

TRANSNATIONAL TRANSLATION:
FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE TRAVEL WRITING OF
COOPER, MELVILLE, AND TWAIN

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the representation of foreign language in nineteenth-century American travel writing, analyzing how authors conceptualize the act of translation as they address the multilingualism encountered abroad. The three major figures in this study—James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain—all use moments of cross-cultural contact and transference to theorize the permeability of the language barrier, seeking a mean between the oversimplification of the translator’s task and a capitulation to the utter incomprehensibility of the Other. These moments of translation contribute to a complex interplay of not only linguistic but also cultural and economic exchange. Charting the changes in American travel to both the “civilized” world of Europe and the “savage” lands of the Southern and Eastern hemispheres, this project will examine the attitudes of cosmopolitanism and colonialism that distinguished Western from non-Western travel at the beginning of the century and then demonstrate how the once distinct representations of European and non-European languages converge by the century’s end, with the result that all kinds of linguistic difference are viewed as either too easily translatable or utterly incomprehensible. Integrating the histories of cosmopolitanism and imperialism, my study of the representation of foreign language in travel writing demonstrates that both the compulsion to translate and a capitulation to incomprehensibility prove equally antagonistic to cultural difference. By mapping the changing conventions of translation through the representative narratives of three canonical figures, *Transnational Translation* traces a shift in American attitudes toward the foreign as the cosmopolitanism of Cooper and Melville transforms into Twain’s attitude of both cultural and linguistic nationalism.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the nineteenth century, the number of Americans traveling to all parts of the world increased dramatically, and many of those travelers chose to write about their encounters with foreign lands, peoples, and cultures. Regular transatlantic service began in 1818, and the growing numbers sailing to Europe included businessmen, clergy, students, scholars, writers, and, of course, the wealthy classes who could afford a European Grand Tour (Dulles 26-30). At the same time, as the United States' military and commercial interests expanded, the number of American whalers, merchants, and scientists visiting the Pacific and other "exotic" places was also increasing.¹ While many American writers struggled to compete economically with the low cost of books pirated from England, travel writers could provide something unavailable from cheap British reprints—an American perspective on foreign locales (Melton 22). These travel writings included not only traditional, non-fictional accounts, but also novels dramatizing the experience of an American abroad, and all levels of fictionalized experience in-between. Indeed, as one scholar of the genre concludes, "there is no neat division between autobiographical and fictional narratives of travel" (Youngs 4).² But however truthful, the various forms of travel literature share a common interest in how Americans perceive the foreign, and how they reconcile their own cultural identity with the incommensurable differences encountered abroad.

¹ The description of this non-European travel is often classified as a "sea narrative." Hester Blum's *The View from the Masthead* provides an excellent introduction to the significance of the genre. See also Robert Foulke's *The Sea Voyage Narrative*.

² Accordingly, I will follow Justin D. Edwards, who takes the broadest possible definition of travel literature, including three categories that define a spectrum of fact and fiction: "conventional travel narrative," "hybrid travel text," and "[t]ouristic fiction" (13).

This project examines the representation, or, in other words, the treatment, of foreign language in texts set abroad, with emphasis on the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain. An author need not be consciously fixated on the issue of language for evidence of his or her attitude toward linguistic difference to be evident in the text—although many of the authors I examine will prove to be quite interested in language. Encountering linguistic difference is a pervasive experience shared by travelers of all kinds. Whether facing an entirely foreign language, or only variations in accent or dialect, travel writers must decide both whether and how to represent this difference in their accounts. Moreover, most of the authors examined here engage in either some kind of translation or representation of translation. Because this transference, literally this “carrying across,” of meaning from one sign system to another requires that the translator negotiate not only linguistic but also cultural difference, both the practice and the concept of translation are concrete and yet particularly fertile subjects for examining an author’s ideas about the nature of language, the negotiation of difference, and the desirability, or even the feasibility, of cross-cultural exchange. The necessary decision to either translate the foreign into more familiar terms or to leave both foreign language and culture untranslated presents a new avenue for examining how nineteenth-century American authors viewed cultural difference and how they positioned their own nation in the world.

Translation, Travel, and Cultural Difference

The empirical subject of *Transnational Translation* is the way travel writers present foreign languages in their texts. Although no previous study has undertaken a comprehensive account of linguistic difference in nineteenth-century literature of travel,

Lawrence Alan Rosenwald's examination of how even literature set within the United States must account for a variety of dialects and languages provides a framework for examining the representation of multilingualism abroad. While some works may directly include languages other than standard English, allowing characters to speak just as they would in real life, other works use any number of representational methods to give the impression of multilingualism without relying on the linguistic knowledge of the reader, and still others ignore the existence of other languages entirely and present events as if they were occurring in a monolingual world. Rosenwald's focus on works set within the United States not only provides a valuable reading of immigrant literatures, but also explores exceptions to the traditional vision of a monolingual America. My focus on American literature set outside of the country raises a complementary set of issues. In addition to clarifying Americans' changing assessments of multiculturalism more broadly, the readings that compose this study reveal the way traveling Americans conceptualized the foreign and saw themselves in relation to other parts of the globe.

This project will pay particular attention to both the act and the concept of translation, examining the many kinds of spatial and cultural transference they involve. While not all representations of multilingualism include an act of translation, either real or implied, many of them do. In his examination of translation in twentieth-century travel narratives, Michael Cronin outlines the varied forms of translation in which a traveler might engage: "meet[ing] fellow speakers of their language from a different country (intralingual), be[ing] able to communicate some ideas in the foreign language (interlingual) but, at other moments, be[ing] completely stymied and have to resort to gestures (intersemiotic)" (*Across* 4). All of these forms of translation make frequent

occurrences the nineteenth-century travel literature I will examine. Furthermore, as Lawrence Venuti has shown in *The Translator's Invisibility*, the way in which the act of translation and the figure of the translator are imagined can reveal much about the extent to which “foreignness” is valued in the target culture. Acts of translation, whether necessitated by the process of traveling, included within the travel literature itself, or undertaken as part of a more scholarly translational practice, are moments when an author’s valuation of foreign language and conceptualization of foreignness are laid bare for critical inquiry.

Translation is also a fertile metaphor for theorizing both exchange and representation more broadly, including such transpositions as economic trade across incommensurable systems of value and the “translation” of reality into any linguistic utterance. When translation fails, when a foreign concept has no direct equivalent in the target language, the limits of cross-cultural transference can unsettle the seeming universality of one’s own language and culture. This is Homi Bhabha’s view when he describes how “[c]ultural translation desacralizes the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy” (327). Because there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between words in different languages, translation reveals that the way language groups meaning into concepts can be arbitrary, and that one’s own cultural concepts, once taken for universals, are not so. The resulting unsettling of cultural authority, or undermining of linguistic certainty, can serve as a tool of resistance, as will be particularly evident in Melville’s descriptions of the South Seas. A frank exposure of the sometimes incommensurable difference of “savage” language and culture can expose the contingent

arbitrariness of Western systems of knowing, although too strong a belief in the Other's incomprehensibility can be another justification for oppression.

The most comprehensive study of the figure of translation in the long nineteenth century is Colleen Glenney Boggs's *Transnationalism and American Literature*. Boggs argues that, in contrast to the "monolingual ontology" she finds in the works of Hawthorne, writers she identifies as transnational "understood American literature as a form of writing that was always in translation" (6-7). She examines how these writers negotiate the relationship between America and the world through linguistic difference and exchange.³ Boggs makes a persuasive argument for the pervasiveness and the theoretical importance of both the act and the concept of translation in American literature, but while she sees translation as a liberatory practice, Eric Cheyfitz reveals its darker side in another major study of translation and the Americas, *The Poetics of Imperialism*. Cheyfitz argues that "translation was, and still is, the central act of European colonization [and] imperialism in the Americas," revealing how translation, particularly the translation of "savage" languages and cultures, need not involve a recognition and negotiation of cultural difference, but may instead be a means of effacing it (104).

While Boggs and Cheyfitz have focused on the power of translation to either consolidate ideological power or to resist it, I am more interested in how authors conceive the act of translation than in the political uses to which translation is put. In other words, my primary subject is how writers and texts imagine the permeability of the language barrier. In their own ways, each of the authors included in this study responds to

³ I share Boggs's interest in Margaret Fuller and Harriet Beecher Stowe (see my Chapter Four), but otherwise, she focuses on works set within the United States.

what Jacques Derrida describes as the implicit paradox generated by the story of Babel. Derrida examines “the origin of the confusion of tongues, the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the necessary and impossible task of translation,” viewing “its necessity *as* impossibility” (171). In other words, the difference between languages is what requires translation, but it is also the very thing that ensures no translation ever can be perfect. Where exactly between perfection and impossibility the act of translation lies is a matter for debate. Examining the empirical evidence of how foreign language appears in works of travel literature allows American perspectives of foreignness to be compared on a fairly straightforward continuum of attitudes—a spectrum along which the mean lies somewhere between complete permeability and impermeability, between the perfection of translation and its impossibility.

In my model, the assumptions of both permeability and impermeability each have two variations, one tending toward a prejudicial extreme and the other toward a more enlightened mean. If one sees the barrier between languages as permeable, this may result in the conviction that cultural differences are easily assimilated into one’s own monolithic viewpoint. Conversely, the assumption of permeability may lead to a desire for cross-cultural understanding and exchange. Likewise, imagining that the language barrier is less permeable may also result in two opposing attitudes. On one hand, the acknowledgement that any translation from one language to the next is less than straightforward can indicate an enlightened recognition of cultural difference. But on the other hand, the view that cross-cultural understanding is impossible can lead to a position of cultural isolationism. At either extreme lies cultural ignorance, one from capitulation to the utter incomprehensibility of the foreign and the other from the assumption of

universality. The golden mean between these two points, or perhaps (in a Derridean sense) the supplementary acceptance of both positions at once, may be described as a kind of cosmopolitanism, as will be discussed below, but such an attitude always risks slipping into one prejudicial extreme or the other. Yet the linguistic, cultural, and monetary translations necessitated by both travel and travel writing require some negotiation of the language barrier, and the attitudes toward cultural difference this negotiation reveals will be the subject of the following chapters.

Like the act of translation, travel too can put the previously monolithic authority of one's own culture into conflict with foreign differences. The experience of foreign travel fosters the same experience of the "*unheimlich*" that Bhabha attributes to the "cultural authority" of colonialism (195). Bhabha explains:

Culture is *heimlich*, with its disciplinary generalizations, its mimetic narratives, its homologous empty time, its seriality, its progress, its customs and coherence. But cultural authority is also *unheimlich*, for to be distinctive, signficatory, influential and identifiable, it has to be translated, disseminated, differentiated, interdisciplinary, intertextual, international, inter-racial. (195)

It may be easy to maintain both the primacy and the logical unity of one's own culture at home, but in a foreign context (even in the seemingly powerful position of colonizer), contact with the Other disrupts the uncomplicated and homely unity of culture, making it uncanny and potentially threatening. This same feeling of the *unheimlich* occurs in the many forms of exchange occasioned by foreign travel: not only cross-cultural communication, but also economic exchange and, when the traveler is faced with new beliefs and customs, cultural exchange as well. The act of leaving home disrupts the hegemony of monolithic culture with the un-homely uncanniness of cultural difference.

Indeed, James Clifford calls travel “an increasingly complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and interaction that [trouble] the localism of many common assumptions about culture” (3). The foreignness perceived by travel writers resists assimilation into the unitary language of monolithic cultural ideology. Whatever the traveler’s imagined or intended relationship to the differences encountered abroad, travel’s “translation” of the traveler’s body, language, and ideology turns the comforting certainty of the traveler’s own culture into something uncanny, uncomfortable, and uncertain.

Many previous studies of travel literature have focused either on European travel, tracing the shift from Grand Tour to tourism, or on American imperialism and the travel to “uncivilized” parts of the globe that it has occasioned. Others have either examined how writers characterize particular locations (such as Italy, the Pacific, or the Levant), or have focused more generally on travel writing as a reflection of national identity.⁴ In

⁴ Foundational studies of American travel writing include Cushing Strout’s *The American Image of the Old World*, Foster Rhea Dulles’s *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel*, William W. Stowe’s *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture*, Terry Caesar’s *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel Writing*, and Larzer Ziff’s *Return Passages: Great American Travel Writing 1780-1910*. Works that examine travel writing and American imperialism include Bruce A. Harvey’s *American Geographics*, Amy Kaplan’s *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Christopher McBride’s *The Colonizer Abroad*, and Susan Castillo and David Seed’s collection, *American Travel and Empire*. Justin D. Edwards’s *Exotic Journeys* is one notable exception to the usual separation of European and non-European travel literature, as are the studies by Ziff and Caesar. Conversely, books that focus on a particular location are far more numerous. Helen Barolini, Leonardo Buonomo, Annamaria Formichella Elsdén, and Nathalia Wright all examine travel to Italy. David Farrier, Paul Lyons (*American*), and Vanessa Smith study travel to the Pacific. Hilton Obenzinger and Brian Yothers (*Romance*) look at Americans in the Holy Land. Phyllis Cole examines England; Pere Gifra-Adroher, Spain; Osman Benchérif, Algiers; and Kim Fortuny, Istanbul. Studies of American travel writing that emphasize how travel writing consolidated national identity include those of Caesar (44), Harvey

contrast, because some kind of linguistic difference is a constant in all kinds of travel, the subject of language allows a broad examination of American travel to diverse parts of the world without effacing the differences of each kind of foreignness. In this way, my project will examine the inextricable relationship between a sense of self and the perception of both Western and non-Western otherness, connecting the differing attitudes Americans held toward what they perceived as “savage” and “civilized” cultures. Indeed, the constants of multilingualism and translation will demonstrate a convergence of Americans’ views of all kinds of foreignness later in the nineteenth century.

A useful concept for examining a travel writer’s negotiation of self and other is Mary Louise Pratt’s idea of the “contact zone.” Pratt derives her idea of “contact” from the field of linguistics, likening the conflict and confusion of encountering radically different peoples to the “improvised” pidgin languages that develop in those situations, languages “commonly regarded as chaotic, barbarous, lacking in structure” (6). Despite this negative characterization, such pidgin languages often present the most viable compromise between too-easy translation and irreconcilable difference. They are a frank if imperfect mediation of linguistic, economic, and cultural systems that would otherwise prove incommensurable. By looking at specific moments of linguistic encounter as illustrative of broader issues of cultural and economic exchange, I will examine how self-identity is shaped through a dialectical relationship to otherness, and how a traveler’s sense of national identity varies with the foreign land to which he or she travels.

(3), William Stowe (xi), Judith Hamera and Alfred Bendixen (1), Jeffrey Alan Melton (20), and Mark Simpson (xxvi).

In characterizing American views of the foreign, this project will trace three major attitudes toward cultural difference: colonialism/imperialism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism. These terms, and the wide variety of views that might be gathered under them, all have specific if complex historical and geographical significances. While I will discuss many of these histories throughout the following chapters, the concepts are also useful for describing particular attitudes toward foreignness made apparent through the representation of language but falling outside of specific ideological movements.⁵

The failure to recognize and respect the often incommensurable differences of the foreign is a hallmark of the West's dark history of colonialism and imperialism. Although the United States grew increasingly imperialistic throughout the nineteenth century, Americans were rarely colonizers in the strictest sense. Nevertheless, the same chauvinistic attitudes toward cultural difference that underpin colonialism proper are often present in American accounts of "savage" difference. Paul Lyons calls such attitudes the "ignoring, disparaging, misappropriation of native knowledges, protocols, and basic definitions . . . the crude Orientalism in and through which colonialism grounds its claims and claims its grounds" (*American* 12). This same Orientalism can be found in the writings that document the United States' expansion into the "uncivilized" world.

⁵ It would be unfair, however, to critique the oversimplified ideas of translation found in nineteenth-century travel writers without recognizing the difficulty of expressing the cultural difference that resists translation. Bhabha provides an indispensable description of the complexity, but also the potential power, of understanding cultural difference. While it is frequently clearest and most efficient to refer to a different "culture," it is important to recognize Bhabha's claim that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (55). Cultural difference is often experienced as "the momentous, if momentary, extinction of the recognizable object of culture in the disturbed artifice of its signification, at the edge of experience" (179-80). Accordingly, the cultural difference that resists translation is what Melville might call an "ungraspable phantom," a slippage of meaning that can be neither fixed nor contained.

Indeed, as many critics have previously explored, travel writing plays a key role in consolidating the dichotomy between self and other on which the discourse of both colonialism and imperialism depends.⁶ While I will most often use the terms “imperialist” or “expansionist” to describe such cultural chauvinism, these views often do not much differ from the attitudes of “colonialism” that postcolonial theory seeks to rewrite.

Underpinning the Orientalism of American expansionist policies, as well as the attitudes of colonialism proper, is a dual, if paradoxical, desire to both emphasize difference and to efface it. Bhabha compares this duality to Freud’s description of the sexual fetish. For Bhabha, the encounter with cultural difference is like a Freudian child’s first apprehension of sexual difference; both experiences entail “a ‘play’ or vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity . . . and the anxiety associated with lack and difference” (106-107). Racial stereotypes draw on the same drive to both assimilate and disavow the Other. David Spurr provides a similar description of the two contradictory attitudes of the “paradox of colonial discourse”: “the desire to efface difference and to gather the colonized into the fold of an all-embracing civilization” and “the desire to emphasize racial and cultural difference as a means of establishing superiority” (32). This description of the duality at the heart of racism (or Orientalism) is particularly illustrative of the moment of colonial encounter epitomized by Columbus,

⁶ For example, Gifra-Adroher, following Said, describes how “travel literature can contribute to discourse formation and the construction of the Other” (24). In the introduction to the collection *Travel Writing, Form, and Empire*, Paul Smethurst argues that “[t]ravel and travel writing, and the imaginative geographies they conjured, were crucial to the discursive formation of empire, especially by their insinuation and cementation of crude binaries such as the West/the Rest, attached to which were the clearly pejorative formulations of civilised/savage, scientific/superstitious, and so on” (1).

which is a central focus of the second chapter. The colonialist's perplexing attempts to at once claim understanding of an unknown language and, at the same time, to deny that it is a language at all demonstrate the contradictory desires for both unity and dominance, and explains the typical recourse, in colonialist descriptions of unknown languages, to either an affirmation of pre-Babelian universality or the reduction of linguistic difference to animal noise.

Imperialism's lack of respect for the legitimacy and particularity of cultural difference is related to, but not necessary congruent with, a different kind of rejection of cultural difference—nationalism's lack of interest in the foreign altogether. While colonialism and imperialism denigrate the Other for being "savage," nationalism rejects difference for the sheer sake of being "not us." My use of this term is further clarified by Pauline Kleingeld's discussion of the shift from the "older tradition of republicanism," in which "patriotism is the citizens' commitment to or love for their shared political freedom and the institutions that sustain it," to the nineteenth-century "nationalist manner" of viewing patriotism as "unconditional loyalty to one's own national community (taken as a linguistic and/or cultural community)" (21-22). In its early form, American patriotism emphasized the political promise of the United States while still allowing that the more developed societies of Europe may be superior in other matters. In contrast, the later "nationalist" model of patriotism insisted on a preference for everything American, not just valuing the political promise of democracy, but preferring all of its cultural productions and, more significantly for the present study, maintaining the supremacy of American language. While Cooper's attitudes toward his country follow the older, republican model of patriotism, later writers increasingly associated

nationalism with the preference for American language and culture, a trend that is epitomized by the travel writings of Twain.

Throughout this project, I contrast the cultural chauvinism of both imperialism and nationalism with the acceptance or understanding of cultural difference that is often described as cosmopolitanism.⁷ In her study of Kant's idea of cosmopolitanism, Kleingeld describes what could be considered two aspects of the term, a practical attitude toward cultural difference and a political ideal. According to Kleingeld, Kant views Germans as "model cosmopolitans" because they "are hospitable toward foreigners, they easily recognize the merits of other peoples, they are modest in their dealings with others, and they readily learn foreign languages" (1). Kleingeld further defines Kant's cosmopolitanism as "an attitude of recognition, respect, openness, interest, beneficence and concern toward other human individuals, cultures, and peoples as members of one global community" (1). It is not necessary to avow an articulated theory of cosmopolitanism to share this liberal attitude toward difference. Beyond this practical attitude of cosmopolitanism, Kant also subscribed to a political ideal, the goal of a universal "federation of states" (6).⁸ As the authors examined in this study only rarely engage with the more theoretical and idealistic philosophy of cosmopolitanism, I use the

⁷ Thomas J. Schlereth defines cosmopolitanism as "an attitude of mind that attempted to transcend chauvinistic national loyalties or parochial prejudices in its intellectual interests and pursuits," also characterized by "a readiness to borrow from other lands or civilizations in the formation of . . . intellectual, cultural, and artistic patterns" (xi). Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen define cosmopolitanism as a "widening of consciousness and confrontation with alterity" (4).

⁸ Likewise, Robert Fine and Robin Cohen explain, "Kant argued that the idea of a cosmopolitan order required the institution of a league or federation of nations that would guarantee with its 'united power' the security and justice of even the smallest states as well as the basic rights of even the most downtrodden individuals" (140-41).

term, unless otherwise specified, to refer to a general attitude of openness to difference—whether on a truly global scale or only applied to a particular location of foreignness—rather than to the political objective.

Yet, despite its apparent openness to cultural difference, some versions of cosmopolitanism tend to slip toward the colonialism or imperialism that such liberality might seem to counteract. As Craig Calhoun points out, the “European colonial projects” progressing concurrently with the Enlightenment “informed both the development of nationalism and that of cosmopolitanism,” and “[t]he cosmopolitan ideals of a global civil society can sound uncomfortably like those of the civilizing mission behind colonialism” (89, 92). The danger that lies behind many political theories of cosmopolitanism is most strongly demonstrated in the philosophy of Anacharsis Cloots, whose goal of “the abolition of all states and the establishment of a ‘Universal Republic’” required that oppressed peoples abroad be forced “into the world state” before they could “learn to recognize their true interests” (Kleingeld 6, 42). This is an important difference between Cloots’s aim of abolishing national boundaries and Kant’s ideal of a non-coercive federation of existing states (63-64). The acceptance of people of different cultures can likewise slip into a desire for all the world’s people to share a single culture and civilization. Because of this perpetual danger, it is not as oxymoronic as it might seem to use the term “cosmopolitan” as a description of open-mindedness toward Europe only. Indeed, it is exactly this shortsightedness of what a universal(ly Western) community might look like that causes cosmopolitanism to slip into imperialism. Few of the works examined in the following chapters address the question of universal governance directly—although Melville does reference Cloots in *Moby-Dick* (121), the

idea of a universal republic in *Redburn* (169), and cosmopolitanism more broadly in *The Confidence-Man*, which is not examined here—but the tension between cosmopolitanism as an acceptance of difference and the drive for universal brotherhood that often effaces that difference will reoccur. By examining how nineteenth-century American travel writers position themselves, their culture, and their countries in relation to other parts of the world, the following chapters will examine the representation of foreign language in order to trace the shift from earlier attitudes of cosmopolitanism and imperialism to the end of the century’s overarching nationalism.

Language in Nineteenth-Century America

This project’s examination of foreign language and travel is part of a larger history of the study as well as the conceptualization of language in the United States. As Werner Sollors’s anthology *Multilingual America* demonstrates, North America has been the home of a vibrant and varied multilingualism since its first colonization, and indeed before. My focus, however, is on the acquisition of additional languages by native speakers of English. While most of the authors examined here will deal primarily if not exclusively with modern foreign languages, the history of language learning in America must begin with Latin and Greek. As Gerald Graff describes, classical languages were the mainstays of a college curriculum well into the nineteenth century (22). At lower levels of education, private schools designed to prepare young scholars for college followed this classical emphasis.⁹ But the intensive focus on the classics did not accomplish its own

⁹ Siobhan Moroney, in “Latin, Greek and the American Schoolboy,” describes the divide between private schools, which taught Latin to boys whose well-off families expected them to attend college, and public schools, which focused on the English-language competency deemed more relevant to a practical profession (305-306). Likewise, L.

aim, and “few students came out of it actually able to read Greek or Latin” (Graff 33). As evidenced by the shortcomings of classical education, formal schooling’s characteristic failure to instill any kind of real fluency is one reason *Transnational Translation* will focus on languages acquired either by private study or by immersion abroad.

In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin critiques the traditional pedagogical preference for classical languages:

We are told that it is proper to begin first with the Latin, and having acquir’d that it will be more easy to attain those modern Languages which are deriv’d from it It is true, that if you can clamber & get to the Top of a Stair-Case without using the Steps, you will more easily gain them in descending: but certainly if you begin with the lowest you will with more Ease ascend to the Top. . . . [And if students] should quit the study of Languages, & never arrive at the Latin, they would however have acquir’d another Tongue or two that being in modern Use might be serviceable to them in common Life. (97)

Despite both the aptness of Franklin’s metaphor and the practicality of his priorities, such dissent from the traditional philosophy of formal schooling and higher education had little effect on educational policy. Calls for reform of higher education’s almost exclusive focus on Greek and Latin grammar were silenced by the 1828 Yale Report, which “reasserted the primacy of the classics in instilling ‘mental discipline’” (Graff 22). As Graff points out, secondary subjects such as modern languages “were frequently offered in the last two years [of college], but usually only as electives for which most students, preoccupied as they were with classical requirements, had little time” (22). In his study of

Clark Keating explains that, while Eastern preparatory schools tended to imitate the colleges in language as in other aspects of the curriculum, “high schools took to languages slowly” and “the normal schools, agricultural and mechanical colleges, as well as the engineering schools, tended to affirm . . . that there were few reasons for offering their students an opportunity to study foreign languages” (37). See also Garrett E. Rickard’s “Establishment of Graded Schools in American Cities: I. The English Grammar School.”

college literary and debating societies in the nineteenth century, Thomas S. Harding mentions several examples of college societies and society libraries that emphasized foreign language works, but many were devoted to political or philosophical debates or to literature written in English (69-75). In general, it appears that such societies may have offered one avenue for the study of foreign language, but the subject was not widely pursued. Thus, with the intensity and difficulty of a classical education, foreign language and literature played only a small role in the life of a college student.

As the century progressed, modern-language courses became increasingly prominent in higher education (Keating 37). Charles Hart Handschin's *The Teaching of Modern Languages in the United States* provides a detailed history of the gradual growth of foreign language instruction. He names Amherst as "the first institution of learning in America to introduce a thoroughgoing modern language course, instruction in French and German there dating from 1824, and in Spanish from 1827" (17). French was taught at Harvard as early as 1735, although it did not become "a regular branch of instruction" until 1780 (21). Spanish was taught at the university level as early as 1780, and Spanish instruction became more frequent (along with Italian) in the 1820s and 30s (84-85). German instruction was given at both the University of Virginia and Harvard in 1825 (35).

