan as the true representative of cosmopolitanism, not any Western nation. Indeed, he comes extremely close to prefiguring Wilson’s conception of a “mediating Nation”—except that Hishida casts his own land in that role. Emphasizing Japan’s newfound hybridity as a modernized Asian nation that has joined the Western powers, he writes:

It is the desire of Japan to preserve in the Orient the national status of those of her sister Asiatic nations which are not yet subjugated by foreign powers, and to lead them to that light of western civilization which she is now enjoying, without having abandoned her national individualism. […] By reason of kindred ideas
and a kinred literature, the Japanese, as Dr. Hirth has remarked, are more capable than Europeans and Americans of educating the Chinese as not to destroy the “the old knowledge while familiarizing the students with the advantages of the new.” (258-59, 261).

Hishida’s vision of Japan as a savior for all of Asia requires a careful balancing act. On one hand, the Japanese must obtain enough of “western civilization” so that they can transmit it to their Asian neighbors; on the other, they must not entirely abandon their “national” culture, which makes them “kin” and, consequently, intelligible to China and Korea. In short, for all his talk of cosmopolitanism, Hishida draws on the same racialist logic that London and Hearn did, though Hishida, like Hearn, uses this logic to challenge the accepted wisdom of the West. But where Hearn merely suggested that comparative thinking might enable the West to learn useful lessons from Japan, such as the comfort of wearing sandals, Hishida argues that Japan’s status as “Asiatic” makes that nation more adept at spreading modernity throughout East Asia. In other words, Hishida believes that Japan can beat the other Great Powers at their own game and become the dominant imperial force in the region.

If Hishida’s ambitions for Japan reveal themselves in his own writing, then the history of his nation reveals how dangerous these ambitions would prove, and unlike Hearn and London, Hishida, who continued publishing into the 1940s, would live to see the result.\(^\text{60}\) In hindsight, it is perhaps impossible for us today not to judge Hishida’s words in light of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, though, to be fair, we might just as well judge them by whatever standards we use to judge Mahan’s. For our purposes, however, I would like to close not by passing such a judgment but by returning to the subject of

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\(^{60}\) I have been unable to ascertain the date of Hishida’s death. His final English-language book, *Japan among the Great Powers: A Survey of Her International Relations*, was published by Longmans, Green in 1940. He was born in 1874.
footwear that so fascinated both London and Hearn. Despite Hearn’s extensive praise for the sandal, the Japanese high command sided with London in the long run. After imagining how much the Japanese soldiers “must have yearned for the pliant sandals to which they had been accustomed,” London simply notes that “it was a vain yearning, for sandals were prohibited under severe penalties” (80). This final image from London evokes the central problem facing Japan at the dawn of the twentieth century: entering modernity without necessarily accepting westernization. Perhaps in their effort to modernize their army and carve out an empire of their own, the Japanese resolved too readily to march in the footsteps of the West.
Coda: American Literary Responses to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 and to the Uncontrollability of Globalization

“We had not known that we had carried the flu with us.” – Mary McCarthy

Among the many brief biographies of historical figures that appear throughout his U.S.A. trilogy, John Dos Passos includes one for Randolph Bourne in the second volume, 1919 (1932). Bourne, whose essay “Trans-National America” (1916) I have already discussed in the third chapter, was both a controversial public intellectual and one of the more prominent American victims of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19. Curiously, however, Dos Passos fails to mention either “Trans-National America” or the pandemic in his sketch of Bourne. Instead, he focuses on Bourne’s unpopular antiwar stance, repeating Bourne’s famous pronouncement that “war is the health of the state” as if it were a refrain, and attributes Bourne’s death to “pneumonia.” Technically, of course, Dos Passos is not incorrect in citing pneumonia, which was a frequent complication—and often the immediate cause of death—for those who contracted Spanish Flu. “When influenza kills,” notes historian John M. Barry, “it usually kills through pneumonia. […] It and influenza are so closely linked that [even] modern international health statistics, including those compiled by the United States Centers for Disease Control, routinely

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classify them as a single cause of death.”

Nevertheless, in this instance, Dos Passos’ preference for the word *pneumonia* smacks of euphemism. In *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*, still the classic historical overview of the pandemic, Alfred W. Crosby suggests that such euphemistic handling of Spanish Flu was purposeful and widespread—both during the pandemic and afterwards by survivors like Dos Passos. It is certainly in evidence in Katherine Anne Porter’s *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), in which hospitalized soldiers “who were not visibly wounded invariably replied ‘Rheumatism’ if some tactless girl, who had been solemnly warned never to ask this question, still forgot and asked a man what his illness was.”

This tendency toward euphemism extended even to members of the medical establishment and their official documentation. Noting the absence of any reference to the first wave of the pandemic in the index for *The Journal of the American Medical Association’s* 1918 volumes, Crosby writes, “Influenza wasn’t a reportable disease: the only evidence of it that was registered with the various public health departments was the deaths, and most doctors ascribed them on the death certificates to uncomplicated cases of pneumonia. […] Pneumonia was a perfectly normal way to die before the advent of sulfa drugs and penicillin.” Crosby attributes this reluctance to be explicit about the pandemic to influenza’s ordinariness: “After all, influenza, flu, grippe, grip—whatever you called it or however you spelled it—was a homey, familiar kind of illness: two or

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5 Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., *Epidemic and Peace, 1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1976) 18. This text has also been reprinted as *America’s Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).
three days in bed feeling downright miserable, a week or so feeling shaky, and then back
to normal. Call it a bad cold or call it flu, it was an annual occurrence in most families
and not a thing of terror like smallpox or typhoid or yellow fever.”6 In other words, those
who survived the pandemic may have been most shocked by the seeming banality of such
a contagion, and subsequently, they may have felt disinclined to apply a run-of-the-mill
word like influenza to a disease that had felled so many of their friends and family.