Despite these apparent gains, calls for educational reform at the beginning of the twentieth century suggest that the same grammatical emphasis that failed with the classics was equally ineffective for teaching modern languages. For example, in a 1916 book advocating "the direct method" of college language instruction, Carl A. Krause entreats the reader, "If you look back upon your own personal experience as students of

modern languages both in school and at college, you will realize that many students failed almost utterly to gain any mastery of the foreign language they were pursuing” (66). Indeed, college language requirements have been chronically unsuccessful at imparting any real competence in a second language, let alone fluency. Accordingly, colleges’ increased emphasis on modern languages near the end of the century suggests, more than anything else, that learning such languages had become as specialized and academic as studying Latin or Greek. Accordingly, I do not spend much time on foreign language instruction as part of a college curriculum, where it is isolated from spoken language and thus required, memorized by rote, and forgotten—a characterization of college language requirements that has remained strikingly consistent from Royall Tyler’s lampooning of his classical education to comedian Father Guido Sarducci’s “Five Minute University,” in which two years of college Spanish, after five years of forgetting, will yield only “Como está usted. Muy bien.”

Yet the small role modern languages played in higher education does not mean that they were not learned at all. Graff explains that modern languages were not widely studied on an academic level because they “were considered mere social accomplishments” (37). Despite his deprecatory language, the importance such an accomplishment held for the country’s literary, political, and social elite must not be underestimated. In many cases, language instruction was imparted by private tutors. For example, Robert Francis Seybolt cites several advertisements for Spanish, French, and Italian instructors in colonial New York City (275-78). Modern languages were also parts

of the curriculum at the secondary level, particularly at private academies.¹⁰ Citing learned examples such as George Ticknor, Henry Longfellow, and James Russell Lowell, L. Clark Keating explains, “The second language, or even the third one, when acquired, was seen as a pleasant adjunct to an upper-class education, and its presence . . . found an adequate basis in purely aesthetic and intellectual considerations” (37). When James Fenimore Cooper studied European languages in the early nineteenth century, it was precisely in this context. Accordingly, by emphasizing the connection between foreign language learning and travel, this study will focus on foreign language acquired willingly as a mark of erudition or a vehicle for cross-cultural communication, not foreign language instruction when it is only an empty curricular requirement.

Not unrelated to the history of linguistic instruction in America is the question of how American authors conceptualized language and the act of translation. A large part of this story will be fleshed out in the following chapters, but an overview of language theories not directly related to travel is useful here. In *Transcendental Wordplay*, Michael West gives a particularly valuable account of the theories of language most influential in nineteenth-century America. One central question for the European philosophers of language was the extent to which language was a natural expression of reality. John Locke, whose theories of language were perhaps the best known, remained somewhat

¹⁰ From the eighteenth century, French was taught in private academies and boarding schools (Handschin 13-14). Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, French instruction became increasingly common at the high-school level (26). German was not as common as French, but played a major role in Moravian schools in Pennsylvania (51). Spanish appears to have been less commonly taught than French or German, but Handschin notes several institutions teaching the language in the mid-nineteenth century (83-84).

ambivalent about the connection between words and things, but Étienne Bonnot de Condillac “postulated an innate language of gesture and facial expression,” a common, biological origin for all human communication (M. West 28-29). Charles de Brosses stressed the ““basis of universal language”” even further, arguing that “the essence of all language is onomatopoeic imitation” (M. West 32). Thus, De Brosses posited not only that all human languages are related, but that they share an inherent connection to the reality they describe. While such philosophers often failed to find convincing evidence of these universal origins in European languages, they suggested that more “primitive” languages were closer to the shared and natural origin of speech and therefore would be inherently understandable. In the nineteenth century, the influential rhetorician Hugh Blair likewise asserted that, “however barren intellectually, primitive language was preeminently natural and poetical” (M. West 46). This romanticized view of “savage” language as natural and transparent informs many texts of colonialism and imperialism, but, as the following chapters will demonstrate, writers such as Cooper and, even more so, Melville will begin to question the inherent universality of “primitive” speech.

These eighteenth-century theories of language also influenced the Transcendentalists. One of the most famous Transcendental theories of language appears in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature* (1836). In that early tract, Emerson posits an inherent connection between words and “natural facts” (48), thus following earlier views that locate the origin of language in onomatopoeic imitation. Michael West, however, argues that Emerson later modified the extreme philosophy presented in *Nature*, finding speech to be “active, temporal, transitive, bipolar, and creative” rather than confined to natural representations (273). As West describes it, this shift served to emphasize the potential

for creativity within a single language, but Emerson's later position still falls short of cultural relativity. While Emerson recognizes the poet's creative power to shape language, his philosophy remains underpinned by an idealism that sees universal truths across all languages and cultures. This universalism is quite apparent in the essay "Books" from *Society and Solitude* (1870). There, Emerson asserts, "I do not hesitate to read . . . all good books, in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable,—any real insight or broad human sentiment" (182). Emerson thus overlooks and devalues any culturally specific content that translation might erase. Indeed, it is not this difference but only "broad human sentiment" that interests him. He further underestimates the creative work of the translator by comparing the act of translation to technology, writing that one series of translations "have done for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse" and that he "should as soon think of swimming across Charles River when [he wishes] to go to Boston, as of reading all [his] books in originals" (182). Emerson imagines that the act of translation is just as efficient and mechanical as any human innovation. Once again taking for granted the universality of human experience and the unproblematic correspondence between language and reality, Emerson overlooks what is really lost through translation's expediency.¹¹ When Melville uses the traveler's

¹¹ Similarly, in his reading of Walter Benjamin, Derrida connects the belief in translation to religious certainty: "Translation, the desire for translation, is not thinkable without this *correspondence* with a thought of God. In the text of 1916, which already accorded the task of the translator, his *Aufgabe*, with the response made to the gift of tongues and the gift of names . . . , Benjamin named God at this point, that of a correspondence between the languages engaged in translation. In this narrow context, there was also the matter of the relations between language of things and language of men, between the silent and the speaking, the anonymous and the nameable, but the axiom held, no doubt, for all translation: 'the objectivity of this translation is guaranteed in God'" (182). Perfect translation is only possible if all human languages are derived from a single divine root, and if the names man assigns to nature are firmly affixed.

encounter with foreign language to highlight the inherent difference of other cultures, his work clearly counteracts such idealistic philosophies of translation and universality, as well as the chauvinistic attitudes toward foreign differences they can so easily support. This interplay between universalism and cultural difference will be a persistent subject throughout *Transnational Translation*.

American Cosmopolitanism in the Early Republic

The texts examined in the following chapters also draw on a longer history of travel and of American attitudes toward the foreign. During the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin was the figurehead of American cosmopolitanism.¹² Franklin's views were cosmopolitan in both the political and the more general senses, as Thomas Schlereth demonstrates. In terms of "international law," Franklin believed in the "protection of neutral and noncombatant rights and the idea of arbitration of international disputes," but he also wished "to make himself as well as his fellow provincials 'as intelligent as most Gentlemen from Other countries'" (Schlereth 121, 128). Thus Franklin not only believed in the international cooperation of states, but he was also cosmopolitan in his desire to elevate America to the cultural level of Europe. Far from the willful ignorance of foreign manners that Twain would flaunt at the end of the nineteenth-century, Franklin's cosmopolitan outlook ensured his diplomatic success in France during the American Revolution. However, like Cooper, Franklin also balanced the worldliness necessary to

¹² In his examination of the cosmopolitanism of another American writer from the period, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Edward Larkin also lists Franklin, Thomas Paine (who will be discussed below), and Thomas Jefferson as major cosmopolites of the American Revolution (53). Larkin further describes two primary ideas of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism: "sympathy and commerce" (53). Both versions of involvement with foreign peoples will play a major role in the following chapters.

achieve his diplomatic goals with a sense of distinctly American identity and a passionate current of patriotism.¹³ In France, Franklin emphasized his Americanness while still endearing himself to the French nobility. Thus, at the end of the eighteenth century, Franklin demonstrated a political, philosophical, and cultural cosmopolitanism that was not incompatible with American patriotism.

Franklin's residence in France during the Revolution established one model for Americans abroad, but public opinion about the country's international relations shifted radically in the following decades. The career of Tomas Paine, a second quintessentially cosmopolitan figure, illustrates this shift. Paine's political beliefs encompassed what Thomas C. Walker calls "the most enduring strands of cosmopolitan thought in international relations: democratic governance, free trade, high degrees of interdependence, nonprovocative defense policies, a recognition that conquest cannot be profitable, and a universal respect for human rights" (52). Further, as Philipp Ziesche argues, Paine's popularity in America and then France demonstrates the centrality of "cosmopolitan universalism" in both countries' revolutions (3). However, public views of Paine, positive during the American Revolution but growing increasingly negative due to his support of the alarmingly radical and violent French Revolution, map a corresponding shift in public opinion as the initial cosmopolitanism of both American and French revolutionaries gave way to an increasing sense of nationalism (Schlereth 133; Ziesche 108). Yet, despite the backlash against Enlightenment cosmopolitanism at the turn of the

¹³ This duality in Franklin's attitudes is one subject of Jonathan Dull's article on Franklin's diplomacy. Dull argues that "[b]eneath Franklin's cosmopolitanism and charm lay the heart of a zealous patriot as uncompromising as Samuel Adams," but Dull also emphasizes Franklin's "public image, that of a simple Quaker in a fur cap" (349).

nineteenth century, Ziesche also describes “a resilient tradition of revolutionary cosmopolitanism” that lasted through the general shift to nationalism, particularly for the private American citizens residing in France who continued to practice the “public diplomacy” of letters and pamphlets first mastered by Franklin, at least until such activities were outlawed by congress in 1799 (Ziesche 166, 116-33). Thus, although the widespread feelings of cosmopolitanism first epitomized by Franklin and his fellow revolutionaries decreased during the French Revolution and the ensuing wars, support of American participation in international politics and culture continued into Cooper’s day.

The shifting values of cosmopolitanism and nationalism were also evident in debates over American language. In accordance with his other cosmopolitan attitudes, Franklin was quite interested in the possibility of “a universal language for use among the philosophes” (Schlereth 43). While he “especially welcomed French as the cosmopolite’s international language,” he also taught himself Spanish, Italian, German, and Latin (4). Franklin clearly valued communication across different nations and cultures, finding worth in the thoughts of those who speak foreign languages, at least European ones. But this cosmopolitan view of foreign language did not remain unchallenged. In sharp contrast to Franklin’s desire for international communication, the various proposals for a new American language sought to further separate the newly independent country from England.¹⁴ The suggested candidates for an American language ranged from Noah

¹⁴ As Cushing Strout puts it, “Noah Webster . . . made an appeal for a national tongue because for America to adopt Old World standards would be to betray the bloom of youth” (16). One of the most extended treatments of language in early America is David Simpson’s *The Politics of American English, 1776-1850*, which demonstrates that the issue of language was one of “weighty cultural, political, and economic importance” (7). Thomas Gustafson’s *Representative Words*, Christopher Looby’s *Voicing America*, and Jay Fliegelman’s *Declaring Independence* also examine language in the Early Republic.

Webster's drastic respelling of English, to ancient languages such as Hebrew or Greek, and even, in some accounts, to Algonquin (M. West 1-2; Shell, "Babel" 6). Often, such proposals were another manifestation of growing American nationalism. For example, one reason Noah Webster wanted drastic spelling reforms was to protect American printers, who would benefit from the business of "translating" all British books into the new American orthography (D. Simpson, *Politics* 53). Thus, not only would such plans distinguish the United States from England, but they would place a stronger linguistic barrier between American writers and the international community of thinkers.

Nevertheless, some proposals for an American language were not so clearly uncosmopolitan. In 1829, James Ruggles submitted to congress a plan for a "universal language" that would solve the dual problems of "the inconvenience of a diversity of tongues and dialects, which obstruct a free intercourse of thought between persons of different countries," and the fact that "the languages of all nations are more or less imperfect and incorrect" (Ruggles v). Accordingly, Ruggles devised "a philosophical language, more correct and simple than any one in use, . . . carrying with it to all nations, an inducement, arising from its intrinsic merit and ease of acquisition, which should lead to its universal adoption" (vi). Ruggles hoped that, if the United States adopted his language, other nations would follow suit—thus reversing the fragmentation and confusion caused by the curse of Babel. Michael West calls James Ruggles's submission for a new American language "the first mixed universal language" of the ilk of Esperanto (3). Unfortunately for the cosmopolitan aim of universal understanding, his scheme—in which the phrase "They are in excellent health" would translate to "Konpis salzdxrp bonzmxn" (Ruggles 152)—was never adopted. Nevertheless, as examples like Ruggles

demonstrate, the debates over American language were yet another arena in which the battle between Americans' participation in a cosmopolitan community and the calls for a narrower sense of nationalism was fought out.

The complex balance between cosmopolitanism and nationalism during the early republic, as well as the relation of such principles to the representation of foreign language, are best illustrated by one popular writer of the period, Royall Tyler. Tyler's most famous work, his play *The Contrast*, places the proper but unadorned speech of the hero Colonel Manly above both the amusing Yankeeisms of the bumpkin Jonathan and the affected and foreign-phrase-dropping speech of both the foppish Dimple and his pretentious servant Jessamy. The play thus aims to help early American audiences find a balance between utter provincialism and slavish attention to European conventions. Tyler is also a useful figure for bridging the gap between the Enlightenment ideal of cosmopolitanism espoused by Franklin and the modified combination of cosmopolitanism and nationalism that characterized the United States in the early decades of the nineteenth century. On one hand, Tyler demonstrates the desire for universal language and understanding that characterized Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. At the same time, he models the combination of cosmopolitanism and patriotism that will characterize Cooper's writings several decades later.

Although they are not as frequently read or anthologized as *The Contrast*, Tyler's two fictional travel narratives, *The Algerine Captive* (1797) and *The Yankey in London*

(1809), offer a valuable introduction to the works examined in the following chapters.¹⁵ In *The Algerine Captive*, Tyler mocks the pretention of a classical education when used merely to impress a boorish and ignorant public, but the protagonist Updike Underhill's experiences in captivity demonstrate that such a broad linguistic education can be useful to a world citizen. The brunt of the satire, then, is directed not at the classical pretensions of Underhill but at his countrymen's provincial failure to appreciate advanced learning.

The first half of Tyler's bifurcated novel describes Underhill's youth and early career in America. A local minister, who is more impressed by the loud volume of the boy's recitation than its content, convinces Underhill's parents to educate their son for college. Although the next four years find the youth "labouring incessantly at Greek and Latin," he neglects the study of English grammar because, as Underhill reports, "my preceptor, knowing nothing of it himself, could communicate nothing to me" (25). Tyler suggests that, whatever benefits a classical education might provide, it should not be prioritized above speaking proper English. When the time comes for Underhill to attend college, however, his father is shocked to learn that his son's Greek is only useful for obtaining additional unpractical education, and that "all that is useful in [Greek books]

¹⁵ *The Algerine Captive* is not often examined in detail, but several have rightly praised it as an early anti-slavery novel (see Benchérif 46; Blum, *View* 55). It is also mentioned as an early example of sea fiction, although most note that the maritime scenes are not treated with any significant amount of descriptive detail (see Clohessy; Wharton 56; T. Philbrick, *James* 31). Cathy N. Davidson reads the novel as an example of the picaresque genre in early American literature, and her description of the picaresque's ability to "leap from one construction of reality to its inverse" is particularly helpful in unraveling the varied and seemingly contradictory references to language throughout the novel (242). Cooper praises *The Algerine Captive* in a 1822 review of *A New-England Tale*, calling it "Mr. Tyler's forgotten, and we fear, lost narrative," and he advises, "Any future collector of our national tales, would do well to snatch [it] from oblivion, and to give [it] that place among the memorials of other days, which is due to the early and authentic historians of a country" ("Art. V." 336-37).

. . . is already translated into English; and more of the sense and spirit may be imbibed, from translations, than most scholars would be able to extract, from the originals” (28). Although Underhill is initially “left . . . proud of [his] Greek,” he laments, “[t]he little advantage, this deceased language has since been to me” and he “regret[s] the mispense [sic] of time, in acquiring it” (29). The problem with learning Greek appears to be one of economy: it may be an impressive accomplishment, but a young American could better employ his time either perfecting his English grammar or performing useful labor on his father’s farm.

While these early scenes might suggest that Tyler privileges parochial practicality over a more cosmopolitan involvement in international intellectual circles, later scenes prove Underhill’s education to be more useful than it first appeared. While Underhill’s pretentious Greek recitations are a liability in courtship and other social relations—one lady calls him “*papish*” after mistaking his Greek for French, and another is insulted when he compares her to “the ox eyed Juno” (33,46)—his languages are an asset in the study of medicine. Not only is Greek “some service to [him], in now and then finding the root of the labels cyphered on [their] gallipots,” but one practicing physician impresses and recruits his patients by quoting random phrases from Latin grammars (54, 68-69). This latter application may seem the most egregious misuse of classical learning, but unlike Underhill’s earlier pub recitations, it proves beneficial to all involved. Underhill had found no demand for his medical expertise in a town overpopulated by quacks, but his supposed apprenticeship to the Latin-quoting “learned doctor” allows the pair to administer sound treatments to willing patients. It even gives Underhill the opportunity to teach his “master” real medicine.

In the second half of Tyler's novel, Underhill uses his skill with languages and his medical training to improve his position in Algiers, contrasting the spurious and pretentious learning of the first half to the real cosmopolitanism necessary for Underhill's survival in captivity. When he leaves the hard labor of the Christian slaves for the luxury of the college, where the Mollah tries to convert him to Islam, the two converse in Latin (138). His Latin is further useful in learning the "*Lingua Franca*" of Algiers, which "contain[s] many Latin derivatives" (137). Underhill is initially critical of this pidgin mixture "of the shreds and clippings of all the tongues, dead and living, ever spoken since the creation" (137), but a continued inability to speak to his captors would have made life more difficult and his eventual escape less likely. In the end, just as Underhill's prior linguistic knowledge helps him to adapt to the international community in Algiers, the experience of his captivity further expands his worldliness.¹⁶ As Cathy N. Davidson argues, "For Underhill, to travel is to see different things, but, more important, to sojourn for six years in Algiers is to see things differently" (302). Thus, Tyler sets a precedent for Cooper in his complex assessment of the value of advanced education. While American

¹⁶ It is interesting to observe, however, that much of the use Underhill obtains from his classical education comes from his Latin, which is historically an international language of learning, rather than from his Greek, which is more truly a dead language. A parallel to this distinction can be seen in Cooper's biography. When he first enrolled at Yale, the young Cooper had no trouble with Latin but continued to struggle with Greek after barely gleaning enough of that language from a private tutor to pass the entrance requirements (W. Franklin, *Early Years* 47). In *The Pilot*, Cooper might have been thinking of his own early expulsion from Yale, as well as his difficulty with Greek, when Barnstable proclaims: "Grif is a seaman; though I have heard him even read the testament in Greek! Thank God, I had the wisdom to run away from school the second day they undertook to teach me a strange tongue, and I believe I am the more honest man, and the better seaman, for my ignorance!" (322). Despite Barnstable's skepticism of the value of a classical education, Griffith's more measured decisions throughout *The Pilot* demonstrate, as Underhill discovers in Algiers, that there can be great benefits to such linguistic knowledge.

society does not require the high level of education that the spurious doctors feign, it is equally foolish to repudiate learning altogether, thereby cutting off all possibilities of meaningful intercourse with the world. Deciding what education to pursue may warrant attention to the practical realities of American life, but it should not use practicality as an excuse for provinciality.

Tyler's admiration for classical languages is even more apparent in his second fictitious travelogue, *The Yankey in London*, consisting of letters "Written by an American Youth, During Nine Month's Residence in the City of London" on various aspects of English politics, life, and culture. When asked for his "opinion of the English language, taken in comparison with the various languages of Europe," the American suggests using classical languages as a benchmark (171-73). He asserts that one can judge a modern language's quality by seeing how well a sentiment expressed in Greek or Latin can be translated into that language. For Tyler, the ideas of Homer are perfectly expressed in Greek, and English can prove its quality by conveying those same ideas. Thus, Tyler esteems classical languages for their closeness to an ideal of universal language that might transcend national bias and cultural specificity. By holding perfect translatability as a paragon of linguistic virtue, Tyler reveals a cosmopolitan desire for communication between all peoples and the same linguistic idealism later espoused by Transcendentalism. As the example of Anacharsis Cloots demonstrates, however, this assumption of universality has a tendency to slip into both cultural and political imperialism.

Tyler also critiques the charge that American language is provincial. He begins the letter on "Bite—bamboozle—all the rage—quiz—quizzical—bore—horrid bore—I

owe you one—that’s a good one,” by criticizing what he calls “cant words, or quaint expressions” (101). Tyler’s complaint is the same timeless railing of the stickler that can be seen in Cooper’s *The American Democrat* (see Chapter One), in Twain’s famous lampooning of Cooper, and in the lessons of curmudgeonly English teachers everywhere. Things become more interesting however, when the letter writer recounts a discussion with an English friend. The American does not notice his own “repeated use” of the “verb *guess*” until the Englishman calls his attention to “this *provincialism*, as he styled it” (105). The American counters by pointing out that his friend’s use of “clever” or “clever fellow” is just as deviant from “modern English fine writing” (106). When the two decide to work together to rid themselves of such vulgar speech patterns, the expressions are no longer called “provincialisms” but “colloquialisms,” with their geographical and political implications removed (106). While the Englishman was quick to blame the American’s sub-standard word choice on his country’s provincialism, Tyler makes it clear that such linguistic faults can be found on both sides of the Atlantic. By applying the tolerance of cultural and linguistic difference that is the hallmark of cosmopolitanism onto the United States, Tyler highlights linguistic variety in order to collapse the hierarchy between the language of the provinces and of the metropole.

Overall, in these letters, Tyler espouses a perspective of linguistic relativism. When he admits that an inherent bias toward one’s native tongue prevents a fair comparison between languages, his attitude is far from provincial. In contrast to the unreflecting nationalism that will become common at the end of the nineteenth century, Tyler recognizes that most linguistic judgments will be biased because the “language in which [one] can most readily convey his ideas, he will be prone to consider the best”

(172). Similarly, Tyler does not advocate a permanent idea of pure English, but acknowledges that all languages change over time, transitioning through “the incoherency and simplicity of youth, the vigour of manhood, and the decline and decrepitude of old age” (175). The American gives his opinion on the state of the English language, but admits he may be mistaken because “a nation can never judge of its own decline in language” (178). Alfred Bendixen has read Tyler’s fictitious travelogue as a work of chauvinistic nationalism (104), but this linguistic relativity indicates a greater degree of cosmopolitanism than Bendixen recognizes. Indeed, Caleb Crain also calls Tyler “a cosmopolitan who composed poems in the style of the Persian poet and mystic Hafez (whose name means ‘one who has memorized the Koran’)” (xxxii). Although he is deeply invested in giving his characters a particularly American identity, Tyler models the openness to foreign language and thought that will become increasingly absent from travel literature during the nineteenth century.

Foreign Language Encounters in the Nineteenth Century

The three major figures in this study—James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain—all confront the reality of foreign language and translation in their descriptions of travel to both the “civilized” world of Europe and the “savage” lands of the Southern and Eastern hemispheres. Tracing the representation of foreign language and the assessment of translatability in accounts of travel to both types of countries reveals these writers’ attitudes toward “otherness” and toward the possibility of bridging cultural differences. Whether a work encourages a cosmopolitan appreciation of foreign culture, or supports a nationalistic preference for only one’s own language and culture, the representation of linguistic difference raises deeper issues of economic and cultural

incommensurability and demonstrates how American writers conceive of and portray the United States' place in the world. Cooper balances cosmopolitanism and patriotism by valuing national differences and the differences between languages. Melville extends Cooper's linguistic cosmopolitanism to Western and non-Western languages alike, critiquing the views of "savage" language found in imperialist discourse. At the end of the century, however, Twain's travel writings will suggest, not entirely in jest, that any communication outside of American English is ridiculous. This trajectory is elaborated in the five chapters that follow.

The first chapter examines Cooper's writings about travel to Europe, tracing his fusion of patriotism and cosmopolitanism from the representation of the Revolutionary War in *The Pilot*, through his own travels to Europe as documented in the five travelogues that constitute *Gleanings in Europe*, and concluding with a novel written after his return, *Homeward Bound*. Throughout these texts, it becomes clear that Cooper's travel continues an older model of extended residence in European society and that it espouses a cosmopolitan resistance to translation. Cooper includes numerous passages of untranslated European language in his travel writing, thereby imagining and promoting a cosmopolitan readership with extensive linguistic education and appreciation for European culture. Although he does not dream of a universal language as did Tyler and the cosmopolites of the Enlightenment, Cooper seeks to counteract America's perceived provincialism by speaking the languages of Europe, and he sees value in the distinct traits of each language—the inherent differences that resist translation.

Cooper is also the central author in the second chapter, but here the focus shifts away from Europe. Scenes from *Afloat and Ashore* and *Homeward Bound* demonstrate

Cooper's engagement with the imperialist representation of native languages in texts ranging from the discovery of Columbus through the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842. Cooper's works demonstrate the imperialist's paradoxical desire to both emphasize difference and to efface it, to view "savage" language as both utterly incomprehensible and easily translatable. Cooper further explores this paradox in his own retelling of the Columbus story, *Mercedes of Castile*. Both this underappreciated novel and another later work, *The Crater*, also raise the issue of economic incommensurability, which proves to be yet another kind of cultural difference that resists translation. Cooper's final assessment of American expansionism remains somewhat ambivalent, but the themes first introduced in his later works provide an invaluable framework for the examination of Melville in the following chapter.

The third chapter builds on the historical and theoretical groundwork laid in Chapter Two by examining the representation of non-European languages in the works of Melville. It traces his developing theory of language and translation beginning in *Typee*; continuing through *Omoo*, *Mardi*, and parts of *Moby-Dick*; and concluding with Melville's most pointed critique of translation in "Benito Cereno." Inspired by his own experiences of linguistic encounter, Melville begins his literary career by portraying the complexities of cross-cultural communication with a level of nuance and sensitivity that is new to the tradition of colonial and imperialist texts he both critiques and builds upon. By paying increasing attention to the difficulties of translation and to the nature of language, Melville develops a theory of the inherent incommensurability of different languages and cultures, a theory that counters the universalizing tendencies not only of idealist views of natural language but also of imperialism's will-to-power.

Taking a slight step back in the chronology, the fourth chapter returns to European travel, picking up where the first chapter left off. By examining the more conventional travel writings of Bayard Taylor (*Views A-Foot*), Margaret Fuller (*Tribune* dispatches), and Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*), it traces the gradual change from the extended residence epitomized by Cooper to the tourism boom after the Civil War. Increasingly, American travelers became less interested in learning foreign languages, and less interested in the real content of foreign culture, preferring instead the cultural capital acquired from the act of merely having been to or having seen the conventional stops of the tourist's itinerary. This chapter also explores Melville's engagement with these changes in American travel, examining the maritime alternative to tourism presented in *Redburn* as well as the eventual acquiescence to both tourism and translation evident in *Clarel*.

Finally, the changes examined in Chapter Four culminate in the tourist age of the late nineteenth century, and in the archetypal American abroad found in the travel writings of Mark Twain. Twain's two European travel narratives, *Innocents Abroad* and *A Tramp Abroad*, present a burlesque account of cross-cultural communication, lampooning Americans pretentious enough to flaunt their knowledge of European languages, and ultimately suggesting that such linguistic knowledge is both elusive and useless. While Samuel Clemens, the man behind the persona, may become increasingly cosmopolitan in the later decades of his life, Twain's continuing jokes about the folly of translation fortify the United States' intensifying attitudes of linguistic and cultural nationalism. The study concludes with an examination of Henry James's *The American*, which, along with the examination of *Following the Equator* in Chapter Five,

demonstrates that the once distinct representations of European and non-European languages converge by the end of the century, with the result that all linguistic difference is viewed with the imperialist's combination of avoidance and disavowal.

By examining the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and economic exchange in American travel to disparate parts of the globe with equally varied purposes, this study reveals a nineteenth-century version of what is often taken as a postmodern state of global exchange, what Bhabha describes as the "circulations of signs and commodities [that] are caught in the vicious circuits of surplus value that link First World capital to Third World labour markets" (30). In the nineteenth century, American travelers faced a similarly complex array of circulating signs and commodities, and one index of how they conceptualized these varied moments and modes of exchange is their representation of the translatability of linguistic difference. The "transnational turn" in American literary studies has uncovered countless examples of underappreciated authors writing from locations and in languages only newly included under the umbrella of "American literature." This study offers a complementary vision of American transnationalism, finding in three of the most canonical American novelists an account of American identity that crosses the boundaries of both language and place.

CHAPTER 1
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER'S LINGUISTIC COSMOPOLITANISM

The end of the Napoleonic Wars marked a resurgence in transatlantic travel. Gone were both the xenophobic nationalism inspired by the French Revolution and the military danger caused by the War of 1812. Americans began once again to revisit their cultural roots by traveling to the Old World.¹ This period also gave rise to one of the first major American novelists, and the first major figure in this study, James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper builds upon the cosmopolitan tradition of the American Revolution in many of his transatlantic works, and issues of language and translation are pervasive throughout his extensive writings.

An overwhelming majority of the scholarship on Cooper has focused on the *Leatherstocking Tales*. One subset of this trend examines Cooper's presentation of Native American speech supposedly "translated" into English, an admittedly interesting facet of Cooper's engagement with language. But the emphasis on American settings also has given the misleading impression that Cooper was most, if not solely, interested in the themes of American exceptionalism and the frontier.² Moreover, in contrast to Cooper's cosmopolitan engagement with foreign languages abroad, his treatment of Native

¹ See Foster Rhea Dulles's *Americans Abroad* for a detailed history of nineteenth-century American travel.

² Luis Iglesias makes a similar distinction between Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and his sea novels. He explains, "The maritime setting gives Copper [sic] license to explore new strategies for presenting American materials, open to a world of languages, customs, and encounters distinct from the epic western expansion with which the *Leatherstocking* novels are so persistently identified."

American language tends toward the stereotypical.³ Previous critics have rightly demonstrated Cooper's attention to linguistic difference, but their limited focus has overemphasized his interest in the act of translation.⁴ As the following argument will reveal, Cooper's numerous works with foreign settings contain a different treatment of multilingualism.

Shifting the focus away from the *Leatherstocking Tales* reveals that their author had a far more international outlook. Indeed, like his cosmopolitan predecessors, Cooper balanced pride in his American identity with an appreciation for foreign languages and cultures. This cosmopolitan attitude is revealed by the representation of European

³ Michael West, for example, explains how Cooper's depiction of Native American language is stereotypically full of gesture and physical metaphors, and how Cooper thereby "insist[s] on the physicality of Indian languages" and invites "readers to imagine a primitive consciousness that had somehow avoided the Cartesian split between mind and body, word and world" (297-98). Eric Cheyfitz is even more critical of Cooper's presentation of Native American languages as languages of metaphor, arguing that the author views "civilization as that state which distinguishes between the literal and the metaphoric" ("Literally" 79).

⁴ Colleen Glenney Boggs includes a reading of *The Last of the Mohicans* in her study of the theme of translation in nineteenth-century American literature. She argues that Cooper "theoriz[es] moments when translation fails or succeeds only partially," thereby recognizing the "alterity that remains beyond the discursive reading of translation" (63). Cheyfitz reads acts of translation in *The Pioneers* as representative of the violence done to Native Americans by whites ("Literally" 75). Lawrence Alan Rosenwald calls attention to "Cooper's scenes of magical translation," in which statements in unknown languages are somehow easily understood (30). Michael Kowalewski notes in his reading of *The Deerslayer* that, whatever Cooper may have hoped to achieve with his "translated" scenes, they leave Cooper open to the "embarrassment" of his work's obvious artificiality (73). Michael West comes closest to the conclusions that I will draw from the less-examined portion of Cooper's works when he argues, "The *Leatherstocking Tales* are permeated with the conviction that verbal expression is radically ambiguous. The mute grandeur of Cooper's wilderness is always menaced by a babel of languages, by diverse dialects and idiolects competing for center stage. Each undermines the others' claims to represent the world truly" (297). Other readings of language and translation in Cooper include those of Stephen Blakemore ("Language" and "Strange"), Jeffrey Hotz (*Divergent*), and Andrew Newman.

language in *The Pilot*, *Gleanings in Europe*, and *Homeward Bound*. In these transatlantic encounters, Cooper does not pretend to translate foreign languages but rather avoids the act of translation whenever possible. He praises the figure of the cosmopolitan traveler who can speak and understand the languages of other countries and emphasizes the sophisticated perspective such a traveler gains by confronting the alterity that translation would have obscured.⁵

The Meaning of “English” in *The Pilot*

As examined in the Introduction, the American Revolution was a catalyst for a number of important changes in American attitudes toward foreign language: it fostered the cosmopolitanism of social contract theorists and foreign diplomats such as Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and Benjamin Franklin; encouraged a greater emphasis on French language and culture; and incited a series of debates over the desirability of distinguishing the young republic from England in its language as well as its government and culture. Although the purer cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment began to give way to a growing sense of nationalism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Cooper, when compared to the later writers in this study, clearly values cosmopolitan multilingualism as an essential component of American travel. The history of cosmopolitanism in America plays a major role in one of Cooper’s Revolutionary novels,

⁵ Other critics who have recognized Cooper’s cosmopolitanism, although not necessarily in the context of language and translation, include Robert Daly and Alisa Marko Iannucci. Virgil Nemoianu describes Cooper’s “cultural relativism” and argues that “Cooper . . . reflected on the issue of what we nowadays call multiculturalism and the place of relativity in human culture” (28). Robert Lawson-Peebles (341) and Thomas Clark (189) both use the term “transatlantic” in describing how Cooper’s political perspective transcended national boundaries.

The Pilot (1823).⁶ While Cooper's early works about the American Revolution often have been viewed as nationalistic endeavors, a far more nuanced reading is possible when one takes into account the complexity of Cooper's patriotism.⁷ In *The Pilot*, although Cooper ardently supports the political innovation of a democratic republic, he continues to see value in the culture of the mother country and consequently rejects the need for an arbitrary linguistic separation. The cosmopolitanism of these political views is mirrored in his conception of language. Because human language is both imperfect and heterogeneous, one must learn, understand, and identify as many variations as possible to ensure the clearest and most efficient communication. For Cooper, this heterogeneity also makes it foolish to conflate a national with a linguistic community; true patriotism must

⁶ *The Pilot* is one of Cooper's historical novels, but it is also considered Cooper's first sea tale, a genre which scholars such as Ronald John Clohessy (n.p.) and Donald P. Wharton (58) have seen as an expression of nationalism. Indeed, Cooper is often said to have "[begun] the tradition of American sea fiction" (Foulke 20; see also W. Franklin, *Early Years* xxiii). As the later example of Melville will demonstrate, the literally *international* setting of sea literature makes it particularly relevant to the present study of plurilingualism and exchange in travel literature. Luis Iglesias summarizes this connection by arguing that "Cooper's sea novels expose the complicated work of defining the nation in terms of its relation to international exchange." Thus, while many readings of *The Pilot* have focused on Cooper's vivid description of nautical scenes and his improvement on the unrealistic maritime description in Sir Walter Scott's *The Pirate*, Cooper's novel also lends itself to a reading of America's place in the transatlantic world.

⁷ George Dekker takes the first perspective when he criticizes *The Pilot* for being "a schoolboyish novel, vitiated especially by an ingenuous and rather unsavoury patriotism" (114). In contrast, David Simpson calls "Cooper's patriotism . . . complex and never hyperbolic" (*Politics* 149). H. Daniel Peck describes Cooper's ambivalent position between the two sides of the Revolution and "the writer's failure to commit himself either to the possibilities of freedom and the future or to the values of tradition and the past" (596). Jason Berger also examines "Cooper's anxiety about the American Revolution and nationalism proper" (644); William P. Kelly notes that "*The Pilot* shares with *The Spy* an understanding of the American Revolution as a civil war" (114); and John P. McWilliams similarly describes how Cooper "[draws] no clear distinctions of merit between the British and American forces operating in the neutral ground" (*Political* 75).

distinguish between empty markers of national identity and national characteristics genuinely worth promoting.

It might seem strange to begin a study of foreign language with a work set in England, but the issues of translation and equivalence that must be confronted when faced with a foreign language are never absent even in one's own language. Indeed, as Michael Cronin argues, "The language of home becomes stranger and more labyrinthine in the mouths and minds of others who ostensibly speak the same language" (*Across* 3).⁸ Cooper highlights the heterogeneity within English in order to negotiate the associations between national identity, language, and gentility. Indeed, *The Pilot* works against the idea of a unified language from its opening dialogue, in which laborers on shore discuss the arriving ships. Their conversation is rendered phonetically in Irish and Scottish dialects. While the rest of the novel will focus on the growing division between the Americans and the English, the dialects of these two minor characters fall outside of the American/English binary. They remind readers that the heterogeneity of the English language has a far deeper history than the American Revolution. Because of the many varieties of English, any simple one-to-one correspondence between language and nation becomes impossible. Although *The Pilot* ostensibly celebrates the American Revolution, it is clear from the opening scene that Cooper refuses to espouse any easy nationalism. Without a monolithic concept of "Englishness" to reject, citizens of the new republic

⁸ Cronin further suggests that "translation is more explicitly emphasised in intralingual travelling than in interlingual travelling. It is as if intralingual accounts ward off the threat of (language) sameness through the highlighting of (language) difference while interlingual accounts counter the menace of irreducible (language) difference through the reiteration of sameness (minimising or making invisible the transaction costs of translation)" (*Across* 10-11).

would have to consider what was valuable and different in the new country and what of the old should and must be maintained.

The heterogeneity of English established in the opening sequence becomes even more prominent in Cooper's treatment of the technical language of sailors. Cooper's use of nautical jargon was groundbreaking, and it remains, accordingly, one of the most examined elements of Cooper's first sea tale. A representative passage from *The Pilot* illustrates the key characteristics of Cooper's nautical description:

Griffith gave forth from his trumpet the command to "heave away!" Again the strains of the fife were followed by the tread of the men at the capstern. At the same time that the anchor was heaving up, the sails were loosened from the yards, and opened to invite the breeze. In effecting this duty, orders were thundered through the trumpet of the first lieutenant, and executed with the rapidity of thought. Men were to be seen, like spots in the dim light from the heavens, lying on every yard, or hanging as in air, while strange cries were heard issuing from every part of the rigging, and each spar of the vessel. "Ready the foreroyal," cried a shrill voice, as if from the clouds; "ready the fore yard," uttered the hoarser tones of a seaman beneath him; "all ready aft, sir," cried a third, from another quarter; and in a few moments, the order was given to "let fall." (43-44)

Many critics have noted Cooper's ability in such passages to incorporate technical language without totally obscuring the meaning for lay readers.⁹ This example includes some specialized vocabulary, such as "capstern," "foreroyal," and "fore yard," but the general action, if not the particular sails and masts of a frigate, is clear. By combining metaphorical description, such as comparing the sailors in the rigging to "spots in the dim

⁹ Both Thomas Philbrick (*James* 12) and Wayne Franklin (*Early Years* 409) note Cooper's reluctance to employ overly technical language, although Cooper felt that some was necessary for his nautical subject matter. Hester Blum argues that "Cooper employs nautical vocabulary and knowledge" so that "the metaphors . . . would be accessible to the reader who might not be familiar with its technicalities" (*View* 85). According to Dekker, Cooper was able "to combine vivid descriptive prose and technical nautical language so artfully that the latter, not baffling the lay reader too much, actually enhanced the realistic effect of the former" (114).

light from the heavens,” with the more abstruse technical terms, Cooper achieves a vivid effect even if the distinction between a “yard” and a “spar” is lost.

Yet the purpose of such technical terminology is not merely maritime flavor. Cooper demonstrates how being conversant in multiple “languages” allows communication to be as precise as possible. David Simpson looks at a similar example of Cooper’s “sea diction” in *Homeward Bound* and contends that the “passage is intimidating to the average reader, but to the sailor it is totally intelligible and totally precise” (*Politics* 199). Simpson explains that, in nautical jargon as in other technical uses of language, “[e]very word refers to an unambiguous thing or describes an unambiguous act” (199). Thus, in the above scene, the technical orders are “executed with the rapidity of thought” because they require no interpretation.¹⁰ Maintaining the technical specificity of nautical terms demonstrates a tendency of Cooper’s that will become more apparent in later works—leaving foreign languages untranslated. Cooper is unwilling to change or obscure the meaning of a passage by translating it into more standard English. But the precise meaning of jargon is only available to those readers with knowledge of nautical terms and the corresponding functions of a ship. In this way, Cooper’s nautical terminology points to the imperfection of human language. Either an avoidance of technical language (a “translation” of nautical actions into common terms) would decrease the specificity of the description, or an inclusion of jargon would obscure the action to lay readers. For this reason, Margaret Cohen’s assertion that such readers

¹⁰ Mary K. Edwards also notes the value of precise nautical jargon: “At sea, the specificity of sailor language is an absolute necessity for the safety of the ship and crew. The cry ‘Let fly fore t’gallant sheets. Haul clews!’ results in one direct action that may be crucial to keep the vessel from destruction” (31).

can “garner unfamiliar knowledge” from Cooper’s nautical scenes is particularly significant (489). It is only by gaining expertise in nautical language (or in foreign languages, as will later be the case) that readers can avoid ambiguity and maximize their comprehension.

In another passage, the quintessential sailor Tom Coffin demonstrates the value of his technical expertise by reading the language of sea and sky to predict dangerous weather approaching. He says:

“I showed you how to knot a reef-point, and pass a gasket, Captain Barnstable, nor do I believe you could even take two half hitches when you first came aboard of the Spalmacitty. These be things that a man is soon expert in, but it takes the time of his nat’ral life to larn to know the weather. There be streaked wind-galls in the offing, that speak as plainly, to all that see them, and know God’s language in the clouds, as ever you spoke through a trumpet, to shorten sail; besides, sir, don’t you hear the sea moaning, as if it knew the hour was at hand when it was to wake up from its sleep!” (25)

Coffin’s speech, like that of Natty Bumppo or of the two laborers in the opening scene, is marked by non-standard pronunciations. Yet, while Coffin may not be “expert” in proper English, he displays two other levels of linguistic expertise. The first, his familiarity with “knotting a reef-point” and “passing a gasket,” exemplifies the technical language seen throughout Cooper’s sea tale. The second language, “God’s language in the clouds,” is like Simpson’s explanation of jargon in that the signs can “speak . . . plainly, to all that see them.” Such knowledge of weather indicators has obvious value, but Coffin emphasizes that “God’s language” takes a lifetime of practice to master. By including nautical jargon in his narration, Cooper encourages and assists the reader in acquiring knowledges like these. Cooper further demonstrates the value of Coffin’s expertise in the ensuing action. Coffin’s warning for the hero, Barnstable, to cut short his romantic

interview with his disguised fiancée, Katharine, leads to the exciting escape of the two American ships, aided, of course, by the technical knowledge and language of the Pilot himself. While nautical jargon is not exactly equivalent to an entirely foreign language, Cooper's use of technical language demonstrates the position on language acquisition that he will develop in later works. By refusing to translate technical actions into common terms, Cooper maintains the cultural specificity of nautical language while encouraging the reader to gain linguistic knowledge and, consequently, a more cosmopolitan outlook.

While the nautical portions of *The Pilot* prove the value of linguistic variety, the drawing-room scenes that further the novel's romantic plot demonstrate how language's flexibility and multiplicity can be used for deceitful purposes.¹¹ For example, Katharine's letter to Barnstable repeatedly critiques the terminology of her loyalist guardian, Colonel Howard. She writes, "He used fifty opprobrious terms that I cannot remember, but among others were the beautiful epithets of 'disorganizer,' 'leveller,' 'democrat,' and 'jacobin.' (I hope he did not mean a monk!)" (67). Her complaint demonstrates the equivocality of such signifiers. The term "democrat" may be "opprobrious" to a loyalist, but an American revolutionary would claim it proudly. Likewise, "disorganizer" and "leveler" are only negative if one believes the status quo does not need to be disorganized or leveled. Language's potential for misdirection is further highlighted by the anachronistic

¹¹ Many previous readers have preferred the exciting and vivid scenes of nautical action to the novel's "land scenes," but in largely ignoring the latter, they have missed the many references to language that clarify Cooper's ambivalent nationalism. For example, Cohen quickly discounts half of *The Pilot* saying, "From its publication, . . . readers agreed that the love plots on land took a backseat to the real dramatic energy of the novel which is offered by the exploits of the mysterious shadowy pilot, John Paul Jones, as he stages raids off Scotland during the American Revolution" (484).

use of “jacobin,” which references the French Revolution.¹² It is possible that this is merely Cooper’s error in chronology, but Katharine’s parenthetical “(I hope he did not mean a monk!)” makes a kind of metatextual linguistic joke. Katharine’s interjection calls attention to the only definition of “jacobin” available to her, but it is clear to the reader that the term’s most relevant definition, however anachronistic, is “a revolutionary with democratic principles.” Colonel Howard thus takes a word with a precise political and historical meaning out of context and uses it indiscriminately to signal the “enemy.” By highlighting how such “opprobrious epithets” have no fixed or simple meaning, Katharine demonstrates how easy it is for opposing viewpoints to be encapsulated with a disparaging term rather than addressed directly and examined thoughtfully.

Katharine further critiques language’s potential for manipulation when she explains, “the rooms we inhabit are in the upper or third floor of a wing, that you may call a tower, if you are in a romantic mood, but which, in truth, is nothing but a wing” (68). Calling their section of St. Ruth’s a “tower” would conform to the standards of a romantic novel, but Katharine is quick to point out that this dramatic appellation is not entirely truthful. Here again, she calls attention to how an artful application of terminology can convey a connotation beyond what may be most factually accurate. Finally, Katharine gets to the root of the novel’s political conflict when she confides that the Americans are called “pirates” by her captors. She complains, “yes, that is the musical name they give you—and when their own people land, and plunder, and rob, and murder the men and insult the women, they are called heroes! It’s a fine thing to be able

¹² According to the *OED*, the French political use of the term “jacobin” dates no earlier than 1789, and its general application to any political reformer comes into use around 1800 (“Jacobin, *n.* and *adj.*”).

to invent names and make dictionaries” (69). Such names have more connection to the speaker’s feelings than to the reality they describe—and one mark of power is the ability to apply such terminology to one’s own advantage. The specificity of precise jargon is of no avail if it is not used in an accurate and straightforward way. Moreover, because there is no strong link between fallen human language and any divine or universal origin, words are only inadequate “inventions.” The precision made possible by linguistic variety may improve human communication, but it can never perfect it—there is always room for both inaccuracy and deceit.

Katharine’s view of words conforms to one Cooper later expresses in *The American Democrat* (1838).¹³ From its beginning, Cooper’s treatise emphasizes “the necessity of distinguishing between names and things in governments, as well as in other matters” (15). This critical view of language is particularly important when interpreting the Constitution. Cooper asserts that many of the “popular errors” in understanding that document “have arisen from mistaking the meaning of [its] language” (22). Cooper’s emphasis on the ambiguous language of the Constitution is not surprising in light of Thomas Gustafson’s analysis in *Representative Words*. Gustafson argues, “since the Constitution is written in a fundamentally imperfect human language, the text—and the political order it creates—possesses the fundamental imperfections of language itself” (273).¹⁴ Yet Cooper does not doubt the existence of the “things” behind language’s

¹³ For further discussion of the importance of *The American Democrat*, see Steven Watts (65) and John P. McWilliams (“Cooper” 666; *Political* 197).

¹⁴ Gustafson goes on to point out that moments of “judicial resolutions of conflict” are interpretive decisions, “a selective choice from a range of competing political values,” rather than the “discoveries or revelations” we hope them to be (T. Gustafson 273). This description of interpreting the Constitution as choosing one of an array of ambiguous

“names.” He explains his perspective in *The American Democrat* chapter “On Language.” Introducing his complaint about Americans’ indiscriminate use of the word “gentleman,” Cooper writes, “Some changes of the language are to be regretted, as they lead to false inferences, and society is always a loser by mistaking names for things. Life is a fact, and it is seldom any good arises from a misapprehension of the real circumstances under which we exist” (120). Cooper believes in a fixed reality beyond language, but he recognizes that the connection between that reality and the various names it is given is far from perfect. For Cooper, it is essential that words signal as precise a meaning as possible, but he rejects the marshaling of excess meaning for the sake of manipulation and deception.

Cooper further highlights linguistic variety’s potential for both precision and deception through Katharine’s signal system, a series of romantic messages she translates into flag signs for communicating with the Americans from her confinement.¹⁵ Yet the

meanings is very much like Lawrence Venuti’s definition of translation as “a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the foreign text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the translating language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation” (13). In law, as in translation, the original text is often ambiguous, but it is not always possible to allow this inherent ambiguity to remain ambiguous. When interpreting the Constitution, as when translating a text, it is impossible to achieve a perfectly “literal” translation. A judicial resolution, like any translation, must be based on an interpretation of the original; it can never be a scientific transfer of meaning.

¹⁵ Previous readings of this system have been mixed. Blum credits Katharine’s achievement by noting that “her flags do provide for crucial information to be transferred,” but she concludes by admitting that the heroine’s “employment of such skills—a flirtatious point of appeal for her lover—is more precious than practiced” (*View* 85). McWilliams cites the signal system as an example of how, unlike many of Cooper’s heroines, Katharine “proves to be a woman of action” (“More” 79). In light of Katharine’s critique of language use throughout the novel, however, it becomes clear that her signal system is more than a “precious” eccentricity or, as others have suggested, an indication of a potentially excellent captain’s wife.

first appearance of a flag comes before Katharine is even introduced. Cooper describes how the frigate accompanying the *Ariel* raises a “heavy ensign,” and, “a current of air opening, for a moment, its folds, the white field, and red cross, that distinguish the flag of England, [are] displayed to view” (15). The colors and shapes on the banner communicate that the ship is under British control. Like so many other instances of communication in the novel, however, this sign proves to be deceitful, as the ship actually contains the American revolutionaries who will be the heroes of the story. Thus, while Katharine’s signal language may seem laughable, it proves more reliable than the conventional display of a national flag, which is easily forged. In another example, Cooper emphasizes the importance of signal flags at sea when a soldier tells Griffith, “Why, they have shown him a yellow flag over a blue one, with a cornet, and that spells Ariel, in every signal-book we have; surely he can’t suspect the English of knowing how to read Yankee” (61). The flag systems are thus another example of the linguistic division between England and America as well as an opportunity to convey information securely. However, as Griffith notes in his reply, “I have known Yankees read more difficult English,” even these languages give opportunities for the interception and forgery of messages (61). Throughout the novel, signal language, like nautical jargon, proves to be an essential area of expertise, yet one that is not immune to miscommunication.

Katharine has put quite a bit of ingenuity into developing her own signal language, and it is no small accomplishment. Even so, it is impossible not to smile at some of Katharine’s messages, what Griffith laughingly calls “a most judicious selection of phrases” including “‘No. 168. **** indelible;’ ‘169. **** end only with life;’ ‘170. **** I fear yours misleads me’” (84-85). More examples of Katharine’s phrases appear

when she puts her system to use. On one level, her signals are comical for their far-fetched long-sightedness:

“White over black,” repeated Katharine, rapidly, to herself, as she turned the leaves of her book.—“*My messenger: has he been seen?*”—To that we must answer the unhappy truth. Here it is— yellow, white, and red— ‘*he is a prisoner.*’ How fortunate that I should have prepared such a question and answer. (314)

Despite Katharine’s claim to be particularly “fortunate,” this exchange leads one to wonder how many signals she would have had to devise in order to have precisely these messages available. Her hurried page turning suggests that the result is somewhat cumbersome. The comedy reaches a climax when Katharine uses a signal that means, “*When the Abbey clock strikes nine, come with care to the wicket, which opens, at the east side of the Paddock, on the road: until then, keep secret*” (315). This detailed message is laughable compared to the efficient technical language actually employed on ships. But when Katharine explains, “I had prepared this very signal, in case an interview should be necessary,” she points out what is too easy to overlook—that the message proved necessary and was communicated without a problem (315).

Katharine’s signs are comical not because they are ineffective, but because they combine two distinct registers of language. The phrases Katharine devises are necessary in the polite discourse of genteel courtship and romantic love plots, but they are alien to the utilitarian and military language of vessels engaged in war. The juxtaposition of the two languages may be comically incongruous, but both discourses are necessary and worthwhile in their own rights. Katharine’s romantic phrases seem silly when turned into a utilitarian signal language; however, she is not directing a ship but subtly manipulating her suitor to achieve her rescue without seeming to throw herself at him. Despite her

dramatic situation, she needs to maintain a lady's polite language. More than an easy laugh at the heroine's expense, Katharine's incongruous signals demonstrate how even the strangest languages can serve a distinct purpose, and how the varieties of English are as numerous as the occasions for speech.

At many other places in the novel, Cooper calls attention to the divisive and contested terminology at the heart of the Americans' conflict with England. Colonel Howard tells Katharine, for example, "A young lady who ventures to compare rebels with gallant gentlemen engaged in their duty to their prince, cannot escape the imputation of possessing a misguided reason," and he goes on to inveigh against "these disorganizers, who would destroy every thing that is sacred—these levellers, who would pull down the great, to exalt the little—these jacobins, who—who—" (115). It seems Katharine's previous account of her guardian's language was quite accurate. The "opprobrious epithets" in this diatribe are nearly identical to the ones Katharine lists in her letter. Instead of focusing on the facts of the conflict and addressing the legitimate grievances of the rebels, Colonel Howard has become caught up in a litany of names that have begun to misguide his own reason. Later in the same scene, Katharine again points out a manipulative use of language when she discovers that Colonel Howard's prisoners are "seamen," making it likely that her beau is among them. Teasing Dillon to cover her concern, she accuses him of whitewashing his real apprehensions in order to keep the ladies at ease. She quips, "I thank you, sir, for so gentle a term [as seamen], . . . the imagination of Mr. Dillon is so apt to conjure the worst, that he is entitled to our praise for so far humouring our weakness, as not to alarm us with the apprehensions of their being pirates" (118). Katharine once again calls attention to the manipulation of language

and shows her unwillingness to be influenced by judgmental connotations passing for unvarnished truth. This question of the proper application of “pirate” is echoed in the Pilot’s first interview with Alice Dunscombe. The incognito John Paul Jones laments, “how powerful is the breath of the slanderer,” and exclaims, “They call me pirate! If I have claim to the name, it was furnished more by the paltry outfit of my friends, than by any act towards my enemies!” (154, 156).