Considering the scope of the U.S.A. trilogy, however, Dos Passos’ use of a
technicality to elide the name of one of the great cataclysms of his generation remains
surprising. Only once in a trilogy that purports to cover life in America during the first
third of the twentieth century does he refer to the pandemic explicitly; in “Newsreel
XXIV,” he excerpts the following line from a newspaper article: “persistent talk of peace
is an unsettling factor and the epidemic of influenza has deterred country buyers from
visiting the larger centers.”7 Elsewhere in 1919, “The Camera Eye (34)” contains an
impressionistic account of a fellow soldier’s bout with the disease, though once again
Dos Passos describes the victim’s death throes as “pneumonia breathing.”8 (Dos Passos
had contracted Spanish Flu himself while serving in Europe and, in a letter at the time,
described the experience more complexly—though not entirely accurately—as a seeming
combination of “pneumonia, T.B., diphtheria, diarrhea, dyspepsia, sore throat, whooping
cough, scarlet fever and beri-beri.”9) Considering some of the trilogy’s stylistic
flourishes, it is doubly surprising that Dos Passos decided against exploiting the disease’s

6 Crosby 5.
7 Dos Passos 109.
8 Dos Passos 135.
ubiquity in order to create further internal rhymes or an additional montage effect. For instance, in *The Big Money* (1936), the final volume of the trilogy, one of the fictional characters, Charley Anderson, succumbs to peritonitis a few chapters after Dos Passos’ biography for Rudolph Valentino, who died of the same disease. In *1919*, however, none of the major characters so much as contract influenza. In the chapter immediately preceding “The Camera Eye (34),” Joe Williams contracts dengue instead. The pandemic plays a similarly miniscule role in Dos Passos’ *Three Soldiers* (1921), with only a passing reference in “Part Four: Rust” to the rapidity with which the disease claimed the strongest member of an army unit; far more space in that novel is dedicated to an outbreak of meningitis.

Dos Passos was hardly unique in paying scant attention to the Influenza Pandemic in his fiction; he and other authors of his generation were evidently more preoccupied with the First World War, even though the pandemic lasted almost as long as America’s direct participation in the war and almost certainly affected more American lives. Both Crosby and Barry have remarked upon the relative paucity of literature devoted to the pandemic by the writers who lived through it. Crosby writes, “It is especially puzzling that among those Americans who let the pandemic slip their minds were many members of that group of supposedly hypersensitive young people who were to create some of the greatest masterpieces of American literature, i.e., ‘the lost generation’ for so many of

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10 The United States was a combatant for nineteen months, though virtually no American troops saw action until almost three months after Congress declared war on Germany. The pandemic lasted roughly thirteen months. The number of American soldiers who died during the war was slightly under 117,000, and many of those deaths were caused by Spanish Flu. Estimates for the disease’s death toll among Americans range between 550,000 and 675,000 out of a national population of 105,000,000. The most conservative estimates initially placed the worldwide death toll at 21,000,000, though recent studies suggest that the disease claimed many lives in the Indian subcontinent alone. Current estimates range between 50,000,000 and 100,000,000 (or roughly 2.5%-5% of the world’s total population at the time). For more detailed analyses of these statistics, see pp. 396-98 in Barry and pp. 205-07 in Crosby.
whom World War I, the other great killer of the era, was the central experience of their lives.” Barry concurs and offers the following explanation: “But the relative lack of impact it left on literature may not be unusual at all. […] People write about war. They write about the Holocaust. They write about horrors that people inflict on people. Apparently they forget the horrors that nature inflicts on people, the horrors that make humans least significant.”

In fact, Crosby and Barry overstate their case somewhat. Many of the writers who survived the pandemic did at least mention it at some point in their careers, sometimes indicating only years after the fact the degree to which their brushes with Spanish Flu had marked them. For instance, watching someone suffer with the disease apparently made such an impression on Ernest Hemingway that he vividly, albeit briefly, recalled it as “the only natural death I’ve ever seen, outside of loss of blood, which isn’t bad.” In the “Natural History of the Dead” section of *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), his book-length study of bullfighting, Hemingway described the process of dying from influenza this way: “In this you drown in mucus, choking, and how you know the patient’s dead is; at the end he shits the bed full.” The distaste he obviously felt for such a “natural” death is so palpable that it may offer a clue to his fascination with—and morbid attraction to—violent death in his fiction and personal life. Likewise, however regretful F. Scott Fitzgerald may have been at not seeing action during World War I, he seems to have realized that his own minor bout with influenza probably saved his life in