A similar conflict occurs over the term “rebellious.” In a dialogue with the imprisoned Manual, Borroughcliffe applies the word nonpolitically to describe a soldier’s unwillingness to submit: “thy knee bendeth not; nay, I even doubt if the rebellious member bow in prayer” (162). Led to misinterpretation by his fear of being discovered as an American, Manual responds, “Rebellious member, indeed! These fellows will call the skies of America rebellious heavens shortly!” (162). He objects to the phrase “rebellious member” as another example of how “rebellious” has been applied beyond its proper signification. When Tom Coffin speaks with the English officer Captain Borroughcliffe, he assigns “rebel” a positive connotation saying, “Tell them, brother, that I’m a rebel, will ye? and ye’ll tell ’em no lie—one that has fou’t them since Manly’s time, in Boston bay, to this hour” (253). Coffin inverts the usual negative meaning of “rebel” by focusing on the loyalty he has shown to his own cause rather than on his lack of loyalty to the crown.

Coffin’s new perspective on “rebellion” is similar to Robert A. Ferguson’s description of the contradictory feelings Americans had about the Benedict Arnold affair (which forms the backdrop for *The Spy*). Ferguson argues:

Arnold found his own consistency in a Revolutionary American discrepancy. The self-confidence of his stance relied on culture-wide

slippage in conceptions of loyalty. . . . The eighteenth-century duty to one's king was a concrete, fixed obligation that brooked little equivocation or room for disobedience. . . . Emerging nationalism would soon substitute a new emotional power, but in 1780 the Enlightenment code of honor and virtue reached for universal recognition and depended as much on the exaltation of reason as on mass appeals to the emotions or communal solidarity. (140-41)

During the Revolution, the concept of “loyalty,” and its inverse “rebellion,” became unmoored from their accustomed and concrete meanings. This is the same conflict of terminology played out between Colonel Howard and the American patriots. Ferguson argues that such loyalty to the idea of republican virtue was later replaced by nationalism, but this late-eighteenth-century version of loyalty also resembles Cooper's complex view of his country. Thus, Cooper's cosmopolitanism does not mean that he repudiates America, but that he puts an “Enlightenment code of honor and virtue” before nationalism's “mass appeals to the emotions or communal solidarity.” Instead of marking American difference, Cooper advocates a cosmopolitan appreciation of linguistic variation and, as will become even clearer in his travelogues, a broader understanding of the cultured languages of Europe.

In light of Cooper's critique of the politicized terminology of the Revolution, the repetition of the phrase “plain English” throughout the novel takes on a greater significance. Indeed, Cooper demonstrates that “plain English” does not exist, and the term “English” (in a linguistic, political, or cultural sense) can prove just as problematic as “rebel” or “traitor.” Such a complication of what “Englishness” might have meant to early Americans is the subject of Leonard Tennenhouse's book *The Importance of Feeling English*. Tennenhouse's argument merits quotation at length:

After the War of Independence, there is every reason to believe that citizens of the new United States knew—and felt keenly—that they were

no longer subjects of Great Britain. But it does not necessarily follow from this that the colonists renounced their British identity in other respects simply because they rejected British government. Political separation did not in fact cancel out the importance of one's having come to America from Great Britain. Indeed, the literary evidence indicates that the newly liberated colonists became if anything more intent on keeping the new homeland as much as possible like the old one in terms of its language, literature, and any number of cultural practices. (2)

While the public at large may have felt increasingly nationalistic by the time Cooper began his career, evidence suggests that the author made the distinction Tennenhouse describes here between political and cultural "Englishness." When Cooper writes in the first chapter of *The Pilot* that its setting is significant "not only because it was the birthday of his nation, but because it was also the era when reason and common sense began to take the place of custom and feudal practices in the management of the affairs of nations" (11), he suggests that the real value of America lies in its democratic government, not in the sheer fact of its nationhood. For Cooper, an arbitrary linguistic separation (such as the proposal to adopt Greek as America's official language) would have little significance in comparison to the important political difference between America and England. Accordingly, when knowing and speaking the languages of European monarchies does little symbolic harm, the citizens of the United States, as representatives of a better form of government, have everything to gain and to give in communication with the world. Cooper's cosmopolitanism, then, encompasses not just the benefit to Americans of the richer cultural pasts of European countries, but also the political value that Americans can provide to Europe. Such a cosmopolitanism involves problematizing what "Englishness" might mean.

Boroughcliffe often employs the term "plain English" to preface a restatement of something he has just expressed in a confusing mix of Latin and various circumlocutions.

For example, after repeatedly confusing Tom Coffin with veiled invitations to join the royal navy, Borroughcliffe concludes, “In plain English, enlist in my company, my fine fellow, and your life and liberty are both safe” (254). After regularly confusing his listeners, Borroughcliffe sees the necessity of “speaking plainly,” but the novel as a whole shows that there is no such thing. What is plain to one person or in one context may not be plain to another. In fact, in the above conversation, Tom Coffin has only just introduced himself in a way that demonstrates his own reliance on nonstandard, nautical language:

“Coffin, . . . I’m called Tom, when there is any hurry, such as letting go the haulyards, or a sheet; long-Tom, when they want to get to windward of an old seaman, by fair weather; and long-Tom Coffin, when they wish to hail me, so that none of my cousins of the same name, about the islands, shall answer; for I believe the best man among them can’t measure much over a fathom, taking him from his head-works to his heel.” (251)

As in the earlier examples of nautical language, this explanation of what Tom Coffin is called in various circumstances is confusing for a land-bound reader ignorant of “haulyards” and “head-works,” but it demonstrates precision, efficiency, and practicality for anyone versed in sea jargon. Still, the complexity of Coffin’s naming, as well as the admitted confusion between Tom and his “cousins of the same name,” shows that a lack of plainness in language can come in other forms than Borroughcliffe’s own pretentious quoting of Latin. Like Katharine’s signal language, the conversation presents another incongruous meeting of discourses, demonstrating that the many varieties of English make the language far from plain. And because there is no single “plain English,” only knowing and being conversant in a wide variety of dialects and registers can ensure one’s full understanding.

Cooper, like Royall Tyler before him, critiques the use of linguistic difference to distinguish “proper” Englishness from American provinciality, but he does not suggest that all language use is equal. Rather than emphasizing national difference, Cooper posits a different hierarchy of usage that transcends national borders. Unlike Tom Coffin’s technical language, Borroughcliffe’s use, and misuse, of Latin is portrayed quite critically. For example, the scene in which the young Merry enters St. Ruth disguised as a peddler illustrates Cooper’s idea of improper speech. When Borroughcliffe toasts “the statu quo ante bellum” and talks of exiting the abbey “sub silentio,” he uses Latin to appear more learned (300-301). Like Katharine—who quips, “And, Captain Borroughcliffe, as you appear to be forgetting the use of your own language, here is even a horn-book for you!” (303)—Cooper frowns on the deployment of linguistic difference as an empty sign of useless erudition rather than a utilization of real knowledge.

At the same time, the captain is not solely a buffoon in this scene. It is he who unmasks Merry by revealing that the youth is proficient with nautical language but ignorant of a peddler’s wares. At the end of his examination, Borroughcliffe cries, “Enough, enough, . . . you have exhibited sufficient knowledge, to convince me that you *do* know something of your *trade*, and nothing of these articles” (305). Borroughcliffe’s pretentious use of Latin may be portrayed critically, but “plain English” is not the only language necessary. Borroughcliffe sees through Merry’s deception because the boy lacks the technical language of a peddler. But Borroughcliffe nonetheless approves of Merry’s nautical expertise. In this sense, Cooper’s view of proper speech and linguistic knowledge conforms to his analysis of the term “gentleman” in *The American Democrat*. Cooper writes, “To call a laborer, one who has neither education, manners,

accomplishments, tastes, associations, nor any one of the ordinary requisites, a gentleman, is just as absurd as to call one who is thus qualified, a fellow” (*American Democrat* 120). Cooper implies that a genuine gentleman is certainly better than a laboring fellow, but for a fellow to call oneself a gentleman is perhaps the worst position of all. True erudition in other languages, including technical terminology, is a virtue, but pretending to unwonted elevation is even worse than linguistic ignorance.¹⁶

Although *The Pilot* deals only sparingly with what would commonly be called “foreign” language, the novel contains a thorough introduction to Cooper’s philosophy of linguistic difference. The multiplicity of dialects, jargons, and registers on display throughout the tale enables a high level of precision in the characters’ speech. It would hinder precise communication to replace this variety with a monolithic idea of “plain English.” But the same heterogeneity that allows for such precise communication also signals the imperfection of human language. As will become increasingly evident in the following readings, Cooper values broad linguistic knowledge as a way to compensate for the imperfect connection between names and things, between post-Babelian language and universal ideals. At the same time, *The Pilot* is also valuable for positioning Cooper’s general philosophy of language in the context of the American Revolution, and the repercussions that conflict had for American identity well into the nineteenth century.

¹⁶ Cooper’s critique of the term “gentleman” also conforms to his characteristic portrayal of gentility. Allan M. Axelrad argues that, “although [Cooper] grew increasingly embittered upon his return from Europe, he was a lifelong conservative, never placing much faith in the judgment of the average man. Instead he placed his faith in institutions, in authority, and in leadership by an elite. Political power should be exercised by those best equipped to make sound conservative judgments—the landed gentry” (19). Dekker notes that “Cooper himself was an aristocrat, or as nearly one as a patriotic American could well be, when in 1820 he began to work on *The Spy*” (20). The works discussed below demonstrate Cooper’s belief in natural hierarchy even more clearly.

Cooper critiques the connection between language and national identity, instead advocating a class-based hierarchy of linguistic knowledge and usage, as will become increasingly apparent in his later works.

Cosmopolitan Travel in Cooper's *Gleanings*

While *The Pilot* establishes Cooper's approach to foreign language and translation in the context of the United States' revolutionary beginnings, Cooper's more traditional travelogues demonstrate the place of foreign language in early-nineteenth-century American travel. In 1826, only two years after the publication of *The Pilot*, Cooper and his family left America for what became a seven-year stay in Europe. Like many elite Americans of the period, the Coopers were continuing the British tradition of the Grand Tour. The practice of undertaking a comprehensive tour of Continental Europe as the "obligatory finish to a gentleman's upbringing" dates as far back as Sir Philip Sidney's tour of the Continent in 1572 (Trease 2-3).¹⁷ Foster Rhea Dulles examines American participation in this tradition "[a]s early as 1787," when "two elegant young men from wealthy and distinguished families arrived [in Europe] with no other purpose than embarking on the traditional Grand Tour" (18). Although travel to Europe became increasingly less exclusive throughout the nineteenth century, Dulles reports that, at the

¹⁷ Trease connects this originally British tradition to the necessity of crossing a body of water, providing a "motive for attempting a once-for-all and comprehensive exploration" (3). He further notes that, as new modes of transportation such as the steamship and railroad made Continental travel easy enough for the British that it did not require such a comprehensive trip, these same technologies made European tours increasingly possible for Americans (4). Although a version of the Grand Tour was available to a wider range of English citizens than the gentlemen who undertook it as a means of finishing their education and manners, for Americans at the beginning of the nineteenth century, transatlantic travel required a far greater outlay of time and money (3-4).

beginning of the century, “the wealthy members of society’s more exclusive circles along the Atlantic seaboard probably accounted for the largest number of Americans visiting Europe” (28). Such privileged Americans continued the tradition of European travel for education and cultural capital.

Cooper’s descriptions of his European tour, published after his return, present further evidence of the author’s linguistic cosmopolitanism. His series of travelogues, which modern editors call *Gleanings in Europe* (1836-38), is invaluable for understanding Cooper’s engagement with language.¹⁸ By declining to replace the specificity of foreign terminology with an imperfect translation, Cooper emphasizes different languages’ potential for expressing varied nuances of meaning, encouraging the widest possible linguistic knowledge in order to foster the most precise and culturally sensitive communication. He thus rejects monolingualism as a marker of distinct national communities, focusing instead on how language indicates class. As a result, Cooper minimizes national borders and instead highlights the distinction between upper-class

¹⁸ Any study of Cooper’s five volumes of travel writings is complicated by a number of bibliographical peculiarities. First, Cooper published the books under different titles in America and Europe. For greater simplicity, twentieth-century scholarly editions have given all five volumes the main title of *Gleanings in Europe*, subtitling each volume with the relevant country. These are the titles that I will use in the following discussion. To make matters even more confusing, the original order of publication was not the order of Cooper’s actual travels, and, as Robert E. Spiller and James F. Beard’s introduction to the 1980 edition notes, while “some letters bear topical resemblances to actual letters,” it seems clear that the epistolary form is merely a device and that Cooper composed the volumes for publication after his return (ix). Because the attention to language in each of these volumes varies more consistently with the time Cooper had spent in Europe than with the original order of publication (as being immersed in a foreign language will be more striking in the early months of residence than after several years abroad), I will examine them on that timeline, progressing through what the modern editions of *Gleanings in Europe* subtitle *France, England, Switzerland, Italy, and The Rhine*, in that order. I abbreviate the title of each volume to *Gleanings: France, Gleanings: England, etc.*

cosmopolitanism and the common provinciality shared by the lower-classes of all countries.

Cooper's sea tales may have received less critical attention than his Leatherstocking series, but Cooper's nonfiction travel writing has been even more widely ignored. When Alfred Bendixen mentions them briefly in the recent *Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, he not only disregards the volumes as "lack[ing] any real sense of coherence," and "often giv[ing] way to bad temper," but he attributes these faults to his mistaken assumption that the books "[consist] largely of unrevised letters" (106-107). However, the few Cooper scholars who do take time to examine *Gleanings* are far more positive. In one of the few pieces that takes Cooper's travel writing as a primary focus, J. Gerald Kennedy argues that Cooper's *Gleanings* "reflect the evolution of a more complicated understanding of nationhood and nationality," beginning "with an earnest desire to know Europe and to correct its misapprehensions about America" but evolving into "Cooper's dismantling of his nation's most cherished illusions about itself" (93).¹⁹ As Kennedy also argues, Cooper's travel writings negotiate a complex relationship between country and world; the following reading will demonstrate that this relationship is inseparable from the subject of language.

Before turning more specifically to language, it is worthwhile to note that Cooper's *Gleanings* also hold an interesting place in the evolving genre of travel

¹⁹ Other positive assessments include that of Thomas Philbrick, who calls Cooper's achievement "travel writing which is both extraordinarily rich in ideas and coherent in point of view" ("Cooper in Europe"). Robert E. Spiller also highlights the interest the books hold for both readers and scholars, noting that they "contain some of his most pungent social criticism and his most brilliant natural description," and that they replace the "pompousness of his formal style" with "a vital intimacy" (*Fenimore* 244).

literature and anti-touristic writing. Throughout the series, Cooper is critical both of the usual traveler and of the usual content of travel literature. Almost as soon as he sets foot in England after his transatlantic voyage, Cooper criticizes a couple “engaged in a lively discussion of the comparative merits of Cowes and Philadelphia,” a comparison he calls “absurd” (*Gleanings: France* 20). Cooper takes this couple as an example of a common fault of travelers everywhere, complaining, “This propensity to exaggerate the value of whatever is our own, and to depreciate that which is our neighbours’, a principle that is connected with the very ground-work of poor human nature, forms a material portion of the traveling equipage of nearly every one who quits the scenes of his own youth, to visit those of other people” (20). Not only does Cooper elevate himself over this general fault of the common rabble, but he further shows a cosmopolitan perspective by attributing the shortcoming to all people, not just to traveling Americans. This does not mean however, that Cooper defends his country at all times. When the grand duke of Florence observes that he has not seen so many Americans traveling recently, Cooper responds with a more critical view of his countrymen, saying that although “the number [of traveling Americans] had greatly increased within the last few years[,] . . . most of those who came to Europe knew little of courts, . . . did not give themselves time to see more than the commoner sights, and . . . were but indifferent courtiers” (*Gleanings: Italy* 80). Thus, while Cooper practices an older mode of travel where one stays for extended periods in high European society learning and speaking the language, he already begins to observe the kinds of tourists who will populate Twain’s travel writing.

As James Buzard explains in his study of tourism, Cooper's elitist position was also, paradoxically, the norm. Buzard thus offers a valuable explanation of Cooper's remarks:

[A]fter the Napoleonic Wars, the exaggerated perception that the Continental tour was becoming more broadly accessible than ever before gave rise to new formulations about what constituted 'authentic' cultural experience (such as travel is supposed to provide) and new representations aimed at distinguishing authentic from spurious or merely repetitive experience. . . . Travel's educative, acculturating function took on a newly competitive aspect, as travellers sought to distinguish themselves from the 'mere tourists' they saw or imagined around them. (6)

While travel was nowhere near as accessible as it would become by the end of the century, the gradual shift away from the kind of extended stay in society that Cooper experiences led him to exaggerate the distinction between his family and other travelers presumably less interested in broadening their cultural horizons. Despite Cooper's observations, however, the distinction between tourists and anti-tourists is never a clear one. Buzard examines both tourism and anti-tourism as part of the same practice, arguing that the anti-touristic perspective exemplified here by Cooper shares the same goal as tourism itself: "making the tour pay in cultural capital accepted by home society" (196-97). Nevertheless, the reality of Cooper's extended residence in Europe, in contrast to the briefer and more rushed visits that became increasingly common in Twain's time, makes him a fitting example of the older model of cosmopolitan traveler. This mode of travel will fade from prominence through the century, although it will never disappear entirely.

Cooper is by no means as critical of guidebooks and other typical travel writings as Twain will be, but he does not miss an opportunity to find fault when fault presents itself. In *Switzerland* for example, he caustically notes:

I owe an especial acknowledgement to M. Ebel, for the pleasures of a long walk, up a hill, under a hot sun, in order to see a linden (*tilleul*) which he has written down as being thirty-six feet in diameter. What will not a traveller come, in time, to believe! There we went, dragging our weary limbs after us, to discover that for “*diamètre*,” we ought to have read “*circonférence*.” I wish the *erratum* had been in *his* book, instead of *mine*. (236)

The traveler may take some blame for his credulity and dependence on such guidebooks, but Cooper’s editorial eye balks at the misprint. If travelogues and guidebooks (a genre to which Cooper himself is contributing) are not to be blindly believed, Cooper at least highlights his own inclusion of the “*erratum*” and, as always, his meticulousness in applying the proper names to things. Moreover, by generalizing that “[t]ravellers are too much in the practice of describing under the influence of their early and home-bred impressions” (*Gleanings: Italy* 228), he implies that his own writing is an exception, an example of accurate reporting from an open-minded and cosmopolitan perspective. Kennedy even goes so far as to argue that Cooper’s *Gleanings* “anticipate the objectives of current transnational studies” in Cooper’s desire to “develop a global (or at least transatlantic) perspective to surmount the parochial nationalism of his American contemporaries” (92). As these examples have indicated, however, Cooper did not limit his charges of such “parochialism” to Americans alone, but criticized and at times sought to correct the narrow nationalistic views of Americans and Europeans alike. Thus, Robert E. Spiller argues that, “[n]ext to American pride in themselves, European ignorance of America was . . . the greatest obstacle against which the culture of [Cooper’s] nation had to contend” (*Fenimore* 142). Cooper’s cosmopolitanism, like the patriotism of the Enlightenment, was not recognition of Europe’s absolute superiority to America, but belief in the value of understanding each continent and recognizing both its merits and

deficits, valuing the older culture of Europe without betraying the political promise of American democracy.

The first volume chronologically, *Gleanings in Europe: France*, contains the most concentrated attention to language, but it also introduces many of the topics to which Cooper will return throughout the series. One reappearing theme is the charge of provincialism, which Cooper seeks to deflect from Americans in particular onto the ill-bred people of all countries. In *France*, Cooper finds the practice of sending cards to be far superior to the American insistence on always visiting in person. He writes, “It is easy to trace these usages to their source, provincial habits and rustic manners, but towns with three hundred thousand inhabitants ought to be free from both” (194). Some American practices are provincial, but Cooper believes that American society has developed enough that such provincialisms can and ought to be dropped. Far from lampooning the lowness of his countrymen, however, Cooper attempts to present a balanced and accurate picture of America. He explains, “America, in my time, at least, has always had an active and swift communication with the rest of the world. As a people, we are, beyond a question, decidedly provincial, but our provincialism is not exactly one of external appearance” (22). Thus, while Americans do not have easy access to the more developed history and culture of Europe, they are also not walking around in buckskins all day, as many of the Europeans Cooper meets seem to expect. Instead, Americans prove even quicker to adopt French fashions than the English, a circumstance which (as Cooper is eager to report) has led some English travelers in America to label as backward what is really *à la mode* (23-

24).²⁰ Cooper values such openness to foreign culture, which even in this frivolous form is a marker of an international aesthetic of taste and class rather than a stubbornly provincial nationalism.

Cooper displays his own cosmopolitanism by including many French words and phrases in his account, a practice he will continue in *Homeward Bound*. One letter describing a royal dinner serves as a good example of Cooper's treatment of language throughout both the volume and the series. In the first six paragraphs of the letter, Cooper explains two French phrases: "the lord in waiting, or, as he is called here, '*le premier gentilhomme de la chambre du roi, de service*'" (158), and "*grands courverts*, as these dinners are called" (161). Cooper emphasizes the French versions with his explicit attention to what things are "called" and, in the first example, his use of quotation marks to highlight the French phrase. He implies that, when in France, it is important to use the French terminology. And while these examples offer more translation than is usual for Cooper, they still show no attempt to give a "literal," word-for-word translation of the French terms. Presumably, readers can do that for themselves. Also in these paragraphs, the words "*fête*," "*salle*," "*châtea*," and "*gardes du corps*" are left with no translation at all (158-59). These examples demonstrate that, while Cooper at times seeks to inform his

²⁰ After giving an example of dancing formation, Cooper writes, "In this little anecdote we learn the great rapidity with which new fashions penetrate American usages, and the greater ductility of American society in visible and tangible things, at least; and the heedless manner with which even those who write in a good spirit of America jump to their conclusions. Had Captain Hall, or Mrs. Trollope, encountered this unlucky *quadrille*, they would probably have found some clever means of imputing the *nez-à-nez* tendencies of our dances to the spirit of democracy!" (*Gleanings: France* 24).

reader about the nomenclature of French society, he assumes there is no need to translate the French language itself.²¹

Cooper further demonstrates his tendency to avoid translation by leaving dialogue in French without any English explanation. For example, in describing the women present at the dinner, Cooper reports:

One, of great personal charms and quite young, was seated near me, and my neighbor, an old *abbé*, carried away by enthusiasm, suddenly exclaimed to me—“*Quelle belle fortune! Monsieur, d’être jeune, jolie, et duchesse!*” I dare say the lady had the same opinion of the matter. (167)

French fluency may not be necessary to understand the gist of this anecdote, but some reading knowledge is required for full comprehension. By concluding this passage with his own dry punch line rather than offering any commentary on the meaning of the French remark, Cooper requires the reader to be conversant in the language in order to feel included in the joke. A second exchange with his neighbor offers another example of this characteristic treatment of dialogue:

I asked my neighbor, the Abbé, what he thought of M. de Talleyrand. After looking up in my face distrustfully, he whispered—“*Mais, Monsier, c’est un chat qui tombe toujours sur ses pieds,*” a remark that was literally true to-night, for the old man was kept on his feet longer than could have been agreeable to the owner of two such gouty legs. (173)

Once again, Cooper’s joke is nonsensical without enough knowledge of French to recognize the common saying. By not offering any translation, Cooper seems to assume that his reader is cosmopolitan enough to understand how the “remark . . . was literally true.” At least Cooper does not seem to care if he alienates a reader who is not. But

²¹ It is important to note, however, that it is not impossible to find fault with Cooper’s French, however proud the author appears to be of it. Spiller notes, for example, that “the French manuscripts of Cooper are improved, as Mark Twain has put it, by being retranslated back into their native tongue” (*Fenimore* 83).

perhaps such a feeling of being excluded might encourage the monolingual to improve their linguistic knowledge.

Amid these far more numerous examples of untranslated French, Cooper occasionally does provide a translation, but only in cases where the translated meaning is of utmost importance. In one of the few examples of such translation, Cooper describes a noble family “who were content to bear the appellation of *Sire*, a word from which our own ‘Sir’ is derived, and which means, like Sir, the simplest term of courtesy that could be used” (164). Already in setting up his story, Cooper explains the French usage. He goes on to describe how the family demonstrate their “contempt for titles” in their motto, which Cooper sets off from the text as follows:

*“Je ne suis roi, ne prince, ne duc, ne comte aussi;
Je suis le Sire de Coucy.”* (165)

To this, Cooper footnotes the translation, “I am neither king, nor prince, nor duke, nor even a count: I am M. de Coucy” (165). Even in this example, Cooper minimizes the obtrusiveness of the English translation by removing it from the main text and allowing readers to consult it or not, depending upon their linguistic knowledge. The significance of this motto, in comparison to the amusing but tangential comments of the Abbé, becomes clear when Cooper offers his own version, to be used by “our own ministers and citizens abroad” (165). Cooper advises:

If any prince should inquire—“Who is this that approaches me, clad so simply that I may mistake him for a butler, or a groom of the chambers?” let him answer, “*Je ne suis roi, ne prince, ne duc, ne comte aussi*—I am the minister of the United States of Amerikey,” and leave the rest to the millions at home. (165)

Cooper’s adaptation of the motto encapsulates the patriotic pride in American democracy that Cooper demonstrates throughout his travels, a pride which will only be soured upon

his eventual return home. Despite its provincial and often illogical usages, America's lack of titles is not a mark of rusticity but a symbol of its *political* sophistication. By recognizing this distinction, Cooper once again emphasizes his republican patriotism, in contrast to the later nationalism of presumed cultural and linguistic superiority. And it is only the significance of this point that warrants the unusual instance of translation.²²

Cooper's pride in knowing French further can be seen in his account of meeting Sir Walter Scott. Cooper describes how he encounters a stranger at the entrance of his building:

"Est-ce Monsieur —, que j'ai l'honneur de voir?" he asked, in French, and with but an indifferent accent. *"Monsieur, je m'appelle —."* *"Eh bien, donc—je suis Walter Scott."* (207)

Despite Cooper's apparent admiration for the writer, his account of Scott's French is far from complimentary, both in Cooper's overt comment about Scott's "indifferent accent" and in the general stuttering quality he gives to Scott's speech. Cooper heightens the sense of Scott's linguistic incompetence with the following observation:

All this time he was speaking French, while my answers and remarks were in English. Suddenly recollecting himself, he said—"Well, here have I been *parlez-vousing* to you, in a way to surprise you no doubt; but these Frenchmen have got my tongue so set to their lingo, that I have half forgotten my own language." (208)

²² Another rare translation also appears for a French saying to which Cooper attaches much importance. Beforehand, Cooper complains of Americans' "tendency to repel every suggestion of inferiority" and calls this "one of the surest signs of provincial habits" (236). He concludes his explanation (or rather, his lesson) with the statement: "The French have a clever and pithy saying, that of — '*On peut tout dire, à un grand peuple.*' 'One may tell all to a great nation.'" (236). In other words, America's failure to take criticism with grace suggests its inferiority. Not only does Cooper feel quite strongly about this issue, as his lampooning of similar provincialism in *Home as Found* demonstrates, but the reader most in need of this advice would be one ignorant of French (if any such readers have remained to reach this point).

Here, Scott is doubly foolish. Not only does he lack Cooper's apparent ease in switching between languages, but that failure exposes his lackluster French. And this is a subject that Cooper proves unwilling to drop throughout the letter. In another anecdote, Scott asks Cooper to decipher an invitation. Scott says, "you are a friend of the lady, and *parlez-vous* so much better than I, can you tell me whether this is for *jeudi*, or *lundi*, or *mardi*, or whether it means no day at all?" (212). As if to highlight how much better he does "*parlez-vous*," Cooper drily follows this with the deadpan, "I told him the day of the week intended" (212). Only several pages later, Cooper again reports Scott's linguistic failure: "He said, laughingly, that he spoke French with so much difficulty he was embarrassed to answer the compliments" (216). Again emphasizing the superiority of his own French, Cooper follows this with another anecdote in which, as in his description of the royal dinner, he leaves the French comments made to him untranslated, even at the risk of obscuring the central point of the story. Summarizing his opinion of Scott, Cooper writes, for a "man who had been so very much and so long courted by the great," he sometimes demonstrates "a want of familiarity with the world," but "after all, his life has been provincial" (213). Cooper never quite mocks or insults Scott in *Gleanings*, but he makes it abundantly clear that, while the Briton might surpass him in fame, it is the American who can converse in France without a problem.²³ For Cooper, literary merit is hollow without such cosmopolitan markers of class.

Gleanings: France contains other, more overt statements of Cooper's views of language. He says of the French, for example, "Like the people of all great nations, their

²³ Stephen P. Harthorn's paper "Truth and Consequences: James Fenimore Cooper on Scott, Columbus, Bumppo, and Professional Authorship" examines Cooper's sometimes harsh criticism of Scott more broadly.

attention is drawn more to themselves than to others, and then the want of a knowledge of foreign languages has greatly contributed to their ignorance” (219). This deficit does not damn the French entirely for Cooper, but his disapproval is clear as he goes on to speak positively of how the younger generation is beginning to remedy the shortcoming. For Cooper, the French people’s ignorance of other languages is a key cause of their greater failings. He explains that “the limited powers of the language, and the rigid laws to which it has been subjected, contribute to render the French less acquainted with foreign nations, than they would otherwise be” (220). In describing this limitation, Cooper gives what amounts to a defense of his general policy on the inclusion of foreign languages in his own works. He explains:

In all their translations, there is an effort to render the word, however peculiar may be its meaning, into the French tongue. Thus, “township,” and “city,” met with in an American book, would probably be rendered by “*canton*,” or “*commune*,” or “*ville*”; neither of which conveys an accurate idea of the thing intended. In an English or American book, we should introduce the French word at once, which would induce the reader to inquire into the differences that exist between the minor territorial division of his own country, and those of the country of which he is reading. In this manner is the door opened for further information, until both writers and readers come to find it easier and more agreeable to borrow words from others, than to curtail their ideas by their national vocabularies. The French, however, are beginning to feel their poverty in this respect, and some are already bold enough to resort to the natural cure. (220)

Because of the importance the French put on their own language and culture, they avoid including any foreign words in their translations. As a result, Cooper argues, other cultures become indistinguishable from French culture, and thus the French people remain ignorant of other countries’ ways. Cooper, in contrast, not only emphasizes the cultural differences between nations, but insists that these differences be represented by using the proper words for things. Thus, the English word “township” would signify the

American concept better than any French equivalent could, and vice versa. By traversing the narrow bounds of linguistic nationalism, writers have access to more varied vocabulary to express their precise meanings. This practice, as I have argued, can be seen throughout Cooper's travel writings, both fictional and nonfictional. What makes this passage even more significant, however, is Cooper's account of his pedagogical rationale. He argues that including a French word in an English-language text will lead the reader to wonder about the differences between townships and *villes*, encouraging them to learn more about those differences and to acquire more foreign vocabulary. Cooper calls the lack of such linguistic and cultural knowledge "poverty," and he clearly takes pains to avoid such a shortcoming in his own writing.²⁴

Cooper's travels to England provide further opportunities to debunk the binary of American provinciality and European sophistication. Cooper is particularly critical of the English, so his observations take on a less favorable cast. Looking at Cooper's references to linguistic difference in *Gleanings in Europe: England*, Spiller calls "Cooper's main theme, a comparison of the cultures of the two countries in terms of the speech of the various social classes in each" ("Cooper's Notes" 298). Indeed, throughout the work, Cooper provides observations on language supporting his view that there is a greater *intranational* difference between speakers of different classes than there is between

²⁴ Kennedy similarly notes Cooper's desire to educate his readers: "When he began *Gleanings*, Cooper fancied himself embarking on a new career as a cultural critic. He hoped his nonfiction writing would enjoy success, but above all he meant to combat ignorance at home and abroad, correcting American self-delusions and enlightening native readers about Europe while aiming (through foreign editions) to provide European readers with revealing views of the countries he had visited" (95-96).

speakers of equivalent classes on each side of the Atlantic.²⁵ As David Simpson argues about Cooper's works more generally, "language is imagined as a symptom (and indeed a cause) of struggle and conflict within the social contract" (*Politics* 251). Language, for Cooper, thus serves as a marker of class rather than a divider of national communities.

Early in *Gleanings: England*, Cooper describes a conversation between himself and three Englishmen. They discuss whether it is possible to determine if someone is American or English from that person's speech:

The two oldest gentlemen professed not to be able to discover any thing in my manner of speaking to betray me for a foreigner. But the young gentleman fancied otherwise. "He thought there was something peculiar—provincial—he did not know what exactly." I could have helped him to the word—"something that was not cockney." . . . The difference between the enunciation of Mr. Rogers and Mr. Cary and one of our educated men of the middle states, it is true, was scarcely perceptible, and required a nice ear and some familiarity with both countries to detect, but the young man could not utter a sentence, without showing his origin. (31)

Cooper, who considers himself an expert on the differences between English and American language, can hear a difference in the speech of Roger and Cary, but their common high level of education makes such a difference extremely small. The young man, who apparently speaks with a "cockney" accent, a term Cooper uses throughout his travels to express contempt for things of a lower class, mistakenly believes that the lack of such an accent is "provincial." But, as Cooper is quick to insist, his own educated American English is far more proper than the youth's British English, and a sign of its

²⁵ Numerous critics have sought to explain Cooper's seemingly contradictory beliefs in democracy and in important distinctions of class, breeding, and merit. According to Ross J. Pudaloff, Cooper felt that "the great promise of America" was "the achievement of a hierarchical society and a democratic polity" (714). Likewise, McWilliams notes Cooper's views that, "in a democracy, the gentry should be voted into power" and that "the gentry are usually the natural and social superiors of the common man" (*Political* 195).

correctness is the relative absence of national markers. Cooper seems to find something shameful in the young man's "showing his origin" in every sentence, and prides himself that his own cosmopolitan correctness prevents such gauche disclosures.

Similar observations can be found throughout the volume. At a dinner party hosted by Lord Grey, Cooper insists that the British company's "manner of speaking is identically the same as our own," adding "(I speak now of the gentlemen of the Middle States)" but also including "that portion of those in the Southern who live much in the towns" (121). For Cooper, the upper classes of both countries share the qualities of directness and simplicity in language because of their "[c]ommunion with the world" (121). Elsewhere in the text, Cooper complains of the "many abuses of the language, in the middling classes" in England (171). One such abuse is the pronunciation of "my." Cooper asserts that "the polite way of pronouncing this word . . . [is] by a sort of elision—as 'm'horse,'" and he concludes "that 'my horse,' 'my dog,' 'my gun,' the usual American mode, and 'me horse,' 'me dog,' 'me gun,' the English counterpart, are equally wrong; the first by an offensive egotism, and the last from offensive ignorance" (171). Thus, Cooper places the genteel and correct usage, which is shared by the "better sort" in both countries, above the common usages of each. In another conversation about language differences between England and America, Cooper explains, "I told him we had social *castes* in America, as in England, though they were less strongly marked than common; and that men, of course, betrayed their associations in nothing sooner than in their modes of speech" (289). For Cooper in this last as in the previous examples, language difference between countries is less significant than verbal distinctions of class.

By making this claim, Cooper elevates himself above the common, provincial American, placing himself on a plane with the best of Europe.

Gleanings: Switzerland, the middle book chronologically (although the first published), holds an interesting position between the books on France and England and Cooper's later travels. Cooper describes the difference in subject matter at the opening of the volume, rejoicing that "a commonplace converse with men was about to give place to a sublime communion with nature" (5). While *Switzerland* is more touristic than *France*, in which much of Cooper's observations deal with his time residing in the country and moving in French society, it contains more examples of linguistic difference than Cooper's even more touristic accounts of Italy and the Rhine.

When Cooper encounters French in *Gleanings: Switzerland*, his treatment of the language is similar to that in *Gleanings: France*, but travel in Switzerland also presents a new linguistic challenge—German. At first, Cooper is optimistic about his ability to understand German. He explains, for example:

The town on the Swiss side of the river is called Kaiserstuhl, or Emperor's seat; the good Franz being called a *Kaiser*, a corruption of Cæsar, in the vernacular of his lieges. *Stuhl* speaks for itself; being pronounced like our own stool. They who speak English, by a little attention to sounds, can soon acquire a very respectable travelling German. (79)

Even ignoring the issue of false cognates (the English and German versions of "gift" being one notorious example), Cooper's implication that all German will be as easy to decipher as *stuhl* is overly optimistic. Such optimism is also indicative of Cooper's cosmopolitan belief that he should be able to converse in any language. Despite this hopeful beginning, the volume contains numerous examples of misunderstandings brought about by a combination of the Coopers' lack of skill with German and the

numerous and obscure dialects of the region. In the very next letter, the Coopers meet with “a serious difficulty” in Altstetten, a small town in which, Cooper writes, “we could not make ourselves understood” (91). He admits that part of the fault is his own and that his “German was by no means classical,” but he also lays some of the blame on the lack of worldliness of the town, writing, “English, Italian, and French, were all Hebrew to the good people of the inn” (91). Cooper admits some fault in not having mastered German, but he still continues to emphasize his own linguistic arsenal in comparison to the town’s provinciality. Further highlighting the fault of the townspeople, Cooper notes that, even though his coachman “spoke as pure a patois as heart could wish[,] . . . the patios of the district would own no fellowship with that of this linguist” (91). Even in the face of his own shortcomings (and he is the visitor, after all), Cooper continues to offset these difficulties by highlighting his linguistic cosmopolitanism. He overcomes this particular language difficulty, for example, by resorting to “the language of nature” and “crow[ing] like a cock” to indicate that his party would like something to eat, a tactic that succeeds in procuring “a broiled fowl, an omelette, and boiled eggs” as well as in entertaining all at the inn (91). Cooper’s onomatopoeia proves successful in addressing his needs, but it also lacks the precision of more specific terminology, procuring him a wider variety of chicken-related food than would have been necessary. Cooper is obviously capable of laughing at himself for the caper, but the anecdote also reveals no small pride in his ability to communicate despite the language barrier.

When the local language is a dialect of French and not German, Cooper is even quicker to elevate his acquired but “proper” French over the native but “provincial” French of the people he encounters. One example is the following miscommunication:

I asked the waiter, who spoke French, for some pears. “*Pois! des petits pois!*” he roared; “why, *monsir*, the *peas* have been gone these six weeks.” “I do not ask for ‘*pois*,’ but for ‘*poires*,’ ‘*des poir-r-es*,’ which are just in season.” One would think this explanation sufficient, and that I might have been quietly answered, yes or no;—not at all. My sturdy Swiss very coolly turned upon me, and gave me to understand that reason he had not comprehended me at first was my very bad pronunciation. “*Fous n’abez bas un bon bronunciashun, Monsir; voilà, poirquoi je ne fous ai bas combris.*” Certes, my French is any thing but faultless, though I have no reason to suppose it worse than that of my castigator, who made a most ludicrous appearance as he reproved me for calling a pear, peas; an offense, by-the-way, of which I was not at all guilty. (175)

Cooper may have laughed along with the women of the inn when he was forced to resort to animal sounds to order food, but he obviously finds the effrontery of this waiter inexcusable. From his first “roared” response, the waiter behaves in a way that is both utterly uncivil and uncivilized, at least according to Cooper’s account of the confrontation. When Cooper responds by repeating and slowing down his words as if the waiter was the foreigner, it is no surprise that his “castigator” does not drop the issue but instead insults Cooper’s pronunciation. Unfortunately for the Swiss waiter, the writer has the power to print the last word, and not only does Cooper end the anecdote by claiming his own innocence (although we have nothing but his word to determine how faultless his pronunciation might have been), but he also wields the power of phonetic spelling to mark the waiter’s speech as nonstandard and incorrect. Whatever Cooper’s own linguistic faults may be, he never represents them by altering the spellings of his own speech.

By the time Cooper reaches the “hamlet” of Disentis, remarking that “village” would be “too significant a word for this local capital,” he seems frustrated enough with these repeated communication difficulties to lay all of the blame on the provinciality of the inhabitants, “a people who spoke a *patois* known only to themselves” (202). Cooper describes how he is startled awake one night by a strange man at his bedside:

To all and each of my questions, however, nothing could be got out of him but the single word, “*serviteur*,” which he pronounced more and more deliberately each time. This ridiculous scene lasted several minutes before I began to suspect the truth. It would seem that the honest landlord, distressed at not being able to comprehend my wants, had sent for an interpreter, who happened to be the worthy and sententious individual in question. (204)

Cooper concludes this amusing anecdote with what amounts to the joke that the people of Disentis are so provincial (how provincial are they?), that their greatest “linguist” knows “but one word of a foreign language, and that one, too, far from particularly well” (204). In his account of the next day, Cooper again contrasts his own linguistic prowess to that of the village. He describes exploring the abbey, “in hope of meeting a monk, with whom [he] might, at least, murder the little Latin that a busy and varied life has spared” (205). As in many of the previous examples, Cooper’s modesty about his “little Latin” is far from convincing. But his desire for conversation is thwarted again, and he laments, “the ‘*serviteur*’ of the linguist was the only intelligible word which had greeted my ear since I entered the place” (205). Despite his attempts at modesty, Cooper demonstrates a clear pattern of displaying his linguistic skills whenever possible and emphasizing, when he does experience communication difficulties, that the fault lies in the rusticity of the locals, not in his own shortcomings.

Cooper’s account of his visit to Italy is the most properly touristic of all of his writings; as Kennedy notes, it “savors of guidebook notations, many of them happily invested with Cooper’s critical intelligence and unaffected delight” (116). Cooper admits near the end of the volume, “I have told you little in these letters of the Italians

themselves, and nothing of what may be called their society” (*Gleanings: Italy* 295).²⁶ His avoidance of Italian society gives him fewer opportunities to remark on the language of the country. When he does, the comments are similar to the more numerous examples from his earlier travels. He praises Florence, for example, by saying, “This is the age of cosmopolitanism, real or pretended; and Florence, just at this moment, is an epitome both of its spirit and of its representatives” (23). Cooper also derives much amusement from the speech of common people with local dialects. One example is a lad rowing a boat from Amalfi to Salerno who “amused [them] greatly with his *patios*” by pronouncing “Signore” as “*snore*” (157). Cooper notes his son’s “great delight” at the incident and concludes with the image of the more worldly American family laughing at the local lad’s provinciality. Finally, Cooper again demonstrates the significance of linguistic difference when he praises the speech of the “females of Rome,” particularly “[t]he manner in which they pronounce that beautiful and gracious word ‘*grazie*’” (230). He continues:

A French woman’s “*merci*” is pretty, but it is mincing, and not at all equal to the Roman “thanks.” After all, as language is the medium of thought, and the link that connects all our sympathies, there is no more desirable accomplishment than a graceful utterance. (230)

As Cooper demonstrates throughout his travel writings, it is worthwhile for a writer to print and a reader to understand foreign words because “thanks” in French is not exactly

²⁶ Interestingly, Emilio Goggio’s explanation of this omission, that while “Cooper had lived among the Italians for a long time, he hesitated to pass judgment upon their character and nature for fear that his knowledge of them might not be sufficiently thorough to do so adequately” (70), further demonstrates the importance Cooper places on speaking the language and living in society for an extended residence. Even though his visit was longer than that of many who would not hesitate to comment freely, Cooper was unwilling to make judgments based on insufficient cultural knowledge.

equivalent to “thanks” in Italian. When both are translated into English, an important difference is lost. Because he believes “language is the medium of thought,” Cooper emphasizes the importance of “graceful utterance,” but he also implies here, as elsewhere, that the original language of the utterance conveys a greater precision of meaning than is possible with any translation.

Perhaps because it documents the last chronological period of Cooper’s travels, *Gleanings: The Rhine* contains more observations of a long-time resident than of a traveler and thus fewer observations about language. The language anecdotes it does contain, as in the Italian volume, reinforce the argument for Cooper’s general interest in the subject. For example, Cooper takes time to comment on Flemish and finds, “So nearly does this language resemble the English, that I have repeatedly comprehended whole sentences, in passing through the streets” (96). Cooper also continues his subtle linguistic competition with Scott by noting that his colleague mistakenly has the people of Liège speak Flemish instead of the “impure French, which is the language of the whole region along this frontier” (106). Cooper ostensibly undercuts his criticism by concluding, “But for the complaints of the Liégeois, the error would not have been very generally known, however; certainly not by me, had I not visited the place” (107). But once again, this feigned modesty only further emphasizes the greater worldliness Cooper himself has gained through his extensive travels.

In sum, *Gleanings in Europe* does much to illuminate Cooper’s opinions of language and of the relation between America and Europe. Like *The Pilot*, it also presents a complex mixture of patriotic pride and cosmopolitanism. Cooper demonstrates that cosmopolitanism is a trait of elite Americans and Europeans alike, and that provinciality

is a mark of the lower classes rather than a national characteristic. Cooper also seeks to vindicate his country from charges of provincialism by speaking the languages of Europe and by following each country's social customs. He conveys this appreciation for linguistic and cultural difference by saturating his own writings with foreign language, not merely to add a meaningless patina of local color, but because he believes that language makes a difference and that the reader can be improved through exposure to that difference. Linguistic difference may cause difficulties for the traveler, but Cooper contends that it should be overcome through broad linguistic knowledge and education rather than elided through translation or ignored by shutting down opportunities for transnational communication. In his later fiction, Cooper will begin to draw an even greater distinction between his own cosmopolitanism and that of the average American, thereby alienating much of his former audience.

Elite Cosmopolitanism in *Homeward Bound*

When faced in Europe with negative views of America and of democracy, Cooper maintained the strong patriotism evident in his early Revolutionary novels.²⁷ But after his return to America in 1833, he found that the country he spent years defending had changed for the worse. As Robert S. Levine explains, "Various social controversies—the

²⁷ As Dekker points out, because "the nation as a whole had accepted Jeffersonian Republicanism" and "(by 1827) Cooper had gone along with it," he remained "far to the left of most of the governing powers of Europe" (109). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that, while Cooper was conservative by American standards, his general belief in his country's mode of government put him on the left in Europe. Illustrating the complexity of Cooper's views, Robert S. Levine argues that "Cooper's early novels express an implicit pessimism about America's prospects that he would not address openly and deliberately until after 1833," but that, "during his European residence of 1826-33, he conceived of himself as a spokesman for the glorious possibilities of American republicanism" (69).

dispute over Three Mile Point, his legal battles with the press, his disdain for Anti-Rentism—led him to feel increasingly alienated from the very public he hoped would purchase and read his novels” (100). The process of compiling his recollections into *Gleanings in Europe*, moreover, may have fostered unfortunate comparisons between their subject and his home. As Robert Lawson-Peebles argues, Cooper’s travel writings allowed him to develop “a richer, more complex, and even more negative view of American society” (348). In 1838, after a three-year break from fiction writing, Cooper published another sea tale, *Homeward Bound*, which is set in Cooper’s present and describes the Effingham family’s own return from Europe. *Homeward Bound* demonstrates how Cooper’s experiences abroad developed the perspectives on language found in *The Pilot*. The later novel also amplifies the class consciousness found in Cooper’s earlier works, carefully distinguishing the cosmopolitanism of the Effinghams (and the Coopers) from the provincial views of the American rabble.

Homeward Bound and its sequel, *Home as Found*, are often read as markers of Cooper’s changing political views. Marilla Battilana describes how, after his return from Europe, Cooper “became one of the loudest and most argumentative critics of U.S. things, government, people and culture,” and she describes the novels as “brimming with aristocratic feelings and distrust with American institutions” (220, 227).²⁸ Likewise, Ronald John Clohessy notes that *Homeward Bound* marks “a shift from a Jacksonian

²⁸ Levine modifies the common perception that Cooper “suddenly became an inveterate social critic, perceiving little but demagoguery and commercialism all around him” (96). Instead, Levine argues that “the transformation was a political-rhetorical one, pivoting as it did on his changing attitude toward his democratic reading public. . . . According to Cooper, the subsequent decline of his contemporary reputation had everything to do with politics: Defending republican and democratic ideals, he was misunderstood in what Marvin Meyers has termed ‘the Age of Dodge and Bragg’” (99).

sense of democracy found in the early novels to a more Jeffersonian notion of an aristocracy of merit.” While many of Cooper’s critics found him to be unapologetically aristocratical, Clohessy’s more balanced perspective reveals that Cooper was not anti-American, as the newspapers portrayed him, but that he did believe a successful republic requires its citizens to discriminate between persons on the basis of quality.²⁹ John P. McWilliams, in perhaps the most nuanced interpretation of Cooper’s shifting political viewpoint, offers the following psychological reading of the Effingham brothers:

Among Cooper’s novels only *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found* divide the American gentleman into two characters who disagree with one another. Edward and John Effingham represent Cooper’s changeable feelings during the troubled years of the late thirties. . . . Benign, optimistic, and self-contained, Edward offers temperate and assuring statements which Cooper very much wished to believe. His angry cynical cousin utters denunciations which Cooper wished not to believe, but which were to recur in later writings. (*Political* 229)

It does seem likely that the reason scholars disagree about Cooper’s politics, particularly during this critical period, is that Cooper’s beliefs were in conflict with his hopes for America. While Cooper’s allegiance may have been divided between the Effingham brothers, both men are admirable in their own rights, and the conflict between them can produce fruitful dialogue. The novel positions such polite and well-reasoned discussion as perhaps the only path to solving the problems Cooper observed upon his return from Europe, and the ability to engage in such discussion is one marker of Cooper’s natural and cosmopolitan aristocrat.

As the following reading will make clear, the gentility required for balanced discourse is impossible without a cosmopolitan education, whether that education be

²⁹ Likewise, McWilliams asserts, “In dealing with Cooper, one must separate his aristocratic social convictions from his republican political convictions” (*Political* 29).

formal or based on real-word experience. Both the benefit and the marker of such an education is knowledge of multiple languages. Cooper himself proudly displays such knowledge with the foreign phrases interspersed throughout the speech of the genteel characters and the narration itself, as well as in the more extended French of Mademoiselle Viefville. Cooper contrasts this linguistic cosmopolitanism with the ungentlemanly speech and behavior of the lower-class characters such as the maid Anne Sidley, who is unable to learn French and dislikes anything said by Eve she cannot understand, and the steward Saunders, whose speech is marked by comically incorrect foreign phrases and mispronunciations.³⁰

While it is in the sequel, *Home as Found*, that Cooper has the most opportunity to satirize everything he finds deficient upon his return to America, the characters aboard the *Montauk* frequently pass the time comparing the merits of America and Europe. As the narration notes, “the conflicts between American and British opinions, coupled with a difference in habits, are a prolific source of discontent in the cabins of packets” (I: 38). Indeed, the first sentence of the novel is a comparison of the coasts of England and America, and it favors the former for its “general appearance of civilisation” (I: 7). This comparison is continued in a conversation between Eve and her father. Edward Effingham muses, “We have seen nobler coasts, Eve, . . . but, after all, England will always be fair to American eyes” (I: 8). He further demonstrates his preference for Europe when he expresses pride that Eve is “educated beyond the reach of national

³⁰ In a paper on Cooper’s use of Scots dialect, Signe O. Wegener similarly points out that “Cooper, always the novelist of manners, insists that the higher a person’s social rank, the more superior and less accented his or her use of the English language—and also their command of other languages. In his texts, language becomes an inescapable social marker.”

foibles” (I: 8). Indeed, Eve’s education has made her cosmopolitan, and she describes herself as “independent of prejudice” (I: 8). Her cousin, John Effingham, likewise praises her for being educated by “a congress of nations,” and he pays particular attention to Eve’s knowledge of languages, which will garner widespread admiration upon her return to America in *Home as Found* (I: 9).³¹ These opening remarks set the tone for a novel that espouses cosmopolitan ideals and assumes a reader as cosmopolitan as its protagonists.

Newspaperman Steadfast Dodge, in sharp contrast to the cosmopolitan Effinghams, is the emblem of everything that Cooper finds distasteful in 1830s America. Most readings of Cooper’s novel pay particular attention to his character, and there is little doubt what Cooper thought of this scurrilous figure. Daniel Marder calls Dodge an “ill-mannered, arrogant and ignorant usurper of republican virtues” (26). Dekker, likewise, calls the editor “a cowardly, sneaking, lying fictional descendent of Hiram Doolittle of *The Pioneers*, a ‘Man of the People’” (155). Others, such as Joel A. Johnson, connect Dodge to Cooper’s dislike of New Englanders. Johnson calls him “an ardent New England democrat . . . so devoted to equality and the rights of the people that he has difficulty thinking for himself” (138). Of more importance to the present argument is David Simpson’s reading of Dodge. Simpson argues that Dodge is an example of what

³¹ An extreme example of the recognition her linguistic knowledge receives is Mrs. Legend’s preparations for Eve’s appearance at one of the former’s “literary evenings”: “[I]t was known that Eve was skilled in most of the European tongues, and, the good lady, not feeling that such accomplishments are chiefly useful as a means, looked about her in order to collect a set, among whom our heroine might find some one with whom to converse in each of her dialects” (Cooper, *Home as Found* I: 92-93). Less admiringly, another minor character gossips, “Eve Effingham has lived so long in France, that she speaks nothing but broken English” (II: 18).

Cooper did not like about New Englanders who believed “everyone must conform to the New England standard” of language (*Politics* 187). Dodge’s hypocrisy on the subject of language is apparent in his own provincial speech. Simpson notes that, in the novel, “[w]hole pages are given over to the transcription of Dodge’s linguistic misdeeds, and the disdain they occasion in the truly polite characters” (187-88).