11 Crosby 315.
12 Barry 394.
14 Hemingway 139.
the long run by delaying his embarkation long enough that the war ended before he could participate in it. He suggests as much in his autobiographical second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), in which the disease is described as “providential” for the protagonist; the resulting quarantine saves him from “the interminable massacre” in Europe.¹⁵ A few authors of the period were willing to give the pandemic even more prominence in their writings. About half of Book Four in Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* (1922) is devoted to a shipboard outbreak of Spanish Flu, and the pandemic is integral to the plots of two of Wallace Stegner’s novels, *On a Darkling Plain* (1940) and *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943). Thomas Wolfe devotes the entirety of chapter XXXV of *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929) to a thinly-veiled autobiographical account of his brother’s death from influenza. Edmund Wilson concludes *A Prelude* (1967), his account of his early life, with his experiences in an army hospital during the pandemic, and Mary McCarthy, who was orphaned by the disease, meditates for several pages on her family’s misfortune in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957). Although never explicitly stated, memories of the pandemic also seem to hang over both Sinclair Lewis’ *Arrowsmith* (1925) and John Steinbeck’s *Cannery Row* (1945), which deal with different epidemics. And of course, two short novels revolve wholly around the pandemic: William Maxwell’s *They Came Like Swallows* (1937) and Porter’s *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. 

The Influenza Pandemic is not, therefore, a glaring omission on the part of the American high modernists collectively, but the fact that only a handful of them dedicated more than a few passing references to a catastrophe of such magnitude is indeed puzzling, especially in view of their general interest in the breakdown of social order. Based on the few texts that do explore the details and ramifications of the pandemic, I

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suggest that the reluctance of Dos Passos and many of his contemporaries to address Spanish Flu more fully in their writings had little to do with any supposedly universal psychological barriers to discussing the ravages of a widespread pandemic or even with the challenges of creating art out of something as seemingly undramatic and inaesthetic as influenza. (On the contrary, Porter employed influenza-induced fever-dreams to great effect when recreating the subjectivity of a Spanish Flu patient in Pale Horse, Pale Rider.) Rather, I argue that the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 presented American authors with chilling and incontrovertible proof that they now lived in a globalized world and that the processes of globalization, once started, were neither entirely controllable nor commensurate with any enforceable definitions of Americanness. By its very nature as a pandemic (literally affecting all populations), Spanish Flu enacted a terrifying test-case scenario of a global event that could occur precisely because of newly emergent technologies and officially sanctioned routes of international exchange but that also could not be controlled by individual nation-states at their now all-too-permeable borders. Thus the various literary responses that the pandemic elicited from the American writers who lived through it, including those who chose to ignore it in their subsequent work, represent an attempt to come to terms with the outcome of all the processes, technologies, events, and conceptual repositionings I have discussed in the preceding chapters: a nascent global identity, or rather, a globalized American identity. In other words, having established how American writers, intellectuals, and public figures of a previous generation contributed simultaneously to the history of globalization and to the United States’ own transformation into a globalized nation, I now close this project by
examining the responses from several writers of the succeeding generation to a calamity that proved, quite literally, that Americans were not immune to global events.

Priscilla Wald has partly laid the groundwork for just such an understanding of the pandemic’s impact upon American social, cultural, and political life. In an essay entitled “Imagined Immunities,” she draws attention to Americans’ historical preoccupation with what she calls “carrier narratives,” which are “fictional and nonfictional stories that take as their central conceit the spread of contagious disease and the efforts of the state and medical establishments to control it.”

These stories derive much of their power from their ability to raise and then allay their readers’ or listeners’ fears. Although they invoke the specter of a community’s annihilation through disease, they typically find hopeful resolution in the state’s ability to “safeguard its citizens, reclaiming its own as it reestablishes the stability of the community.”

Wald, however, is primarily concerned with the role these narratives have in constituting or reinforcing a particular image of “a national community against the backdrop of […] changing demographics” by projecting that community’s “anxieties about strangers and contacts” onto a diseased Other. For Wald, these carrier narratives offer “a vivid analogue for a less easily defined and justified anxiety about immigrants”: “strangers bring the threat of new microbes that can introduce a destabilizing element, manifested as a disease outbreak.”

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17 Wald 207.

18 Wald 190.

19 Wald 192, 199.
group of individuals in sufficient contact to adjust to each other’s germs.” At the same time, these stories also draw attention to “the precariousness of the imagined community” because “they depict global connections that implicitly underscore the constructedness—and the arbitrariness—of national borders.” In focusing on the influx of immigrants and their germs, these stories reveal not only the difficulties of a state policing its borders but also one of the most basic facts of globalization: that what happens in one nation (such as a disease) is determined to some extent by what happens in another (germs).

For the most part, Wald offers a persuasive account of how these carrier narratives highlight the tension between the forces of globalization on one hand (immigration, technologies of travel and communication, etc.) and the forces of national solidarity on the other (state-run or –sanctioned medical agencies, border checkpoints, etc.), especially in her discussions of “Typhoid Mary” and more recent fictional films and novels about potentially apocalyptic pandemics, such as *Outbreak* (1995), *The Stand* (1978; film version 1994), and *Invasion* (1997). Nevertheless, her assertion that “the state remains at the center of such imagining in spite of the pressures exerted on it by the relations of globalization” is belied by the historical realities of the Influenza Pandemic and the nature of American literary responses to it. Like typhoid, a disease Wald examines in great detail, Spanish Flu also “confounded American—and, in general, Western—chauvinism, which evoked epidemics in nonindustrialized nations and regions

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20 Wald 193.
21 Wald 191.
22 Wald 196.
to mark Western progress and superiority.”