Dodge’s provincial opinions about the English language are matched only by his provincial opinions of Europe. Cooper uses Dodge’s travel journal, which the newspaper editor already has sent back home for publication, to satirize the typical travel writings of American tourists who make snap judgments, fail to learn the language, and cannot see through their own prejudices. To the dismay of the Effinghams, Dodge begins to read from the journal of his visit to Paris:

“*Dejjuned* at ten, as usual, an hour, that I find exceedingly unreasonable and improper, and one that would meet with general disapprobation in America. I do not wonder that a people gets to be immoral and depraved in their practices, who keep such improper hours. The mind acquires habits of impurity, and all the sensibilities become blunted, by taking the meals out of the natural seasons. I impute much of the corruption of France to the periods of the day in which the food is taken— ” (I: 187)

In a typical display of his excessively democratic ideas, Dodge disapproves of the French breakfast hour because it would be met “with *general* disapprobation in America” (emphasis added). Dodge further ignores the arbitrary relativity of cultural differences when he calls such timing not only unpopular but *unnatural*. And Dodge does not stop at disapproval of this single practice: he precipitously and illogically attributes the French breakfast hour to a generalization about the “corruption of France,” the same rhetorical move of which Cooper complains throughout his own travel memoirs. Cooper’s satire of travel writing in *Homeward Bound* is full of examples highlighting the distinction

between the cosmopolitanism of the Effinghams, Paul Powis, and Cooper and the provincial and chauvinist opinions of Dodge and his ilk.³²

Just as French phrases remain untranslated in Cooper's own travel writing, Dodge's remarks are punctuated by the responses of Mlle. Viefville in untranslated French.³³ Cooper thus aligns the anti-touristic sentiments of the genteel portion of Dodge's audience with the cosmopolitan reader who can understand the Parisian's rebuttals—and the cosmopolitan traveler who would understand the French spoken in Paris itself and make less prejudiced observations. Indeed, the higher-class listeners mock Dodge's misuse of French as well as his misguided opinions. His bad pronunciations, in particular, mark him as one whose go-aheadism has prevented him from taking the time to learn the language properly. Mlle. Viefville, for example, is baffled by Dodge's "Nully" until Eve clarifies, "*Pour Neuilly, mademoiselle*" (I: 188). Shortly after, when Captain Truck apologizes to the ladies for Dodge's inclusion of a "naughty place," Dodge himself clarifies, "To Notter Dam, Captain Truck, if you please, and I flatter myself that is pretty good French" (I: 189). Of course it is actually terrible French, and this is one of

³² If any more evidence of Cooper's obvious alignment with the Effinghams were needed, it could be observed that, in both his confrontation with Dodge during this scene and his conversation with Eve afterwards, John Effingham voices many of the same views of American government found in *The American Democrat*, including the argument that if all men were equal, elections would be better held by lottery, and the declaration that the "[t]he character of the American government is to be sought in the characters of the state governments" (*Homeward Bound* I: 96, 99; see *American Democrat* 79, 25).

³³ While a comparison of Cooper's presentation of European languages with that of his more frequently studied Native American languages lies outside the scope of this project, Rosenwald makes just such a comparison in his reading of a similar scene of untranslated French in *Last of the Mohicans*. He contrasts Cooper's idealistic and stereotypical portrayal of Native American languages with his more realistic depiction of French, concluding that the faults in Cooper's portrayal of frontier multilingualism are evidence of his perspective on Native Americans, not his general views of language (30).

the greatest crimes in Dodge's recitation as well as the most obvious marker of his worthless, provincial opinions.³⁴

While all of the Effinghams are cosmopolitan, the virtue is epitomized in the mysterious figure of Paul Blunt, whose "real" name is revealed to be Paul Powis later in the novel, but who we discover in the sequel actually to be Paul Effingham (son of John Effingham).³⁵ When Mr. Sharp first invites Blunt to discuss the situation of the pursuing *Foam* as an American to an Englishman, Blunt counters, "I do not know that it is at all necessary I should be an American to give an opinion on such a point For what is right, is right, quite independent of nationality" (I: 62). Similarly, Blunt shows his balanced view of his own country when he observes, "I do not think you Americans, Miss Effingham, at the head of civilisation, certainly, as so many of your own people fancy; nor yet at the bottom, as so many of those of Mademoiselle Viefville and Mr. Sharp so piously believe" (II: 50). As the antithesis of Dodge, Blunt seeks a level of truth beyond provincial biases. He even refers to himself as a "cosmopolite" (II: 49, 52), and his eventual match with Eve seems most fitting because she, too, "properly belongs" to neither side of the Atlantic (I: 128).

³⁴ In *Gleanings: France*, Cooper describes another American with similarly terrible French, one who shares the poor pronunciation of "gullyteen" (*Homeward* I: 191; *Gleanings: France* 281). The real-life American, however, is an "eccentric, but really excellent-hearted and intelligent man" (*Gleanings* 280). This difference is perhaps an indication of Cooper's greatly lowered opinions of his countrymen after his return to America, and/or the process by which real, complex people are simplified into satire.

³⁵ Joel A. Johnson also notes that "Cooper's ideal is embodied" in Blunt, but he frames this ideal in terms of Blunt's compromise between the "self-confidence" of Captain Truck and the "deference" of Steadfast Dodge (139).

In addition to his balanced opinions of national differences, another marker of Blunt's cosmopolitanism is his skill with languages. Describing her earlier acquaintance with Blunt in Germany, Eve recollects, "He made a good figure; was quite at his ease; speaks several languages almost as well as the natives of the different countries themselves" (I: 74). This facility with many languages keeps Blunt's nationality a mystery. Eve further remarks of his uncertain origin, "this gentleman speaks three or four [languages] with almost equal readiness, and with no perceptible accent. I remember, at Vienna, many even believed him to be a German" (I: 75). Later, Mr. Sharp and Eve again debate Blunt's nationality using the languages he speaks as evidence:

"He is, then, an Englishman, after all!" said Mr. Sharp, in another aside.

"Why not a German—or a Swiss—or even a Russian?"

"His English is perfect; no continental could speak so fluently, with such a choice of words, so totally without an accent, without an effort. As Mademoiselle Viefville says, he does not speak well enough for a foreigner." (I: 100)

Blunt's skill with European languages is so great that English is only identifiable as his native tongue for being *less* perfect. Whether his true nationality is discoverable or not, Blunt's balanced and worldly opinions are clearly accompanied by an ability to converse like a native in almost any country of Europe. This connection is confirmed when Mlle. Viefville tells Blunt, "*vous parlez trop bien Français* not to love *Paris*," and he responds, "I *do* love *Paris*, mademoiselle; and, what is more, I love *Londres*, or even *la Nouvelle Yorck*. As a cosmopolite, I claim this privilege, at least, though I can see defects in all" (II: 52). By seeing both good and bad, at home as abroad, Blunt epitomizes the intellectual benefits of the extended travel in Europe from which the Effinghams are just returning, and which the Coopers also experienced.

So far, all of these polite conversations in the Effinghams' private rooms demonstrate how, in *Homeward Bound*, "the domestic novel *becomes* a sea novel" (H. Egan 78).³⁶ One of the common criticisms of the novel, however, is that this "sea-going drawing room," as Stephen Railton calls it (172), is improbably disturbed by an extended sequence of action in which the packet is demasted in a storm, left defenseless when most of the men go to procure a new mast, and then beset by Arabs.³⁷ The first-class passengers escape in a launch and later reunite with the captain and crew. At this point, all of the able-bodied men, except the cowardly Dodge, attack the Arabs to retake the *Montauk*. After seeing the action from the perspective of the attackers, the reader is taken back in time to experience the battle with the women and older Effinghams hiding in the launch. In this second telling of the action sequence, Mlle. Viefville is the only one who can see what is going on. In response to the Effinghams' eager questions, she gives a play-by-play of the battle presented only in untranslated French. The following passage is representative of the longer sequence:

³⁶ Establishing the importance of *Homeward Bound* in Cooper's body of work, Hugh Egan goes on to argue that the novel "unites the two opposing strains of Cooper's earlier fiction, and in so doing establishes a tendency that will recur throughout the second half of Cooper's career: the sea will not be considered a romantic world by itself so much as a lens through which to view a troubled contemporary world, a lens capable of isolating and focusing essentially continental dilemmas. His sea fictions, in short, become novels of critical principle rather than of patriotism" (78). Thus travel, for Cooper, is no longer a source of romance; it becomes a tool for critiquing the problems at home.

³⁷ Robert Emmet Long remarks that *Homeward Bound* "is unsatisfactory in many important respects" and claims that the "adventures experienced in the course of the voyage . . . seem gratuitous and pointless" (*James* 105). Railton, in contrast, argues, "Far from being irrelevant, the action of this novel is in fact an emotional scenario, a transcript of Cooper's state of mind," and "the fight with the Arabs for possession of the *Montauk* . . . is an imaginative transmutation of the struggle over a piece of land in Cooperstown" (174).

“*Voulez-vous avoir la complaisance, monsieur?*” said Mademoiselle Viefville, taking the glass from the unresisting hand of Mr. Effingham. “*Ha! le combat commence en effet!*”

‘Is it the Arabs who now fire?’ demanded Eve, unable, in spite of terror, to repress her interest.

“*Non, c’est cet admirable jeune homme, Monsieur Blunt, qui devance tous les autres!*”

“And now, mademoiselle, *that* must surely be the barbarians?”

“*Du tout. Les sauvages fuient. C’est encore du bateau de Monsieur Blunt qu’on tire. Quel beau courage! son bateau est toujours des premiers!*” (II: 137)

For several pages, the lines in French almost outnumber those in English. As with Mlle. Viefville’s responses to Dodge’s travel journal, this choice of narration presumes a cosmopolitan reader. It is possible, of course, to pass over these impressions or to consult the earlier English narrative for clarification, but the exchange would be appreciated most by a bilingual reader. In such a climactic scene, Cooper does more than intersperse humorous French asides—he leaves exciting action that no reader would want to miss untranslated.

In the next major action sequence, when the *Montauk* flees from the firing Arabs still on shore, it is not foreign language but technical jargon that might baffle the reader. As in *The Pilot*, much of the nautical language in *Homeward Bound* is either combined with metaphorical description or explained for lay readers, but some examples, like the following, are nearly impenetrable to those ignorant of sailing:

By lowering the gaff the spanker was imperfectly bent; that is to say, it was bent on the upper leach. The boom was got in under cover of the hurricane-house, and of the bundle of the sail; the out-hauler was bent, the boom replaced, the sail being hoisted with a little and a hurried lacing to the luff. (II: 152)

In his paper “Getting Under Way with James Fenimore Cooper,” Robert D. Madison decodes similarly technical passages. He notes that Cooper’s contemporary readers

would have been more knowledgeable of sailing than modern ones (having the equivalent of our general, but not particularly exact knowledge of airplanes), but the precise meaning of all of these technical terms would not have been obvious to everyone. It might seem unreasonable to expect a reader to be fluent in both nautical jargon and French, but the ideally cosmopolitan Blunt is an example of one gentleman who does know both, in addition to his impeccable English and numerous other European languages. Although he is only a passenger aboard the *Montauk*, Blunt's nautical skill and expertise are essential for the escape and survival of his shipmates throughout their encounter with the Arabs. At the same time, Blunt's ease with European languages makes him an appropriate companion for the refined Eve. For Cooper, there is benefit to knowledge of all kinds, and Blunt is an example of how even disparate knowledges can be combined in one supreme example of cosmopolitanism.

After their series of close escapes, the international complement of passengers aboard the packet are drawn closer together, and the debate over the merits of England and America becomes less partisan. With a final show of his cosmopolitan impartiality, Blunt remarks how "it is the duty of the citizen to reform and improve the character of his country" (II: 172). He further explains Cooper's own increasingly critical view of America by adding, "The American, of all others, it appears to me, should be the boldest in denouncing the common and national vices, since he is one of those who, by the institutions themselves, has the power to apply the remedy" (II: 172). Cooper demonstrates that the best American citizen is not blindly nationalistic, but instead is one who can solve the country's worst problems through a cosmopolitan worldview and a willingness to criticize and improve. And just as Blunt has gained this impartiality from

his travels in Europe, John Effingham tells Mr. Sharp (actually Sir George Templemore) that the Englishman will gain a fairer perspective of America by extending his stay there. John Effingham predicts, “You have too much sense to travel through the country seeking for petty exceptions that may sustain your aristocratical prejudices, or opinions, if you like that better; but will be disposed to judge a nation, not according to preconceived notions, but according to visible facts” (II: 176). The virtues of the cosmopolitan society aboard the *Montauk* have also been observed by Thomas Philbrick. He writes:

The ship, no longer the symbol of freedom from the responsibilities and restrictions of society, becomes a microcosm of that society. Into the *Montauk* is crowded “a congress of nations,” and the discipline of the ship serves as a lesson that might well be applied to governments on land. (*James* 123)

The international society of the packet is removed from the prejudices of the nationalist societies on land, and from that vantage point, the passengers prove capable of discussing social issues in a balanced way. Society’s many problems can only be resolved from the cosmopolitan perspective cultivated by international travel.

Shortly after this genteel conversation, Cooper reprises the satire of Dodge’s travel journal, thereby demonstrating how the wrong kind of travel can serve instead to strengthen prejudices:

Mr. Dodge . . . turned over to one of his most elaborate strictures on the state of society in France, with all the self-complacency of besotted ignorance and provincial superciliousness. Searching out a place to his mind, this profound observer of men and manners, who had studied a foreign people, whose language when spoken was gibberish to him, by travelling five days in a public coach, and living four weeks in taverns and eating-houses, besides visiting three theatres, in which he did not understand a single word that was uttered, proceeded to lay before his auditors the results of his observations. (II: 202)

With this description, Cooper summarizes the three qualities that distinguish Dodge's travel from that of the Effinghams or of Cooper himself. First, Dodge is provincial because he is "complacent" in his lack of knowledge about the places he visits. Just as he holds to public opinion instead of proper logic and morality, he seeks to confirm his opinions abroad rather than expanding his viewpoint. Second, the hurry that, for Cooper, characterizes American society prevents Dodge from remaining in Paris long enough to gain a true sense of Parisian culture. The shortness of Dodge's stay is exacerbated by his tendency to remain only in the public places most visited by travelers, preventing him from experiencing the true lives of the locals in what little time he *does* spend in the country. Perhaps most importantly, Dodge's travel does not result in greater cosmopolitanism because he does not understand the language. In fact, Cooper notes the shortcoming twice in this brief passage. Dodge acts entirely counter to Cooper's own philosophy of travel, in which learning the language is a priority.³⁸ Cooper leaves so much French untranslated in his novel because he imagines a reader who, like himself, will be sufficiently worldly, and perhaps sufficiently well-traveled, to understand the language of Paris like a native.

³⁸ This philosophy is further demonstrated by Cooper's decision to hire "foreign servants" while abroad so that they would "be a great aid in acquiring the different languages" (*Gleanings: France* 2). Many biographers and critics have also noted the importance of language learning in Cooper's travel plans. Nathalia Wright lists having "his children learn French and Italian" as a reason for Cooper's trip to Europe (115); Kennedy notes that "[t]he desire to afford his daughters German language instruction prompted their departure for Dresden in May 1830" (94); Wayne Franklin describes the instruction in French and Spanish given to the Cooper family in preparation for their time abroad, calling it "part of an educational plan for the family," and further explaining that "the long work in French was also part of a long-matured wish of Cooper and his wife to spend some time abroad" (*Early Years* 513-14).

The elite cosmopolitanism of Cooper's ideal of traveling may be somewhat extreme, but it also represents an older mode of travel: an extended stay in Europe during which one learns the language and moves in society. Cooper thus exemplifies the tradition epitomized by Benjamin Franklin's residence in France and represented, in the nineteenth century, by scholars and cultural icons such as George Ticknor, Edward Everett, George Bancroft, and Washington Irving.³⁹ Cooper is also a major contributor to the genre of the sea tale, and his inclusion of nautical language and maritime themes introduces the trope of seeing the world (and learning its many languages) from the fore-castle, an attention to language that also can be seen in Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* as well as in the works of Melville examined in Chapter Three.⁴⁰ In both travel narrative and sea tale, Cooper emphasizes how the experience of travel can open the

³⁹ In his study of eighteenth-century travel literature, for example, Percy G. Adams describes a "long tradition of real and fictional traveled protagonists who learn of the diversity in the world, live happily or sadly abroad, acquire languages and impressions, and constantly make comparisons" (193). Dulles calls Franklin "the foremost American in Europe" and notes that he "completely bewitched Parisian society" (8). Dulles also describes how Ticknor spent "nearly four years in Europe, learning its languages, studying its cultures, absorbing everything" before taking the "specially created chair of modern languages" at Harvard (36). Rolena Adorno calls Irving "the first . . . to make use of Spanish as a tool of humanistic learning and research," starting "a trend . . . to move beyond English-language perspectives on the Americas' history" (52). Also, see Cushing Strout's analysis of how "Europe was inevitably a training ground for literary, artistic, and scholarly development" (62), as well as Trease's discussion of the literary Americans who undertook a Grand Tour in the first half of the nineteenth century (213-32).

⁴⁰ Like Cooper's sea tales, Dana's *Two Years* is well known for introducing nautical language to lay readers. Blum even suggests, as I argue for Cooper's novels, that Dana's work "encourages the domestic reading community to assimilate technical nautical language and customs" (*View* 46). Dana's book also demonstrates how the issues of linguistic cosmopolitanism developed in Cooper's sea tales became staples of the genre. Throughout the narrative, Dana emphasizes the variety of nations encountered on a sailing voyage, the benefits of hearing such a mix of languages, and the pleasure of finding a common ground of understanding. He finds that learning the language of other peoples leads to a better understanding of their culture.

receptive mind of the cosmopolite to the experience of cultural difference. In contrast to the idealism that reduces this difference to universal commonality, Cooper emphasizes the remainder of cultural significance that eludes translation. For Cooper, the variety of human language can be both confusing and misleading, but leaving foreign and technical language untranslated gives the writer a broader choice for expressing a precise meaning. In contrast to the works of imperialism examined in the following chapter, and the touristic travel to Europe that characterizes the latter half of the century, Cooper's travel involves learning different languages and terminology, balancing republican patriotism with a cosmopolitan respect for the value of national differences, at least when those differences are of European origin. How Cooper's perspective on linguistic difference might change in reference to less "civilized" parts of the world is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2 EXPANSIONISM AND EXCHANGE IN COOPER'S LATER WORKS

After his return from Europe, and the various legal battles that followed it, James Fenimore Cooper expressed his growing frustration with the American rabble, particularly in contrast to the sophistication he had observed abroad. Whether aiming to critique America's mercenary expansionist policies, or merely wishing to escape the country he now found so objectionable, Cooper more frequently set his later works outside of the familiar North American and transatlantic worlds of his earlier novels.¹ This shift in setting mirrors the United States' increased interests beyond its own coasts, and it illuminates the shifting attitudes toward foreign language that accompanied such imperialist endeavors.

Cooper's cosmopolitan appreciation for European languages may have exemplified the views of early-nineteenth-century Americans in Europe, but the many Americans traveling to parts of the non-Western world expressed a very different attitude toward the foreign. In contrast to the esteem in which European culture was held, views of the "savage" peoples encountered in the course of American expansion tend toward two prejudicial extremes: the seemingly opposed, yet simultaneous beliefs that alien

¹ Whether, as Robert S. Levine argues, Cooper's "disillusionment" with America caused him to search out foreign settings in order to "relinquish borders, disencumbering himself, as it were, of America itself" (102), or whether his growing criticism of the United States extended to a critique of its expansionism in the form of what George Dekker calls voyages "made in pursuit of plunder and discovery" (195), Cooper's later works demonstrate a greater engagement with non-Western settings. Sandra M. Gustafson finds a similar change, albeit an earlier one, in her observation that Cooper's "critique of empire" in *The Bravo* is "far more direct" than in *The Prairie* (125). Hugh Egan examines Cooper's desire to escape "the shoreline," arguing that Cooper's increasing attention to the "mysteries of the open oceans" produces "a sense of Melvillean uncertainty and hidden fate" (78).

cultures are both utterly incomprehensible and easily translatable into Western terms.² This paradox can be found in views of non-Western languages as well as in attitudes toward cultural and economic exchange. Cooper's later works of travel beyond America and Europe clearly map these two varieties of cultural misunderstanding. But while Cooper critiques both extremes, his treatment of "savage" cultures never equals the cosmopolitan appreciation of difference found in his European writings.

Nevertheless, Cooper's later sea tales raise questions of cross-cultural exchange that are central to the power structure of American imperialism. This chapter will examine how language, cultural concepts, and economic value are parallel currencies of exchange, and how the imperialist's failure to recognize incommensurability—and thus to commence the difficult task of negotiating that difference through greater knowledge and understanding—results in the paradoxical extremes of too easy translatability and utter unknowability. The first section of this chapter outlines the common tropes of imperialist discourse highlighted in Cooper's later works, examining the relationship between linguistic exchange and cross-cultural understanding. The second section demonstrates Cooper's engagement with imperialist misunderstandings of linguistic difference in his novel *Mercedes of Castile*. The third section extends the analysis of language to the analogous translation of economic exchange, demonstrating that, while Cooper's recognition of linguistic incommensurability takes an important step in the

² As discussed in the Introduction, David Spurr describes the two parts of this "paradox of colonial discourse" as "the desire to emphasize racial and cultural difference as a means of establishing superiority" and "the desire to efface difference and to gather the colonized into the fold of an all-embracing civilization" (32).

critique of American expansionism, his ultimate approval of America's civilizing mission leaves his position both imperfect and ambivalent.

Language and Cannibalism in Imperialist Discourse

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the United States, though by no means a colonial power, was beginning to expand its military and commercial reach into the Pacific.³ The nature of this expansion is clearly illustrated by the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842, which Cooper draws on for at least two of his later novels (N. Philbrick 339). Its official instructions claim that “[t]he Expedition is not for conquest, but discovery,” but its mission to “extend the empire of commerce and science” was not accomplished without some violence (Wilkes xxvii-xxix).⁴ The expedition also epitomizes how blindness to cultural difference manifests in the expectation of easy and unproblematic word-for-word translation. A postscript to Wilkes's instructions notes:

The accompanying printed list of English words . . . are intended for Indian vocabularies, which can be filled up as circumstances permit, taking care that the same words be used in all of them. (Wilkes xxxi)

³ As John M. Belohlavek has noted in his study of Jacksonian foreign policy, the United States, though “not seeking colonies,” “did not hesitate to carve out her own commercial empire” (151). Stressing American expansionist policies even further, Paul Lyons argues that “[a] whole U.S.-Pacific system of commerce and settlement functioned on a broad scale throughout [Oceania] from 1812 through the Civil War around the whaling industry (along with sandalwooders, sealers, *bêche-de-mer* traders), involving agents, communication networks, a consular system, and state-sponsored military protection, along with the missionaries who trained Island missionaries who fanned out, spreading trade and establishing U.S. influence throughout the Islands” (*American* 29).

⁴ One major goal was to further the interests of American commercial endeavors by charting the dangerous waters of the Pacific and establishing safe ports (Wilkes xxv-xxvi). As Barry Alan Joyce demonstrates, however, protecting the interests of trade also depended upon the expedition's “military purpose,” which was partly a response to the “perceived threats” of French and British warships in the Pacific, but also aimed “to send a message to the native inhabitants” (14).

In accordance with its scientific aims and methods, the expedition sought to expand the United States' linguistic knowledge methodically, with the meticulousness and empiricism of any scientific enterprise. Accordingly, rather than learn each native language on its own terms, Wilkes's instructions were to chart a rigid lexicon of equivalent vocabulary, to find a corresponding term in each of the new languages encountered for a series of predetermined English words. These instructions assume not only that all languages will have the same words, with no change in or overlapping of concepts, but also that their words will correspond perfectly to the shopping list of English words prepared in advance. Thus, the "accompanying printed list of English words" assumes that there is a universal dictionary of concepts to which the terminology of every human language must correspond. As radically different cultures are never quite this commensurable, either such a plan is doomed to failure, or, worse, by forcing such artificial and misguided correspondence onto a newly encountered language, imperialist discourse will erase cultural difference in the translation of the subaltern tongue.⁵

At times, Cooper seems complicit with imperialism's tendency to erase a "savage" language through the extremes of disavowal or assimilation: the accusation of animality or the assumption of too easy translation. An example of the first position occurs in the novel *Afloat and Ashore* (1844), a first-person narrative in which Miles Wallingford chronicles his extensive and exciting career sailing throughout the globe on various merchant voyages. Although Cooper's hero travels to many strange lands, the language of the savage Other plays little role in the text. Yet one exception to this rule

⁵ Eric Cheyfitz's *The Poetics of Imperialism* studies how translation was used as a tool of cultural and linguistic domination throughout the history of colonialism and imperialism in the Americas.

warrants particular attention. While on a trading voyage in the Pacific, Wallingford describes a native language as “the uncouth sounds of the still more uncouth savages of that distant region” (180). These “uncouth savages” are like the Greeks’ idea of “barbarians,” so called because of their inability to speak properly (Spurr 102-103). The whites do not even take the time to ascertain the real names of these people, and instead call them things like “Smudge” and “Dipper.” This belittlement of their language accompanies other derogatory comments portraying the natives as little better than animals. For example, Wallingford calls Smudge “semi-human” and compares him to “baboons and monkeys” (182). It is obvious that the whites can barely understand these “savages,” but rather than admit their own failure to communicate, they imagine Smudge to be “almost without ideas” and to have “the air of downright insensibility” (182). Cooper, or his narrator, treats the speech of Smudge and his companions, unintelligible to the Americans, as hardly more advanced than animal grunts. Instead of admitting their inability to understand, the Americans recast the incommensurability of the alien language as inherent unintelligibility.

Cooper begins to question these prejudices, however, when the seemingly “insensible” Smudge organizes the capture of the ship. Wallingford is forced to concede that “savages” have more sagacity than he previously thought, but he still uses language to outsmart them. He retakes control of the ship by speaking to the men below in a more complex style than Smudge, who possesses only a limited knowledge of English, can comprehend. In the end, it is difficult to determine what distance Cooper might have placed between the young Wallingford’s opinions and his own. Thomas Philbrick has pointed out that the “stoical dignity” of Smudge as he is hanged following the ship’s

recapture represents “the revolution that occurs in Miles’s judgment of the relative worth of the Indians and the whites” (*James* 140-42). Indeed, it is tempting to read the rebellion as a kind of forerunner to Melville’s “Benito Cereno.” Still, the apparent ease with which Wallingford outsmarts the entire band of natives seems to corroborate the whites’ linguistic and technological superiority. In either case, Cooper’s characterization of Smudge demonstrates how the radically foreign languages of non-white peoples are denigrated by the accusation of utter intelligibility, and the assumption that such incomprehensibility cannot be ranked with human speech.⁶

Cooper also engages with the seemingly impenetrable speech of the non-white Other in *Homeward Bound*, after the *Montauk* encounters hostile Arabs along the coast of Africa. As examined previously, the novel privileges foreign language when it is a marker of a cosmopolitan education in Europe. In contrast to its large sections of

⁶ This trope is more famously employed by Poe in his depiction of the jabbering natives of Tsalal in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. Like several of Cooper’s later works, including *Afloat and Ashore*, Poe’s novel responds to “the popular excitement which the preparations for the United States Exploring Expedition had stirred” (T. Philbrick, *James* 175). The racist stereotypes employed in Poe’s characterization of the Tsalalians as black and large-lipped are too obvious to deny. Critics seek instead to explain Poe’s purpose in including them. Mark Simpson, for example, argues that Poe invests in racism as “a viable discursive commodity” in order to “reinvest in authors the agency to *shape* the discriminations people make” (38). Focusing on language, Michael West argues that “[t]he strange speech of the Tsalalians sounds like aggressive baby talk” (312). Likewise, Scott Bradfield remarks, “The blacks in Too-Wit’s village possess no real language, only crazed ‘jabbering’” (79). The characterization of savages as language-less animals is also literalized in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” where the brutal murder of two women turns out to have been committed by an orangutan. As John Carlos Rowe aptly puts it, “The razor-wielding, imitative, ferocious, and prodigiously strong orangutan of ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue’ acts out a racist fantasy regarding civilized women—Mme and Mlle L’Espanaye—brutalized by ‘savages’ incapable of ‘proper speech,’ lacking the linguistic competency of those ‘Caucasians’ classified by Cuvier as the group that ‘has the most highly civilised nations’” (*Literary* 73).

untranslated French, the Arab language is never presented directly for the reader.