But the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 seems to invert Wald’s “carrier narrative” model, demonstrating the ultimate ineffectuality of both the state itself and various imaginings of national solidarity in the face of a particular global event. Thus although she introduces a global perspective to her discussion of contagion, Wald tends to pose the “global” in opposition to the “national” and thereby significantly underestimates the degree to which national modes of spreading and containing disease are imbricated in global ones.

For example, for the people who lived through the Influenza Pandemic, the virus’ most salient and most terrifying characteristic was the peculiar susceptibility of the healthiest, least likely members of the communities where it struck. Whereas influenza epidemics historically tend to claim the lives of the very young, the very old, and the already weakened, the 1918-19 pandemic preyed equally on young adults between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. This latter fact was not lost on the authors who wrote about the disease. Both Adam and Miranda, the central characters in Katherine Anne Porter’s *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, are twenty-four when they contract Spanish Flu, and only Miranda survives. In *One of Ours*, Willa Cather underscores the irony that it was often the healthiest who succumbed: “Tod Fanning held out better than many of the stronger men; his vitality surprised the doctor. The death list was steadily growing; and

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23 Priscilla Wald, “Cultures and Carriers: ‘Typhoid Mary’ and Science of Social Control,” *Social Text* 52/53 (1997): 191. Spanish Flu is significantly absent from Wald’s continuing work on contagious diseases; she discusses the pandemic neither in “Imagined Immunities” nor in any of her other published works to date.

the worst of it was that patients died who were not very sick. Vigorous, clean-blooded young fellows of nineteen and twenty turned over and died.”

Paradoxically, such widespread susceptibility may ordinarily work to reinforce a sense of community, as Wald points out: “common susceptibility, even more than immunity, at the same time reaffirms relatedness.” Again, however, the realities and literary depictions of the Influenza Pandemic present us with a somewhat more complicated picture, for during the pandemic, community itself was the cause of contagion. In *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*, for instance, Wallace Stegner focuses extensively on the fear that gripped small towns during the pandemic and the extremes to which people went in order to avoid contact with their neighbors. Businesses close down, and store owners refuse to help carry what they sell to their customers’ cars. “Gregariousness,” Stegner writes, “had suddenly ceased to be pleasurable in Whitemud,” and one of the novel’s characters tells another, “If you’re not scared you’re the only person in Saskatchewan that isn’t.” Such fears were far from uncommon, and many towns and cities in the United States issued ordinances specifically prohibiting communal gatherings and even handshaking. And as *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* indicates, survivors of the disease felt that they had reemerged into a community drastically changed by the pandemic. After regaining consciousness near the end of Porter’s novel, “Miranda looked about her with the covertly hostile eyes of an alien who does not like the country in which he finds himself, does not understand the language nor wish to learn it, does not

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26 Wald 203.

27 Wallace Stegner, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943) 267, 262. It is worth mentioning that, although born an American citizen, Stegner spent much of his boyhood in Canada, including the years of the pandemic. By setting his novel in Saskatchewan, he underscores the ubiquity of the disease; the pandemic was a global experience, not a uniquely American one.
mean to live there and yet is helpless, unable to leave it at his will.” Since Miranda has pulled through, she is no longer a “carrier,” in Wald’s sense; therefore, her new status as “an alien” is not founded upon any threat she herself poses to the community, but upon a transformation that she perceives in the larger community. It is, in other words, the nation, “the country in which [she] finds [herself],” that has been destabilized.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that literary responses to the Influenza Pandemic present to the particularities of Wald’s model, however, is that the “carriers” of Spanish Flu were often the very people who could and did produce narratives about the pandemic afterwards. Mary McCarthy drives home this point in the epigram that heads this coda: “We had not known that we had carried the flu with us.” Due to its ubiquity, the cause and spread of this disease, unlike typhoid, could not be blamed on immigrants or other marginalized members of American society; if there had been a counterpart to “Typhoid Mary”—an “Influenza Mary,” if you will—then that Mary was McCarthy herself. (And if McCarthy’s or F. Scott Fitzgerald’s Irish Catholic background, a background they incidentally shared with “Typhoid Mary,” presents itself as a possible candidate for just such a marginalized status, then it is worth remembering that other “carriers” included authors with even more mainstream roots, such as Dos Passos, Porter, Cather, and Dashiell Hammett. At any rate, McCarthy’s degree from Vassar and Fitzgerald’s bourgeois upbringing and prep school and Ivy League education would make it difficult to portray either of them as a marginalized figure.) Furthermore, John M. Barry has demonstrated that, in comparison to most epidemics, immediate reactions to the pandemic in America in 1918 were largely devoid of racist, ethnocentric, and class-conscious rhetoric. He writes:

28 Porter 313.
Those historians who have examined epidemics and analyzed how societies have responded to them have generally argued that those with power blamed the poor for their own suffering, and sometimes tried to stigmatize and isolate them. (The case of “Typhoid Mary” Mallon, an Irish immigrant in effect imprisoned for twenty-five years, is a classic instance of this attitude; if she had been of another class, the treatment of her might well have been different.) […] The 1918 influenza pandemic did not in general demonstrate a pattern of race or class antagonism. […] The disease was too universal, too obviously not tied to race or class.29

In fact, when initial blame for the pandemic was being assigned during its early stages, it was assigned to an obvious external enemy: imperial Germany. The following conversation from Pale Horse, Pale Rider, while darkly amusing in its wrong-headedness and blind patriotism, is a representative and historically accurate example of the wilder theories that were bandied about during the autumn of 1918:

“They say,” said Towney, “that it [the disease] is really caused by germs brought by a German ship to Boston, a camouflaged ship, naturally, it didn’t come in under its own colors. Isn’t that ridiculous?”

“Maybe it was a submarine,” said Chuck, “sneaking in from the bottom of the sea in the dead of night. Now that sounds better.”

“Yes, it does,” said Towney; “they always slip up somewhere in these details … and they think the germs were sprayed over the city—it started in Boston, you know—and somebody reported seeing a strange, thick, greasy-looking cloud float up out of Boston Harbor and spread slowly all over that end of town. I think it was an old woman who saw it.”

“Should have been,” said Chuck.

29 Barry 394-95. Likewise, Crosby points out that, apart from Native American and Inuit populations, which historically have suffered disproportionately from epidemics, white Americans seemed most susceptible to contracting—and dying from—the disease; despite significant discrepancies in the quality and accessibility of medical care, black Americans, by contrast, fared surprisingly well (see pp. 228-29).
“I read it in a New York newspaper,” said Towney; “so it’s bound to be true.”

According to Alfred W. Crosby, such “interweaving of the war and the pandemic” revealed “a pattern of complete insanity” in a war-addled populace, but the inclination to make that particular connection was not in itself unsound. In point of fact, the war and the pandemic were linked, though that link was forged by the United States’ own participation in the war and not by fictitious biological warfare. (As the pandemic continued to drag on months after the war ended and as the number of victims of the disease rose as rapidly in Germany as elsewhere, rumors of German responsibility lost whatever tenuous credibility they had initially possessed.)

There seems to be little doubt among historians and epidemiologists that the particular strain of influenza commonly referred to as Spanish Flu (a variant of subtype H1N1 of Influenzavirus A, most likely a form of swine flu that crossed over to humans in January or February of 1918) originated in the United States; Edwin O. Jordan, editor of The Journal of Infectious Disease, first proposed this scenario in Epidemic Influenza, a comprehensive 1927 survey of the pandemic that was sponsored by the American Medical Association. The appellation Spanish Flu was, of course, a misnomer based on the fact that, due to routine war-time censorship of the press among the belligerent

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30 Porter 284. The Philadelphia Inquirer actually printed a version of this U-boat story on the front page of its 19 Sept. 1918 issue.

31 Crosby 46.

32 Edwin O. Jordan, Epidemic Influenza: A Survey (Chicago: American Medical Association, 1927). Jordan’s assertions were widely confirmed by other contemporaneous surveys of the pandemic and have been generally upheld by subsequent studies. I continue to borrow from Barry’s and Crosby’s texts in this brief history of Spanish Flu. For an excellent historiographical overview of the literature written on the pandemic, see pp. 12-21 in Howard Phillips and David Killingray, eds., Introduction, The Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19: New Perspectives (New York: Routledge, 2003). Phillips and Killingray provide their own brief summary of the pandemic on pp. 5-10.
nations, neutral Spain was the first source of detailed information about the disease and its devastation. Notably, that appellation was far more common in Europe than in America during the pandemic, again suggesting that Americans were reluctant to assign blame for the disease randomly to a foreign Other. (In *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, for instance, no character mentions “Spanish Flu.” On the contrary, in the passage quoted above, Towney assumes that the virus originated in Boston, and earlier in the novel, Adam refers to it generically as “this funny new disease.”) The first recorded cases of the disease occurred in early March of 1918 at Camp Funston, a training camp near Fort Riley, Kansas. A first wave of the disease spread rapidly over the next three months as troops were sped by rail to eastern ports and then transported in steamships to Europe. Sometime in August the virus mutated in Europe, giving rise to the second—and deadliest—wave of the pandemic during the autumn months of 1918. It is this second wave that dominates *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, with its endless parade of funerals. The French city of Brest, a key point of entry for the American Expeditionary Force, appears to have served as the hub for this second wave, transmitting the disease across the rest of Europe, back to North America by way of Boston, and throughout the world by way of Freetown, Sierra Leone. By the end of the year, the pandemic had become truly global, striking virtually every community on the planet. The few exceptions were islands, such as American Samoa and New Caledonia, where effective quarantines could be enforced. The pandemic eventually subsided over the winter, though a third, less virulent wave

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33 Porter 281. I utilize *Spanish Flu* in this coda chiefly for variety but also because it is still a more immediately familiar name than *H1N1*. The disease was also popularly referred to as *La Grippe*, a term no doubt borrowed from the French by English-speaking soldiers stationed in that country during the war, and the even more gender-specific *Spanish Lady*. 
took place during the early months of 1919, affecting, among others, Woodrow Wilson at the Peace of Paris.