However, it is clear that Cooper goes beyond the most unproblematically stereotypical portrayals of savage language. While he falls short of giving true voice to the Other, his treatment of non-verbal signs and of the threat of cannibalism encapsulates an archetypal scene of failed communication found in both the Columbus story and the contemporary record of American expansionism. Cooper's portrayal of cross-cultural communication in *Homeward Bound* questions the imperialist use of translation for the erasure of cultural difference.

The cosmopolitan assembly aboard the *Montauk* is defined by its combination of American, English, and European nationalities, but the passengers' first encounter with *radical* difference occurs along the coast of Africa. After the ship is incapacitated by a storm, Captain Truck takes his men to procure a new mast from a wrecked Danish ship. That night, Captain Truck and his first mate Mr. Leach hear a noise on shore, sneak onto the beach, and capture the Arab man they find there. At first this stranger, like the natives in *Afloat and Ashore*, is described in animalistic terms. When knocked unconscious by the captain, he "[falls] like a slaughtered ox" (II: 14). Shortly afterward, Truck looks over the captive, "commenting on his points very much as he might have done had the captive been any other animal of the desert" (II: 15). The man is subsequently described as having "the whip-cord meagreness and rigidity of a racer" (II: 15). The Arab may be portrayed as something less than human in these offhand comments, but the ensuing scene undercuts any superiority the two Americans might feel.

When the two mariners shine a light on their prisoner's face, it is "sufficiently apparent that he fancied a very serious misfortune had befallen him" (II: 16). They

accordingly attempt to communicate that they mean him no physical harm. Cooper explains: “As any verbal communication was out of the question, some abortive attempts were essayed by the two mariners to make themselves understood by signs, which, like some men’s reasoning, produced results exactly contrary to what had been expected” (II: 16). Partly because of the comical lowness of these characters, but also because of the inherent difficulty of communication between radically different cultures, the attempted reassurances make the Arab prisoner fearful of even greater danger. Seeing the unwanted results, the captain guesses that “the poor fellow fancies we mean to eat him” and begins a more focused effort to “let the miserable wretch understand, at least, that we are not cannibals” (II: 16). Despite these efforts, the prisoner’s increasingly alarmed expression makes it clear that he does expect of Truck and Leach what Westerners often consider the most savage and repulsive practice of an unknown culture—in short, he expects they will eat him.

Whether or not the Arab was the first to take the mental leap to cannibalism, Truck and Leach do nothing but make the situation worse:

Hereupon the mate commenced an expressive pantomime, which described, with sufficient clearness, the process of skinning, cutting up, cooking, and eating the carcass of the Arab, with the humane intention of throwing a negative over the whole proceeding, by a strong sign of dissent at the close; but there are no proper substitutes for the little monosyllables of “yes” and “no,” and the meaning of the interpreter got to be so confounded that the captain himself was mystified. (II: 16)

Despite Leach’s best intentions, and the clarity he obviously seeks to achieve in establishing the noun of “cannibalism,” his non-verbal signs cannot match the more sophisticated grammar of speech and thus fail to communicate the most important element of the message: that the Americans do *not* intend to roast and eat their captive.

Truck can see Leach's error, but when he attempts to pantomime the same message, the result is the same. Truck deals with his failure by "ascrib[ing it] to anybody but himself" and deciding that "this fellow is too stupid for a spy or a scout" (II: 17). In the end, they set the man free rather than suffer him to remain in fear of becoming their breakfast.

This comedy of non-verbal communication raises an important issue for both the Western conceptualization of language and the ramifications of that theory for colonized peoples. The apparent primitiveness of gesture seems to support the idea that all human language might share some universal origin. And belief in the inherent unity of human language, whether its origin is divine or natural, might further support an ideal of universal understanding, like Anacharsis Cloots's cosmopolitan plans to abolish national boundaries. In practice, however, the assumption of some primordial, universal language more often leads to the imposition of Western norms and religious concepts onto less powerful peoples, whose differences are not indications of a "primitive" state destined to progress into Western civilization, but markers of their own legitimate culture with a different set of norms entirely.

Some gestures, undoubtedly, mimic biological realities sufficiently for their meaning to be understood by even the most widely divided cultures. For example, all humans must eat by putting food in their mouths, chewing, and swallowing, so a pantomime of this sort may convey particular and basic messages, although, as Cooper describes in *Homeward Bound*, even this simple a message may be greatly misconstrued.⁷

⁷ In his analysis of the connections between speech and gesture, Adam Kendon describes several kinds of mimetic or illustrative gestures including "enactment . . . , the use of body parts as models of things . . . , and the use of moving hands as if they are sketching diagrams or shapes in the air," as well as "point[ing] to things, persons, or locations as a way of bringing these in as referents" (112).

Similarly, some people may be able to mimic animal or other sounds in a way recognizable to anyone familiar with the original source. From such examples, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century language theorists extrapolated that all human language was derived from natural and universal origins. However, for every one of these genuine universals (or at least *global* or *species-wide* truths), many more gestural or onomatopoeic signs seem universal when they are not so. Gestures that are conventionalized rather than illustrative vary greatly from culture to culture (Kendon 118; Archer 80). For example, as sociologist Dane Archer points out, the “thumbs up” sign conveys “a very aggressive ‘screw you’ message” in Iran (80-81). Even seemingly mimetic gestures can prove less universal than a traveler might hope, as the American gesture of tipping a bottle to request a drink is quite close to the “an obscene gesture for ‘homosexuality’ found in a slightly permuted form in many societies” (80). The same may be true of onomatopoeia. For example, the sound a rooster makes varies worldwide from “cock-a-doodle-doo” to “cocorico,” “kiao kiao,” and “kikeriki” (Bredin 558).

Sounds and gestures can be used to imitate reality, but more often, culturally specific signs and gestures are incorrectly taken for natural representations. Thus, to borrow Cooper’s example from *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* (91; see Chapter One), a traveler can imitate the sound of a rooster and possibly be understood, but to believe that it says “cock-a-doodle-doo” instead of “kikeriki” is the same kind of cultural misunderstanding that leads imperialists to mistake their own culturally specific concepts for universals. Thus, while recourse to gesture and sound may be the only option for communication in a foreign land, and may have some degree of success, these forms of communication can too easily foster the impression that all messages are equally

universal, and this assumption leads to *mis*understanding, mistaken meaning, rather than the absence of understanding altogether. And it is misunderstanding that often proves to be the most dangerous and misleading failure of communication.

In *Homeward Bound*, the first miscommunication with the captured Arab could be attributed to the ignorance of the two American mariners, but a second encounter with the Arabs suggests that non-verbal communication between radically different cultures is not as straightforward as universalist theories of human language would assume. When a larger party of Arabs appears on shore, Mr. Monday offers to go negotiate a peace with them, aided by a case of liquor. The cowardly Dodge accompanies him so as not to endanger anyone who would actually prove willing to fight should violence become necessary. The two ambassadors are received with hospitality, and all goes tolerably well until the Arab captured the night before reappears. Here, Cooper notes that the “inhabitants of the desert, in the course of ages, had gleaned certain accounts of mariners eating their shipmates, from their different captives, and vague traditions to that effect existed among them, which the tale of this man had revived” (II: 32-33).⁸ Although Cooper falls short of directly portraying the Arab language, this shift in perspective provides readers a more sympathetic view of the *Montauk*'s enemies than is common in imperialist discourse. Moreover, by revealing that the Arabs have the same kind of alarming rumors about the “savage” behavior of the whites as the whites do about

⁸ Interestingly, Cooper further comments, “Had the sheik kept a journal, like Mr. Dodge, the result of these inquiries would probably have been some entries concerning the customs and characters of the Americans, that were quite as original as those of the editor of the Active Inquirer concerning the different nations he had visited” (II: 33).

“savages,” Cooper demonstrates how the failure to recognize and respect cultural difference can lead to ignorant assumptions of barbaric otherness.

Cooper gives one final example of the failure of communication by signs, and of the disavowal of difference that attributes unthinkable acts to foreign peoples. The previously captured Arab undertakes a “pantomime . . . to explain the disposition of Captain Truck to make a barbecue of him” (II: 33). In this case, it is the Americans’ turn to misinterpret. Mr. Monday construes the communication as an invitation to dinner (which is exactly what the bon vivant would most desire). Even more tellingly, Dodge, “with a conformity of opinion that really said something in favour of the science of signs, . . . arrived at the same conclusion as the poor Arab himself—with the material difference, that he fancied that the Arabs were disposed to make a meal of himself” (II: 33). Comically, yet perceptively, Cooper presents a bumbling array of characters, who, with an ironic “conformity of opinion,” all convert an incomprehensible message into the most extreme form of barbarity and inhuman Otherness—the threat of the great taboo of cannibalism.

Although previous critics have disregarded these paired scenes of misinterpretation in *Homeward Bound* as comic interludes in an already superfluous adventure sequence, Cooper’s repeated and pointed commentary on non-verbal communication as well as on cannibalism directly references many narratives of exploration in which whites encounter radical and unthinkable cultural and linguistic difference.⁹ Indeed, Geoffrey Sanborn’s extensive research in *The Sign of the Cannibal*

⁹ Stephen Arch, one of the few critics who mention these scenes at all, relegates them to the “comic end” of the “line or ornamentation in the plot that diverges from the known or

demonstrates that accusations of cannibalism are a perpetual and an almost defining feature of any encounter with a radically different culture. Richard Slotkin has noted, for example, that “[c]annibalism had traditionally been associated with the Indians of America since the discovery of the New World by the men of the Renaissance,” and stories of cannibalistic acts continued through the time of the Puritans (90). Ted Motohashi calls cannibalism “one of the most powerful terms in the written literature of conquest,” one that is “circulated as a normative representation of the transgressive Other” (85). This tradition of attributing cannibalism to unknown people extended to America’s trade and exploration in the Pacific. For example, when the Wilkes expedition surveyed its first group of Pacific Islands (The Tuamotu Group), the Americans were quick to assume the natives were cannibals. As Nathaniel Philbrick notes, “The natives in this region had a reputation for cannibalism, and [one member of the expedition] claimed that their gestures suggested that if the white men should come ashore ‘they would certainly be made a meal of’” (123). This is the same conclusion made by both the Arabs and the Americans in Cooper’s novel. In light of the repeated appearance of cannibalism in the history of colonialism and conquest, Cooper’s use of it in *Homeward Bound* proves to be more than incidental—it references an extensive history of imperialist encounters.

Consequently, the association of an unknown culture with the equally incomprehensible act of cannibalism is far from random. Another form of disavowal, the accusation of this unspeakable crime is the equivalent of comparing the language of the

expected journey to place the passengers quite literally on the margins of the Arab world.”

Other to animal noise.¹⁰ As has been demonstrated previously, imperialist perceptions of “savage” language often resort simultaneously to two opposite extremes. On the one hand, native languages are presumed to reference universal concepts and hence to be readily translatable. On the other, what cannot be so readily understood in the “savage” language is characterized as inhuman. As Cooper will demonstrate at length in *Mercedes of Castile*, the same binary exists on the level of culture. On the one hand, the assumption that “savages” are in a “state of nature” assumes that cultural difference is only an earlier stage of a universal progression of human civilization. At the same time, colonialist discourse wards off the incommensurable differences inevitably found within such radically foreign cultures with an accusation of utter inhumanity, and this accusation frequently takes the form of one of the most profound human taboos, the act of cannibalism.

Not only is the discourse of cannibalism a commonplace in the archive of colonialism dating back to the age of discovery, but even the term itself derives from an archetypal moment of imperialism, Columbus’s description of the New World. The word “cannibal” is traditionally associated with the Carib tribe, but it is unclear whether it comes from the Caribs’ own language or from the language of their enemies, the

¹⁰ Mary K. Edwards makes this point in her discussion of “cannibal talk”: “The term ‘cannibal’ has been applied to almost all groups of people at one time or another. Humans generally consider the eating of another human an anathema. Cannibalism, like incest or necrophilia, is the boundary beyond which we cannot stray and remain fully human. Those who do eat people are monstrous—animals, savages, witches, nonhumans. To label a group of people cannibals is a way to gain power over them and to control them. It has also served as the justification for often horrific acts of violence” (61). Likewise, Otter argues that, for many imperialists and explorers, “cannibalism is the ultimate sign of the unnatural and the uncivilized. Cannibal interruptions register the writer’s ambivalence toward ‘savage’ cultures” (*Melville’s* 14).

Arawaks, who are the source of Columbus's belief that the Caribs were man eaters (Cheyfitz, *Poetics* 41-42). Hence, the term originates in linguistic uncertainty. Cheyfitz even questions whether Columbus's "cannibals" actually ate human flesh, raising many of the same issues found in Cooper's scene of cannibal pantomime:

[Columbus] did not have any empirical evidence, and his assertion that the Arawaks themselves told him is contradicted by Columbus's own admission that neither the Indians nor the Europeans knew the other's language. If we try to imagine the use of gestures in this case, we have not gotten around the problem of translation, but only embedded ourselves more deeply in it. For gestures are already translations of the culturally specific signs that compose linguistic phenomena, although Columbus and the European voyagers who later followed him appear to have believed from moment to moment in the power of a universal gestural language to transcend the frontiers of translation that frustrated their efforts to communicate. (42)

By pointing out that gestures can be just as culturally specific as language, Cheyfitz locates the same failures of communication Cooper describes in *Homeward Bound* at the moment of European conquest. Although presented comically, Cooper's depiction of how seemingly universal and transparent signs can inadvertently signify horrible acts of cannibalism is not farfetched—instead, it echoes the very origin of the term.

The similarities between Cooper's scene of misunderstood cannibalism and the history of colonialism are made even more significant by the importance of Columbus, and of Spain more generally, during the later decades of Cooper's career. Indeed, the figure of Columbus resonated with the United States' own goals of expanding its influence and territories. In the 1820s, there was a surge of interest in Spain as Americans such as William H. Prescott and Washington Irving traveled there for study. Iván Jaksic argues that these Americans studied Spain in order to "contribute to the shaping of their own country's national identity," because "the story of the rise and fall of Spain

contained *lessons* of great relevance to the fledgling United States” (1-2).¹¹ Pere Gifra-Adroher argues that, by 1830, “the Columbian myth was totally engrafted in American letters” (54). Although the Spanish Conquest was most often seen as an example of an unnecessarily violent imperialism, the “heroic Columbus,” according to Eric Wertheimer, was often contrasted to the cruelty of later conquistadors; Columbus was admired for “discovering a New World reminiscent of the Protestant Eden or Arcadia” and meaning only “to bring Christianity to the benighted” (20).¹²

The primary source of the Columbus legend for English-speaking Americans was Irving’s *History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828).¹³ Further demonstrating the significance of the figure of Columbus, Rolena Adorno argues that “Washington Irving, as Prescott and others would do after him, turned the Spanish adventure in the New World into a remarkable Anglo-American story” and “created a nineteenth-century Columbus on the verge of discovery—and opportunity” (61). Thus, Columbus, and the Spanish conquest he began, were more than mere subjects of interest for nineteenth-century Americans, they encapsulated the spirit of discovery that was

¹¹ María DeGuzmán’s *Spain’s Long Shadow* also analyzes how “the construction of Anglo-American identity as ‘American’ has been dependent on figures of Spain (xii).

¹² Spain’s alleged cruelty to the native civilizations it conquered generated the widespread “Black Legend,” whose “implicit denigration of the contemporary Spanish Americas,” according to Anna Brickhouse, “conveniently gave rhetorical support to a variety of US political positions toward Latin America” (75), and, as Richard L. Kagan argues, allowed “early nineteenth-century promoters of American exceptionalism . . . to see Spain as an example of what would happen to a country whose fundamental values were antithetical to those of the United States” (22).

¹³ Irving originally intended to translate the historical archive that had recently been compiled by Martín Fernández de Navarrete, but he instead decided to write a unified narrative history that combined information from the various Spanish documents.

beginning to drive American expansionism while warning of the dangers that such expansion might present. The signs of cannibalism in *Homeward Bound* may or may not be a direct reference to Columbus, but they clearly outline a defining feature of cross-cultural contact—how the assumption of universality leads to vast *mis*understanding. These issues will reappear, with far greater detail, in Cooper’s own version of the Columbus story.

Discoveries of Incommensurability in *Mercedes of Castile*

Cooper engages with the Spanish predecessor to American expansionism in his often-ignored novel *Mercedes of Castile* (1840). His retelling of Columbus’s first voyage highlights the colonialist assumptions about non-Western language that lead to radical misunderstanding. In the nineteenth century, Columbus was seen as a quintessentially American figure with the “self-reliance” necessary to ignore all who doubted the possibility of his plan and to push westward beyond the bounds of contemporary understanding. Furthermore, Columbus’s discovery of previously unknown continents and peoples, with the expansion of both territory and trade that it provided for Spain, epitomizes the ideal behind expansionist projects like the U.S. Exploring Expedition, which even sought to discover the “New World” of Antarctica. Cooper, indeed, makes the connection between Spain and America explicit when he notes in *Mercedes of Castile* that the date the Moors relinquished Granada to the Christian monarchs, November 25, was the same date the British “reluctantly yielded their last foothold on the coast of the republic” (I: 51). Despite the correspondence between Cooper’s version of the Columbus

story and American expansionism, *Mercedes of Castile* has been largely ignored and generally condemned when mentioned.¹⁴

Most critics have found Cooper's novel to be overly reliant on the historical record. However, Lawrence H. Klibbe, whose article appears in Spanish, offers one of the most positive, and consequently most interesting, readings of Cooper's historical novel. The primary focuses of his study are Cooper's representation of Spain and the many elements of *Don Quixote* in the book, but Klibbe also draws an important parallel between Spain's Golden Age and Cooper's America. He concludes:

The mysterious forces of historical progress bring with them an inevitable battle between two civilizations, one primitive and one modern, and the violent disappearance of the one that is less advanced. Cooper confronts this moral contradiction within his country as well as in *Mercedes*: the victory of domination leads to a sense of responsibility and of decline. All of these influences and ideas call for a more just recognition of *Mercedes of Castile*. (1327, my translation)

Thus, Klibbe recognizes that *Mercedes of Castile* is more than a history trying in vain to be a novel. Instead, Cooper uses the Columbus story to confront issues of imperialism

¹⁴ For example, Dekker writes, "Nobody, I believe, has ever maintained that *Mercedes* is anything but a very bad book" (194). Wayne Franklin mentions in passing that "Cooper admittedly faltered in *Mercedes of Castile*" ("Brief Biography" 51). Many other critics take the tactic of Robert Emmet Long's generally comprehensive overview of Cooper's works and avoid discussing the novel entirely (*James*). In one of the very few articles about the novel, Donald M. Goodfellow admits, "For its many literary faults *Mercedes of Castile* has suffered well-deserved neglect" (318). Even when Goodfellow does conclude that the novel "is of considerable interest" to "the student of . . . the American historical novel," the chief interest it would hold is still only its "unique . . . method" of combining source materials (328). Yet what Goodfellow sees as the novel's principal area of interest, Robert D. Madison blames for its failure, focusing his essay on the "irrelevance" of the lengthy exposition on Spanish history and the saturation of the novel with historical details ("Cooper's Columbus"). Stephen Harthorn joins Madison in this criticism, complaining, "The novel (a perfect example of oneupsmanship gone wrong in Cooper's attempt to best Irving's *Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*) has been rightly criticized for its plodding pace and excessive dialogue, and especially for being 'source-bound,' leaving little room for an appealing story to develop."

that were anything but distant history for the United States in 1840. When read with an understanding of Cooper's career-long engagement with language, as well as his increasing interest in questions of territorial and commercial expansion, this underappreciated novel reveals an exciting commentary on the misunderstanding produced by encounters with radical otherness.

Although previous scholars have criticized the novel's disproportionate organization, which devotes nearly half its length to events in Spain before Columbus even departs, each of the novel's three phases illustrates an important aspect of the imperialist's encounter with cultural difference. In the opening section, the focus on the strict social codes and mores of Spain demonstrates the relatively unproblematic interpretations that occur within a single cultural context. In a society where cultural norms are taken for universals, and all dissenters, such as the Moors or the Jews, are expelled, most messages among members of that monolithic culture can be conveyed with little to no misunderstanding. The ease with which Spanish society interprets actions through the lens of its own culturally specific relations puts the misunderstandings and uncertainties of the later parts of the novel into greater contrast.

Moreover, while many commentators have criticized the novel's clumsy combination of historical fact and romantic plot, there is an important thematic connection between the fictional story, featured primarily in the last third of the novel, and the historical account of Columbus's voyage that occupies the middle section.¹⁵ Throughout both the transatlantic voyage and the initial exploration of the Caribbean,

¹⁵ Dekker, for example, calls the novel "a narrative of Columbus's first voyage to the New World on to which Cooper has soldered an absurd and puerile love story" (194).

Columbus and his crew engage in repeated misinterpretations, first by misreading signs of land and then by incorrectly translating the gestures and speech of the Caribbean natives. In both cases, the Spaniards see what they want to see. Columbus believes he can translate the communication of the natives because he takes his own cultural assumptions for universals, viewing as a prelapsarian state of innocence what is really a distinctly different culture. Columbus not only fails to communicate (an *absence* of understanding) but also more actively *misunderstands* the natives. His universalizing assumptions lead him to believe that communication has taken place when it has not.

Columbus's historical misunderstanding of the New World and the people he found there is mirrored in the novel's romantic plot, in which Cooper's hero Luis becomes infatuated with the beautiful indigenous "princess" Ozema. Luis eventually discovers that, like all the people encountered by Columbus, Ozema already possesses a culture of her own, and the incompatibility of her culture and Spanish culture leads to chronic misunderstanding. Throughout the novel, Cooper's parallel examinations of both linguistic and cultural misunderstanding demonstrate the same willful ignorance seen in the U.S. Exploring Expedition's shopping list of vocabulary. The assumption of too easy translatability results in the effacement of native culture.

The first section of Cooper's novel, which draws heavily on Prescott's history of the Spanish monarchs (Goodfellow 319-24), depicts a series of nuanced negotiations in Spain. These include the courtship of Ferdinand and Isabella, discussions about whether the romantic hero and known rover Luis de Bobadilla is worthy of the hand of Mercedes de Valverde, and bargaining for terms for the voyage that would recognize the audacity

of Columbus's undertaking while preserving the dignity of the monarchs. Each decision and each formal treaty is balanced between competing considerations of social standing, duty, and honor. For example, Isabella discusses her upcoming marriage with full knowledge of this complex web of responsibilities:

“We are not to think principally of ourselves in entering upon this engagement,” continued Isabella, earnestly—“for that would be supplanting the duties of princes by the feelings of the lover. . . . If I may have seemed to thee exacting in some particulars, . . . it is because the duties of a sovereign may not be overlooked. Thou knowest, moreover, Fernando, the influence that the husband is wont to acquire over the wife, and wilt feel the necessity of my protecting my Castilians, in the fullest manner, against my own weaknesses.” (I: 46-47)

The future queen will not agree to marry Ferdinand without considering the culturally specific relationships both of ruler to subject and of husband to wife. Likewise, when the novel jumps forward to the events of 1492, Luis is judged unworthy of marrying Mercedes because his previous actions are deemed unseemly for the husband of a noble lady of Isabella's court. In another passage rife with various social obligations, Mercedes recounts her promise not to marry without Isabella's consent:

“She spoke to me, Luis, of our duties as Christians, of our duties as females, and, most of all, of the solemn obligations that we contract in wedlock, and of the many pains that, at best, attend that honoured condition. When she had melted me to tears, by an affection that equalled a mother's love, she made me promise—and I confirmed it with a respectful vow—that I would never appear at the altar, while she lived, without her being present to approve of my nuptials; or, if prevented by disease or duty, at least not without a consent given under her royal signature.” (I: 84)

Playing the roles of both mother and monarch, Isabella reminds Mercedes of the responsibilities of Christian, woman, wife, and daughter. And these passages are just two of the many possible examples illustrating the web of social relations that any Spanish citizen must interpret and apply to major decisions as well as to daily actions. Such

examples create a “control” case of unproblematic communication within a monolingual culture against which the interpretive problems of the later sections of the novel will show in sharper contrast.

In the middle section of the novel, Cooper’s narration stays very close to the historical record of Columbus’s voyage and landing, including the Spaniards’ innumerable assumptions and misinterpretations. Through this account, Cooper highlights the importance of proper interpretation while examining the causes of interpretive error. In recent years, many analyses of the Columbus story have pointed out how little the Spaniards must have understood of the native peoples they encountered.¹⁶ Tzvetan Todorov’s analysis of the journal reconstructed by Las Casas contains a particularly insightful reading of Columbus’s repeated misinterpretations. As Todorov notes, it is not surprising that Columbus could not understand the Caribbean natives, but it is strange that he so often insists communication has taken place (31). Todorov suggests that “Columbus performs a ‘finalist’ strategy of interpretation, in the same manner in which the Church Fathers interpreted the Bible: the ultimate meaning is given

¹⁶ Gesa Mackenthun, for example, notes numerous inconsistencies in the various extant documents related to when, how, and whether the Spaniards understood the native peoples they conquered and argues, “someone who does not understand a word of what is spoken and who is unfamiliar with the body language of a foreign culture may easily assign wrong interpretations to the signs he encounters” (*Metaphors* 74-76). Cheyfitz further asserts, “Columbus’s European paradigm of what a language was, and hence of what a human was, must have been challenged. But rather than consciously questioning his culture’s centrality, a question that would have threatened terrific anxiety by raising doubts about his grasp of the situation, he represses the question by projecting it onto the Indians; the result is Columbus’s hallucinatory attempts to domesticate the far-fetched in his recurring fantasy that he understands the Indians’ language” (*Poetics* 110). This last argument will prove particularly relevant to my reading of Cooper’s novel, as it is such an unwillingness to rethink his own “culture’s centrality” that causes Luis to inadvertently mislead Ozema.

from the start . . . ; what is sought is the path linking the initial meaning (the apparent signification of the words of the biblical text) with this ultimate meaning” (17). In other words, Columbus is so confident in what he expects to find that he twists all signs to point back to this expectation. As a consequence, as Todorov aptly summarizes, “At sea, all the signs indicate land’s proximity, since that is Columbus’s desire. On land, all the signs reveal the presence of gold: here, too, his conviction is determined far in advance” (20). Columbus’s misinterpretations are not simply failures to understand; they indicate the far more pernicious practice of imposing one’s expected meaning onto alien sign systems.