This history of the pandemic provides stark and startling evidence of the degree to which official U.S. policy went hand-in-hand with the processes of globalization and, more generally, of the complementarities between national and global modes of linking together—and potentially destroying—disparate communities. That a virus originating in the American Midwest could encircle the globe within a single calendar year is itself a powerful illustration of the interconnectedness of the world’s communities already in place in 1918; that the virus most likely mutated in Europe before returning to the United States and traveling elsewhere exemplifies a characteristic of globalization I have emphasized throughout this project: its web-like multi-directionality. Moreover, the fact that the initial dissemination of the disease was so closely tied to the United States’ participation in the First World War, another global event already underway at the time, underscores the potentially global ramifications of specific national policies. Had the Wilson administration been less intent on supplying U.S. troops for the Allied cause as soon as possible or had the U.S. Army been more attentive to the conditions of its training camps, health officials might have contained the spread of influenza more quickly and reduced the likelihood of a pandemic considerably. War-time urgency and existing means of travel and communication, however, provided an ideal situation for just such a pandemic, as Howard Phillips and David Killingray point out:

The virus spread rapidly along the conduits of war. […] A modern system of global communications, of steamships and railways, along with the constant and large-scale movement of men and materials for the war, provided the conditions for the easy and speedy spread of the virus. Military encampments and the close
concentration and movement of men provided ideal conditions for the transmission of a respiratory infection.34

These conditions and their contribution to the pandemic were not lost on Edmund Wilson, who was serving in France during the second wave of Spanish Flu. For his earliest published book, *The Undertaker’s Garland* (1922), which he coauthored with the poet John Peale Bishop, Wilson composed a short story entitled “The Death of a Soldier.” The story follows an eighteen-year-old soldier named Henry who contracts the virus in France while en route to the front lines. Wilson makes a point of emphasizing the urgency with which troops were sped by rail to the front and the resulting poor conditions they faced; Henry and his comrades travel in box-cars “just like a lotta goddam cows,” as one of them puts it.35 Once they have piled into the box-cars, Wilson continues, “Everybody felt angry and ill and they began to quarrel among themselves. […] It was the final wound to self-respect, the last indignity of the Army, which, although the fact was plain enough, had never before confessed that it put American soldiers on a level with animals!”36 Wilson’s choice of words here is telling, with its emphasis on the language of disease and suffering (“Everyone felt […] ill”; “It was the final wound”). Indeed, Henry becomes ill during the journey and, as the title forewarns us, dies at an army hospital shortly afterwards, drowning in mucus just as Hemingway described in *Death in the Afternoon*. But Wilson does not end his story there. He makes room for a

34 Phillips and Killingray 5-6.


36 Wilson, “Death of a Soldier” 105.
short postscript in which a doctor and nurse comment on Henry’s death and then, more uneasily, on what his death signifies:

“But seriously, they ought to isolate these cases. It begins to look like an infection.”

“I should think so,” said the nurse. “And when you consider that the Army’s hardly over here yet—”\(^{37}\)

The nurse’s abrupt breaking off at this point leaves unspoken what Wilson’s readers in 1922 already knew: that, as the pandemic’s second wave got started in Europe, the disease literally fed on incoming U.S. troops before spreading elsewhere. Wilson’s story thus reveals the imbricated relationship between official U.S. policies, such as troop movements, and a larger global event. But the doctor’s exasperated lament that the U.S. Army “ought to isolate these cases”—something that did not happen—also reveals an anxiety over what neither he personally nor the U.S. Army at large could control: first epidemic and then, ultimately, global pandemic.

As I suggested earlier, this sort of anxiety over the uncontrollability of the processes of globalization that had made the pandemic possible is precisely what constrains American literary responses to Spanish Flu, including those responses that amounted to silence. It is for just this reason that I called attention not only to Dos Passos’ elision of the pandemic from his biography for Randolph Bourne but to his failure to mention Bourne’s “Trans-National America” as well. In choosing to focus exclusively on Bourne’s antiwar writings, Dos Passos also chooses not to address the other global dimensions of Bourne’s career and writing: the pandemic that claimed his life and the issues of immigration that drive “Trans-National America.” In a sense, Dos

\(^{37}\) Wilson, “Death of a Soldier” 119.
Passos suppresses two global events that often prove difficult for any nation to control (immigration and pandemic disease) in order to privilege another global event that the United States could have continued to avoid (world war) but that provided the state with an even greater degree of control over its citizenry. As Bourne himself argues in the essay from which Dos Passos quotes, during times of war, “the minorities are either intimidated into silence, or brought slowly around by a subtle process of persuasion. […] The nation in wartime attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal, which could not possibly be produced through any other agency than war.”

Even as he joins Bourne in condemning the United States for its decision to go to war and its subsequent efforts to enforce conformity and to silence dissent, Dos Passos effectively reinscribes an ambivalent faith in the nation’s ability to control external pressures by eliminating from his narrative explicit references to global forces that existed outside the United States’ control and by suggesting that Americans could have taken Bourne’s advice to heart and acted otherwise. By contrast, in Pale Horse, Pale Rider, Porter manages to combine both a vivid account of the Influenza Pandemic and a stinging condemnation of wartime small-mindedness. Indeed, for Miranda, the protagonist of Porter’s novel, the pandemic is a form of divine punishment for America’s involvement in the war; it is “‘a plague,’ said Miranda, ‘something out of the Middle Ages.’” And it only ends, within the context of the novel, on Armistice Day: “No more war, no more plague, only the dazed silence that follows the ceasing of

38 Randolph Bourne, “The State” 361.
39 Porter 281.
Unlike Dos Passos, then, Porter exploits the connections between the war and the pandemic and accepts the pandemic’s uncontrollability as a means of criticizing the dangers and limitations of enforced national solidarity.

There is, however, yet another facet to Bourne’s writing that makes Dos Passos’ simultaneous elision of the pandemic and Bourne’s “Trans-National America” a revealing index of wider concerns over America’s newly globalized status. In the opening pages of “Trans-National America,” Bourne sets up a contrast between the vitality that ethnic and cultural diversity brings to American life on one hand and, on the other, the enervation that results from a blind commitment to Anglo-Saxonism, the belief in the innate superiority of English culture and the English language. Responding both to the xenophobic premise that pride in one’s ethnic background amounted to “hyphenated Americanism” and to the increased suspiciousness English-descended Americans exhibited toward their German-born or -descended neighbors during the war, Bourne writes:

If there were to be any hyphens scattered about, clearly they should be affixed to those English descendants who had had centuries of time to be made American where the German had had only half a century. Most significantly has the war brought out of them this alien virus, showing them still loving English things, owing allegiance to the English Kultur, moved by English shibboleths and prejudice. It is only because it has been the ruling class in this country that bestowed epithets that we have not heard copiously and scornfully of “hyphenated English-Americans.”

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40 Porter 317. Wallace Stegner similarly links the end of the pandemic to the end of the war in The Big Rock Candy Mountain; see esp. pp. 275-79.

41 Randolph Bourne, “Trans-National America,” The Radical Will 251.
Bourne’s depiction of this Anglo-Saxonism as an “alien virus” echoes Knut Hamsun’s characterization of his own experiences on the receiving-end of such ethnocentric Americanization as an “incurable disease,” a point of comparison that certainly bolsters Bourne’s argument. Otherwise, there is no need to read too much into Bourne’s coincidental choice of words; in 1916, Bourne had little reason to suspect that a virus originating in the American heartland would claim over half a million lives, including his own, only two years later. Still, that irony would not have been lost on Dos Passos when writing 1919 over a decade later. More to the point, however, is Bourne’s recognition of a turn within powerful political and social spheres toward a more restricted definition of American culture—one that Bourne considers to be antithetical (i.e., “alien”) to the openness of the American way of life. While perhaps initially stimulated by a deeper sense of connectedness to Britain during the war, this turn persisted and even gained momentum after the war ended, developing eventually into outright isolationism. For even as the Influenza Pandemic entered its final stages in 1919, Henry Cabot Lodge and other prominent Republican Congressmen began spearheading a campaign to prevent the United States from ratifying the Treaty of Versailles and joining the League of Nations. And as I have already demonstrated in my first and third chapters, the Wilson administration itself advanced a series of policies that, in effect, served to federalize Jim Crow, and succeeding administrations enacted more severe checks on immigration, culminating in the establishment of quotas during the 1920s.

In focusing solely on Bourne’s antiwar writings, Dos Passos thus elides all of these other issues that concerned Bourne but that, like Spanish Flu, offered evidence of the United States’ limited ability to control external events. In other words, Dos Passos’

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42 See the second half of my third chapter.
decision to ignore the full extent of Bourne’s writings is part and parcel of his decision to ignore the full extent of the Influenza Pandemic. In light of the wider turn to isolationism in American society, both decisions also reveal a general reluctance to accept the full extent of America’s globalized status.

Not all American writers, however, shared Dos Passos’ reluctance to face up to the United States’ newly-emergent globalized status or to the destabilization of American identity such a status might entail. Nor did they all share Porter’s cynical acceptance of that status as a means of criticizing the dangers of unquestioning patriotism and conformity. Some displayed enthusiasm instead, finding in their experiences during the war and the pandemic an unforeseen source of liberation and empowerment. Having opened my first chapter by quoting a passage from a speech by Woodrow Wilson in which Wilson offers a celebratory evocation of a globalized America (the “mediating Nation”) but one that is problematic in its outright suppression of racial and ethnic diversity (“no racial momentum”), I now close this project by turning to a different Wilson altogether—one whose cause for celebration arises in the wake of Spanish Flu and in recognition of the vitality of diversity that globalization brings.

Apart from “The Death of a Soldier,” which he incorporated wholesale into A Prelude, Edmund Wilson discusses the Influenza Pandemic only once in his memoir of his early life. Writing nearly fifty years after the pandemic, however, Wilson still accords the pandemic special prominence; it ushers in the concluding passage of the book and Wilson’s final remarks on his entry into adulthood. Since Wilson was working at an army hospital at the time, it is unsurprising that his description of the pandemic at first focuses primarily on his own sense of being overwhelmed by the event:
Before I had left Vittel, the flu epidemic of 1918 had taken, I think, as heavy a toll of our troops as any battle with the Germans had done. The hospitals were crowded with flu patients, many of whom died. I was on night duty and on my feet most of the time. […] We would put them [the dead bodies] on a stretcher and carry them down to a basement room, where we sometimes had to pile them up like logs. They were buried in common ditches. This was much the busiest time in our hospitals. We never had a chance to think—though doctors and nurses also died—about catching the disease ourselves.  

Although Wilson did not contract the disease himself, the stress of caring for so many ill and dying men took its toll on him. “When the worst of it was over,” he continues, “I did collapse, although I had not caught the flu. I was allowed to go to bed for a day or so in a hospital room by myself.” As he rested, Wilson found the time and quietude to contemplate his recent experiences in the army, and in his memoir, he describes reaching a deep understanding of what the global events in which he had participated (the war and the pandemic) signified. “I also had the leisure to think,” he writes, “and it suddenly became very clear to me that I could never go back to my former life—that is, that I could never go back to the habits and standards of even the most cultivated elements of the world in which I had lived. I felt now that I had never quite belonged in that world, that I had never, in fact, quite belonged to it. […] My experience of the army had had on me a liberating effect.” For Wilson, this “liberating effect” is a newfound ability to connect with others and a willingness to accept and even seek out variety: “I could now

43 Wilson, A Prelude 276.

44 Wilson, A Prelude 276.

45 Wilson, A Prelude 277.
get on with all kinds of people,” he claims, “and could satisfy my curiosity about aspects of life that otherwise I should not perhaps so soon have known.”

What Edmund Wilson means here is something akin to what Woodrow Wilson was getting at in his 1915 speech. In essence, Edmund Wilson is claiming that his experiences in the army enlarged the scope of his imagination by bringing him into contact with a wider range of types of Americans than he had ever known in his insular world of East Coast prep schools and Princeton. He writes that “many of my friends in the American army had been born in other countries than America: they had been Irishmen, Swedes, Danes, Swiss, Belgians and cockneys. […] My association with all these had given me a strong contempt for the complaints about the ‘foreign’ immigrants on the part of old-line Americans and for the talk about the necessity for getting them ‘Americanized.’” He then goes on to individuate his friends in a way that Woodrow Wilson never bothered to do: an Italian-American he spent Christmas with, a Danish immigrant named John Andersen, and the son of a poor English farmer named Roy Gamble who had found an independence and social mobility in America that was impossible in his native Britain. Thus whereas Woodrow Wilson speaks of understanding these immigrants “in the compound, not separately, as partisans, but unitedly as knowing and comprehending and embodying them all” and thereby erases whatever cultural, ethnic, or personal idiosyncrasies they may exhibit individually, Edmund Wilson attempts to name the immigrants he met in the army, relate their individual histories, and explain what these encounters meant to his own life. And whereas Woodrow Wilson’s insistent use of the first-person plural pronoun we

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46 Wilson, A Prelude 277.

47 Wilson, A Prelude 277.
paradoxically reveals the failure of his vision—in attempting to give voice to a common American identity, he in fact merely ventriloquizes—Edmund Wilson allows his friends to speak through him. In a sense, then, far from giving him a means of blaming immigrants and excluding them from the body politic, the Influenza Pandemic and its aftermath helped convince Edmund Wilson of the centrality of immigrants to American society.

In giving voice to those immigrants through his writing, Wilson also finds a source of creative empowerment. In the final paragraph of *A Prelude*, he writes, “When I was back in New York at first, my habits did not change very much, but my life began soon to take a different direction in a way that, I think, otherwise it would hardly have ever done. […] I was by that time as a much a product of the world of the war as of that of my earlier years, and I had to live now in the world in which I found myself after the war.” That “different direction,” of course, would ultimately lead Wilson to a distinguished career as one of the most influential literary critics of the twentieth century. By specifying that that shift in his life’s course occurred during a few moments of reflection in the aftermath of the First World War and the Influenza Pandemic, however, Wilson assigns to those two events an importance that is striking. Looking back on the start of his career from near its very end—he would die within five years of *A Prelude*’s publication—Wilson casts the war and the pandemic not so much as a rupture with the past, which he still acknowledges he is partially a “product” of, but rather as a moment of transition into something irrevocably new. The “world of the war” prepares Wilson for the “world […] after the war.”

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48 Wilson, *A Prelude* 278.
Like Dos Passos and Porter, Wilson recognizes this new “world” as a global one—where immigrants have destabilized his understanding of American identity; where world war has introduced him to new places, people, and ways of life; and where a pandemic has prodded him into taking stock of his life, his future, and his relationship to his country. But unlike Dos Passos, Wilson embraces the implications of this recognition, and perhaps even more so than Porter, Wilson transforms this recognition into a basis for critique. While neither Wilson’s story “The Death of a Soldier” nor *A Prelude* may match the artistry of Porter’s *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Wilson’s experiences before, during, and after the pandemic provide him with a means for both condemnation (through his criticism of narrow-minded definitions of American identity) and regeneration (through his expanded imaginative powers). After all, at the end of *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, Miranda is left alive but with the morbid certainty that she is set “once more safely in the road that would lead her again to death.”49 At the end of *A Prelude*, however, the reader is left with the knowledge that Wilson still had the bulk of his career left before him—a career that, as much as any other, helped to define the place of American literature and culture in the twentieth century.

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49 Porter 314.


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