Todorov links Columbus’s misinterpretation of the natives’ language to his misinterpretation of other signs throughout the voyage, and both kinds of misreading appear in Cooper’s retelling, where the short-sighted assumptions underlying such misinterpretations are brought to the fore. Although neither Todorov’s analysis, nor the original Spanish documents, would have been available to Cooper, the same record of misinterpretation observed by Todorov is quite clear in Cooper’s main source, Washington Irving’s history of the voyage. For example, Irving writes, “It is evident that a great part of this fancied intelligence was the mere construction of the hopes and wishes of Columbus; for he was under a spell of the imagination, which gave its own shapes and colours to every object” (248).¹⁷ In Cooper’s novel, as well as in the Columbus journal

¹⁷ Irving goes on to describe Columbus’s persistent belief that he was in Asia, and his tendency to interpret all communication as pointing to that foregone conclusion. Likewise, Irving notes, “Columbus looked in vain for bracelets and anklets of gold, or for any other precious articles: they had been either fictions of his Indian guides, or his own misinterpretations” (253-54). Later, he muses, “It is curious to observe how ingeniously the imagination of Columbus deceived him at every step, and how he wove every thing into a uniform web of false conclusions” (279). With particular attention to the

and in Irving's history, the mariners are preoccupied with a series of omens, portents, and signs as they cross the uncharted ocean: an erupting volcano (I: 230-31), a meteor (II: 18-19), and innumerable signs of land.¹⁸ In Cooper's version, the most superstitious interpretations are attributed to the common sailors, while the heroic Columbus provides more rational, if anachronistically scientific, explanations. Despite Cooper's characteristic distinction between common men and the natural aristocrat, these historical misreadings highlight the act of interpretation as a key theme of the novel and foreshadow the Spaniards' equally mistaken interpretation of Caribbean language and culture.

Accordingly, in Cooper's novel as in the historical voyage, the repeated misinterpretation of signs of land mirrors the misinterpretation of the gestures and language of the natives once the Spaniards reach the New World. Cooper does not describe Columbus's passage among the Caribbean islands in as much detail as he describes the voyage, but he does cast some doubt on the amount the Spaniards could have understood. He describes, for example, how "Columbus proceeded to other islands,

difficulties of communication with the natives, Irving reports, "The misapprehension of these, and other words, was a source of perpetual error to Columbus" (290). He concludes, "[T]he vague accounts collected through the medium of signs and imperfect interpretations, filled the mind of Columbus with magnificent ideas of the wealth which must exist in the interior of this island" (347).

¹⁸ Cooper reports that a large "field of sea-weed" is interpreted as "a sign of the vicinity of land" in mid-September, even though Columbus will not reach San Salvador until October 12 (II: 20). Several days later, still in the middle of the Atlantic, the Spaniards find a crab that they believe is "never known to go farther than some eighty leagues from the land" and "one of the white tropic birds, which, it is said, never sleep on the water" (II: 30). Cooper further highlights the madness of these hopes when he describes how, after seeing these supposed signs of land, the crew taste the ocean's water and, "so general was the infatuation, that every man declared the sea far less salt than usual" (II: 30).

led on by curiosity, and guided by real or fancied reports of the natives” (II: 88). He later states the fallibility of Columbus’s interpretations more forcibly when noting that the “adventurers” were “following directions that were ill comprehended, but which, it was fancied, pointed to mines of gold” (II: 89). Finally, and most strongly indicating Columbus’s pervasive misinterpretation, Cooper summarizes, “The delusion of being in the Indies was general, and every intimation that fell from those untutored beings, whether by word or sign, was supposed to have some reference to the riches of the east” (II: 89). Even after the strongly negative choice of the word “delusion,” Cooper does not quite proclaim, as Irving does, that the Spaniards were flat wrong in their interpretations. On one hand, such a denunciation would work against Cooper’s overwhelmingly positive and heroic portrayal of Columbus.¹⁹ On the other hand, by understating Columbus’s misinterpretations of the natives, Cooper invites the reader to make the same assumptions, heightening the effect when the plot finally reveals their fallibility.

In other seemingly apologetic moments, it is possible that Cooper is merely extending his cosmopolitan understanding of cultural difference to the Spaniards’ own assumptions. For example, he summarizes Columbus’s activities:

All this time, there had been as much communication as circumstances would allow, with the aborigines, the Spaniards making friends wherever they went, as a consequence of the humane and prudent measures of the admiral. It is true that violence had been done, in a few instances, by seizing half a dozen individuals in order to carry them to Spain, as offerings to Doña Isabella; but this act was easily reconcilable to usage in that age, equally on account of the deference that was paid to the kingly authority, and on the ground that the seizures were for the good of the captives’ souls. (II: 92)

¹⁹ Indeed, Robert Foulke mentions *Mercedes* as an example of how “flattering portraits of Columbus became a sign of patriotism” (76).

While Cooper casts some doubt on the justice of the Spaniards' actions with his odd conjunction of violent "seizures" and the claim that the Spaniards were "making friends wherever they went," he invites his readers to understand the goodness of Columbus in the context of the admiral's historical limitations, to see his actions as "easily reconcilable to the usage in that age." The ability to put Columbus's actions in the context of his own cultural norms is a virtue of the cosmopolitan reader Cooper imagines for many of his works. While this empathy for the man who initiated centuries of colonial atrocities might seem to ally Cooper with the United States' own imperialist policies, Cooper's romantic plot contains an extensive play with the interpretation of native language that works against such a narrow condemnation. As the following reading will demonstrate, the novel's conclusion suggests that Cooper recognizes and even values cultural and linguistic difference in a way that surpasses the prejudices of his contemporaries.

In the final section of the novel, which breaks away from the historical record to further the romantic plot, Cooper most fully explores the failures of communication between the Europeans and the native peoples they encountered. After the preliminary descriptions of the Spaniards' activities in the Caribbean, Luis and his Cervantean sidekick Sancho Mundo travel to stay with a local cacique, Mattinao, and his tribe. At first, cultural symbols seem easily comprehensible:

Mattinao drew from under a light cotton robe, that he occasionally wore, a thin circlet of pure gold, which he placed upon his head, in the manner of a coronet. This Luis knew was a token that he was a cacique, one of those who were tributary to Guacanagari, and he arose to salute him at this evidence of his rank, an act that was imitated by all of the Haytians also. From this assumption of state, Luis rightly imagined that Mattinao had

now entered within the limits of a territory that acknowledged his will. (II: 96)²⁰

Amazingly, Luis can understand the symbols of rank among the Haytians as easily as in any court of Europe. The symbol of leadership is a crown, and the proper sign of respect, as at home, is to rise in salute (although one might wonder whether the Haytians stand because it is their usual practice or only in imitation of Luis). Furthermore, the narration does not leave the reader to guess at the accuracy of Luis's suppositions, but declares outright that Luis "rightly imagined." Like Cooper's sympathetic portrayal of Columbus's errors, this statement firmly places the reader in a position to make cultural assumptions, dramatizing the failure to recognize cultural difference and heightening the effect of the reversal that will follow.

Almost immediately following these observations, Cooper begins to undercut such interpretive confidence as Luis makes another, less accurate assumption:

[Mattinao] attempted to converse with his guest in the best manner their imperfect means of communication would allow. He often pronounced the word, Ozema, and Luis inferred from the manner in which he used it, that it was the name of a favourite wife, it having been already ascertained by the Spaniards, or at least it was thought to be ascertained, that the caciques indulged in polygamy, while they rigidly restricted their subjects to one wife. (II: 96)

In contrast to the previous example, Cooper modifies the confident phrase "already ascertained" with the less sure "thought to be ascertained." Indeed, Luis's inference about Ozema proves incorrect, as she is actually Mattinao's sister. The misunderstanding appears to have arisen, at least in part, from a cultural difference between the rulers of Spain and of Hayti. As Cooper explains, "According to the laws of Hayti, the authority of

²⁰ Cooper refers to this people and their country as Haytians and Hayti, and I will use his terminology and spelling in the following analysis.

a cacique was transmitted through females, and a son of Ozema was looked forward to, as the heir of his uncle” (II: 99-100). Luis is correct in assuming from Mattinao’s tone that Ozema will be the mother of his heir, but an incongruity of cultural concepts makes his interpretation unreliable. The Haytian concept for such a woman is not congruent with the Spanish one, so neither “wife” nor “sister,” nor any Spanish or English word, fully conveys the precise position Ozema occupies in her own society. Luis misinterprets Ozema’s position because the concept for her status fails to translate directly into European language.

Todorov quotes a passage from the Columbus journals that mirrors this kind of misunderstanding. In it, Columbus wonders if “cacique” signifies “king or governor,” and whether another term means “hidalgo or governor or judge.” Todorov offers the following analysis:

having learned the Indian word *cacique*, [Columbus] is less concerned to know what it signifies in the Indians’ conventional and relative hierarchy than to see to just which Spanish word it corresponds, as if it followed of itself that the Indians establish the same distinctions as the Spaniards, as if the Spanish usage were not one convention among others, but rather the natural state of things. (29)

By assuming that “wife” or “sister,” like “governor” or “judge,” are universal categories rather than culturally specific and constructed terms (like the complex social-tie system found in Spain), both Luis and Columbus ignore the possibility that the Haytians have their own radically different culture. They instead expect a one-to-one correspondence of vocabulary, just like the predetermined list of vocabulary sought by the Wilkes expedition. This error is a methodological error of translation. Like the important difference between *ville* and township Cooper emphasizes in *Gleanings in Europe*, a difference lost when the terms are translated (see Chapter One), the Spaniards’ blindness

to the fact that culturally specific categories may not align perfectly across different languages leads to a more profound misunderstanding than simply not knowing the Haytians' word for "wife."

Luis, who is bred to value the meticulous refinement of the Spanish court, invites such profound misunderstanding again and again as he proves unable to accept the radical difference of Hayti and instead seeks equivalents for the cultural norms of Spain. Admiring the scenery as he is rowed off to the village, he incongruously combines the natural beauty of the island with the courtly polish of his Spanish love:

Luis saw fifty sites where he thought he could be content to pass his life, provided, always, that it might possess the advantage of Mercedes's presence. It is scarcely necessary to add, too, that in all these scenes he fancied his mistress attired in the velvets and laces that were then so much used by high-born dames, and that he saw her natural grace, embellished by the courtly ease and polished accessories [sic] of one who lived daily, if not hourly, in the presence of her royal mistress. (II: 96)

In addition to reminding the reader of the romantic plot, largely abandoned since the departure from Spain, Luis's daydream of his future life with Mercedes serves to contrast her fussy attire and "polished accessories" with the natural grace he will soon find in Ozema, foreshadowing the difficulties Luis will have reconciling his previous admiration of "high-born dames" to the seemingly less artificial beauty he finds in the New World. Making the comparison even more explicit, Luis finds an uncanny resemblance between Ozema and his Spanish fiancée, Mercedes:

Luis bowed to this Indian beauty, as profoundly as he could have made his reverence to a high-born damsel of Spain; then, recovering himself, he fastened one long steady look of admiration on the face of the curious but half-frightened young creature who stood before him, and exclaimed, in such tones as only indicate rapture, admiration, and astonishment mingled—
"Mercedes!"

The young cacique repeated this name in the best manner he could, evidently mistaking it for a Spanish term to express admiration, or satisfaction; while the trembling young thing, who was the subject of all this wonder, shrunk back a step, blushed, laughed, and muttered in her soft low musical voice, "Mercedes," as the innocent take up and renew any source of their harmless pleasures. (II: 99)

Presuming, even before he sees her, that a noble woman in Haiti will be somehow equivalent to one in Spain, Luis first addresses Ozema with a deep bow. When he looks up, he is shocked to find that the "half-frightened young creature" (a description antithetical to the courtly demeanor of Mercedes) looks to him just like his Spanish lady. In his surprise, Luis utters Mercedes's name, which, like "Ozema" in the previous scene, is misunderstood. The cacique and his sister believe the exclamation to be a general term of great approval, a misconception that Ozema retains throughout the novel.

If the doubling of Mercedes and Ozema represents Luis's conflation of Spanish culture with universality, it remains unclear how identical these bizarre doppelgangers really are. At times it seems that any resemblance is only the wishful thinking of the lovesick Luis, like seeing signs of gold and land when gold and land are the things most desired. The two women's similarities are first called "a decided and accidental resemblance," but this is amended by the admission that, "[c]ould the two have been placed together, it would have been easy to detect marked points of difference between them" (II: 101). Indeed, when Ozema does live for a time in the apartments of Mercedes, it seems that no one notices the resemblance. From Luis's perspective, the clearest distinction between the two is the divide between civilization and savagery, or to put it more in Ozema's favor, between artificial refinement and natural charms. The initial descriptions of the "Indian beauty" as a "curious but half-frightened young creature" and a blushing and laughing "trembling young thing" make it easy to "fancy Eve such a

creature, when she first appeared to Adam, fresh from the hands of her divine creator, modest, artless, timid, and perfect” (II: 100). Instead of correctly seeing that Ozema is part of a radically different culture, Luis imagines she lives in a state of nature, and imposes a Christian concept of prelapsarian innocence onto her as if it were a universal fact. And instead of understanding how concepts like “wife” or “sister” might differ for her people, Luis mistakes his own versions of such concepts for universals. To see Ozema and Mercedes as nearly identical, differing only in that one is cultured while the other is innocent and childlike, is to replicate Columbus’s own misunderstanding of the people he has discovered as lacking all language and culture.²¹ Cooper’s commentary on such a mistake becomes more evident as the romantic plot unfolds.

As Luis begins to converse with Ozema, the possibilities for misunderstanding multiply, even as the prospects for meaningful communication ostensibly increase:

To Ozema, then, Luis put most of his questions; and ere the day had passed, this quick-witted and attentive girl had made greater progress in opening an intelligible understanding between the adventurers and her countrymen, than had been accomplished by the communications of the two previous months. She caught the Spanish words with a readiness that seemed instinctive, pronouncing them with an accent that only rendered them prettier and softer to the ear. (II: 104)

²¹ Irving describes how Columbus “imagined that the Indians had no system of religion, but a disposition to receive its impressions” (291-92). An ambiguous comment in the reconstructed journal that Columbus took several Indians back to Spain so they could “learn to talk” provides more fodder for critical commentary (Cheyfitz, *Poetics* 109). Todorov argues, “Columbus’s failure to recognize the diversity of languages permits him, when he confronts a foreign tongue, only two possible, and complementary, forms of behavior: to acknowledge it as a language but to refuse to believe it is different; or to acknowledge its difference but to refuse to admit it is a language” (30). Cheyfitz does not take the mysterious statement quite as literally, and argues, “Perhaps what is troubling Columbus throughout his journal is not the question of whether the Indians possess a language, but the question of whether he possesses one, that is, the question of what a language is” (*Poetics* 110).

Despite some of Cooper's earlier descriptions, he now makes it clear how unsuccessful the Spaniards' attempts to communicate with the natives have been. This failure undercuts Luis's optimistic expectations about how much information he and the lovely Ozema have been able to exchange without error or misunderstanding. Luis even imagines that Ozema can instinctively learn Spanish as if it were a natural rather than a culturally relative language. Luis reflects:

The admiral had also enjoined on him the importance of ascertaining, if possible, the position of the mines, and he had actually succeeded in making Ozema comprehend his questions on a subject that was all-engrossing with most of the Spaniards. Her answers were less intelligible, but Luis thought they never could be sufficiently full; flattering himself, the whole time, that he was only labouring to comply with the wishes of Columbus. (II: 105)

If her answers are "less intelligible," it is unclear how Luis can be sure that he has "actually succeeded" in making Ozema understand his questions. Moreover, Cooper goes on to strongly hint that the infatuated Luis is deceiving himself about his motives for spending so much time with the beautiful Haytian, making it equally possible that he is deceiving himself about how much he has communicated with her at all.

In one of the last scenes before the ships leave for Europe with Ozema aboard, Luis gratifies his desire to play the lover when he protects Ozema from the attack of "Caonabo," an evil Carib chief. As the Haytian princess practically falls into his arms with fear, Luis "[hears] her murmuring— 'Caonabo—no—no—no!'" and "[understands] this exclamation to express her strong disinclination to become a wife of the Carib chief" (II: 111). However accurate this implicit "understanding" might be, Luis, as surely as Columbus finding signs of land and gold wherever he looks, turns the situation into that for which he might most hope. Like a knight errant of old, the young soldier protects a

beautiful lady in distress, who from apparent affection for her protector does not wish to marry another. Ironically, Ozema's exclamations, like all of the ensuing communication between Luis, Ozema, and Caonabo, are the same kind of noun-only exchanges that cause so much trouble in *Homeward Bound*. And if "Caonabo," a chief of the tribe that supposedly lent its name to man-eating, sounds like an infantile pronunciation of "cannibal," it serves only to make Cooper's clues of misunderstanding and misinterpretation even stronger.

In the confined spaces of the ship on the long voyage back to Spain, Luis and Ozema appear to reach new levels of understanding. Ozema's "progress in Spanish" is "such as to astonish even her teacher," and Luis has "acquired nearly as many words of her native tongue, as he [has] taught her of his own" (II: 141). Even so, the following scene will demonstrate that this exchange of words is not enough to ensure mutual understanding. As a fearful storm threatens the lives of all aboard the ships, Cooper introduces a pivotal dialogue explaining, "they conversed, resorting to both dialects for terms, as necessity dictated. We shall give a free translation of what was said, endeavoring, at the same time, to render the dialogue characteristic and graphic" (II: 141). Even though Cooper claims that both characters speak in a combination of their native and a foreign language, when "translated" for his English readers, Ozema's speech is infantile and broken while Luis's is elevated, just as he would speak in pure Spanish. It is likely this choice reveals Cooper's own failure to recognize that Ozema's seemingly primitive state may really be only a different kind of equally developed civilization, but it also invites the reader to participate in Luis's assumption that the only difficulty lies in

understanding the broken speech of Ozema, while his communication must be perfectly clear.

This assumption helps conceal a gross communication error that, although not explained at the time, will return to put Luis's marriage to Mercedes in jeopardy. Fearing that the lovely girl might die in her "benighted" state, Luis gives her the jeweled cross that Mercedes had given him before he left Spain:

The young man wore the parting gift of Mercedes near his heart, and raising a hand he withdrew the small jewel, pressed it to his own lips with pious fervour, and then offered it to the Indian girl.

"See"—he said—"this is a cross; we Spaniards revere and bless it. It is our pledge of happiness."

"That Luis' God?" enquired Ozema, in a little surprise.

"Not so, my poor benighted girl"—

"What benighted?" interrupted the quick-witted Haytian, eagerly, for no term that the young man could or did apply to her, fell unheeded on her vigilant and attentive ear.

"Benighted means those who have never heard of the cross, or of its endless mercies."

"Ozema no benighted now," exclaimed the other, pressing the bauble to her bosom. "Got cross—keep cross—no benighted again, never. Cross, Mercedes"—for, by one of those mistakes that are not unfrequent in the commencement of all communications between those who speak different tongues, the young Indian had caught the notion, from many of Luis's involuntary exclamations, that "Mercedes" meant all that was excellent.

(II: 142-43)

Examined carefully, there are many warnings in this exchange that Ozema is susceptible to misunderstanding. First, she is guilty of idolatry in thinking the cross might be Luis's God instead of just a symbol (although Cooper's Protestant readers would likely think that the Catholic Luis is a bit idolatrous here, too). Ozema's interruption to ask the meaning of "benighted" seems to bode well for her acquisition of Spanish, but it also serves as a reminder of how much she does not yet know. Then, by calling the cross a "bauble," Cooper suggests that it may be less significant than is believed by either party.

Finally, Ozema's understanding is called into question by her persistent misinterpretation of Mercedes's name. Not only does this indicate an error in Ozema's Spanish vocabulary that Luis is either unable or strangely unwilling to correct, but it also suggests how ignorant Ozema remains of his romantic history and, consequently, of his possible intentions toward herself. By ignoring these many indications that Ozema's cultural differences have led her to misinterpretation, Luis has failed to realize that this conversation means something different to her than it does to him. As will be revealed at the end of the novel, Ozema has mistakenly interpreted this exchange as a marriage ceremony.

Despite the ferocity of the storm, Columbus and company do, of course, survive the passage home. After another section of historical description, the romantic plot is furthered when Sancho Mundo arrives at the court as a messenger from Columbus. Appearing before Isabella and Mercedes, Sancho quite understandably incites the latter's jealousy when he describes "Doña Ozema" as under Luis's particular attention, wearing Mercedes's cross, and as one of "these Haytian dames" who "are simpler than our Spanish nobles, half of them thinking clothes of no great use, in that mild climate" (II: 162). The trouble caused by this initial account deepens when Isabella questions Ozema. The girl declares, "Ozema now Luis' wife. Luis marry Ozema, already" (II: 187). After repeated questioning, Isabella is certain that Ozema is not lying, so she concludes that Luis "hath already wedded the Indian, and she is, at this moment, his lawful wife" (II: 187). Isabella adds, "But there can be no mistake. I have questioned the princess closely, and no doubt remaineth in my mind, that the nuptials have been solemnized by religious rites" (II: 188). Like Columbus and Luis, Isabella does not recognize that Ozema may

understand the word marriage and yet still misinterpret the Spanish concept. Seeing correctly that the girl is not lying, she jumps to the conclusion that, if Ozema considers herself to be Luis's wife, she must be his "lawful wife" with "the nuptials . . . solemnized by religious rights."

When investigating the matter further, Isabella shows a similar blindness to cultural difference in the matter of Ozema's status. Columbus tries to explain that he "consider[s] the rank of the lady Ozema to be less than royal, and more than noble, if our opinions will allow us to imagine a condition between the two," but Isabella will not accept such a difference, declaring "station is station, and the rights of birth are not impaired by the condition of a country" (II: 195). This example continues Cooper's positive portrayal of Columbus, as the admiral calls attention to the same nuance of cultural difference that the historical Columbus ignored in his desire to find a literal translation for "cacique." Isabella, in contrast, insists that matters of nobility are universal and that Ozema's rank be made to translate, demonstrating the imperialist attitude that assimilates all cultural differences into the dominant power's own system of meaning.

Finally, the conflict comes to a head when Isabella summons Luis before her to explain himself, and the queen's rage almost threatens his execution. She first gives him two possibilities to which he may confess: either he has "cruelly deceived, by a feigned marriage, this uninstructed and confiding Indian princess," or he has "insolently braved [his] sovereign with the professions of a desire to wed another, with [his] faith actually plighted at the altar, to another" (II: 198). Of course both of these interpretations are based on the assumption that Ozema has participated in Spanish versions of "lawful" and "religious nuptials." Luis denies any wrongdoing, and the accusations continue for what

seems like a ridiculously long time. At last, the queen asks Ozema, “When and where didst thou meet him before a priest?” and the truth is finally revealed: Ozema understood Luis’s gift of the cross as a marriage ceremony (II: 201). Ozema may have learned the Spanish terms for husband and wife with ease, but she did not understand the full concepts. The misunderstanding was exacerbated by the Spaniards’ assumption that their own cultural conventions were universals. Because they viewed Spanish ceremonies and social codes as the only options, they proved unwilling or unable to see the differences in Haytian rituals and concepts. Instead, they imagined the Haytian people in a state of nature easily understood in Christian terms. Just as in Wilkes’s instructions for collecting native vocabularies, Cooper’s Spaniards mistakenly believed that translation between the Old and New World could be accomplished by a simple, one-to-one change in terminology.

Yet Cooper’s own summary of the mistake leaves the question of how fully he embraces such an explanation uncertain:

The result showed how naturally and cruelly the young Indian beauty had deceived herself. Ardent, confiding, and accustomed to be considered the object of general admiration among her own people, Ozema had fancied that her own inclinations had been fully answered by the young man. . . . The very want of language in words, by compelling a substitution of one in looks and acts, contributed to the mistake The false signification she attached to the word “Mercedes,” largely aided in the delusion, and it was completed by the manly tenderness and care with which our hero treated her on all occasions. (II: 203-204)

Cooper seems to back away from the most insightful explanation of the incident in suggesting that Ozema has, like any love-sick girl, “deceived herself.” He places the burden of error on the native girl’s misunderstanding of the Spanish instead of the Spaniards’ misunderstanding of her. He does admit, however, that the problem was

exacerbated by communication difficulties. Cooper comes tantalizingly close to what might be a more modern reading of the events, but he still holds human weakness at fault rather than the irreconcilable differences between the two cultures. Although the misunderstanding between Luis, Ozema, and Mercedes does not cancel out all of the times Cooper presents communication between Europeans and Native Americans as unproblematic, or the latter as innocent and untouched by civilization, Cooper's extended engagement with cross-cultural communication reinforces the valuation of linguistic difference made more apparent in his European travel writing. His emphasis on the specific cultural meaning of foreign terminology—difference that resists translation—counteracts the imperialist tendency to see the language of the “savage” Other as either utterly incomprehensible or too easily translatable. Instead, his treatment of miscommunication in the colonial contact zone reveals the danger of these archetypal assumptions.

Thus, Cooper begins in his later writings to raise some of the questions that will become the focus of works like Herman Melville's *Typee*. Cooper is skeptical of the Spaniards' wishful-thinking interpretation of both natural signs and native languages, but he believes in a universal and unambiguous reality behind language, even if the imperfection of language often hinders the expression of that reality.²² In contrast,

²² This emphasis on a fixed reality beneath language is also apparent in the rational explanations Columbus provides for the omens and portents observed throughout the voyage, and the dedication to the laws of nature that these explanations reveal. For example, when the crew voice their fears about the erupting volcano, Columbus “[proceeds] to give his people an explanation of the causes of volcanoes” and “[tells] them that he look[s] upon this little eruption as merely a natural occurrence” (I: 231). Likewise, Cooper insists that Columbus “did not believe the sudden rising of the seas, on this occasion, was owing to a direct miracle, as some of the historians and biographers

Melville's treatment of the inherent ambiguity in language suggests an underlying ambiguity in reality itself. The distinction is apparent in a resonance between the Columbus story and *Moby-Dick*. When a devotee of American literature reads of Columbus's first voyage in Cooper's novel, Irving's history, or the reconstructed journal, the alternately hopeful and hopeless sailors seeking their reward for the first sight of land seem eerily reminiscent of the crew of the *Pequod*, tempted by Ahab's doubloon into a mad search for the white whale. Both groups are driven by a single-minded captain, and both must accomplish the mission of their commander to ever see home again. But there is a difference between Ahab's drive for revenge and Columbus's certainty that he will find land by sailing west. Ahab's misplaced monomania will lead only to destruction, but Columbus's monomania proves genuinely prophetic, or so it seems in any retrospective history, because readers know that he *will* discover the New World. While Ahab's failure demonstrates the limits of what William V. Spanos calls "the transcendentalist-inspired discourse of 'self-reliance'" (*Errant* 45), Columbus's success, as retold by Irving and Cooper, is the origin of such an exceptionalist American identity.²³ Thus, as observed in the cosmopolitan philosophy of the Enlightenment, Cooper's belief in a single ontological reality and a single ideological good can slip toward the universalizing assumptions that underwrite the discourse of imperialism, but his recognition of the

seem inclined to believe; but rather to a providential interference of Divine Power, through natural means" (II: 46).

²³ Similarly, Robert Tally argues, "By positing an inhuman force of infinite extension over the finite American Adam, by subverting the foundations of individualism (the individual subject and its agency), and by evacuating the myth of God's mandate, of His power to reward or punish, *Moby-Dick* effectively dismantles the dominant American ideological system undergirding such notions as manifest destiny" (84).

inevitability of cross-cultural misunderstanding, and his resistance to the idea of easy translatability, work against this universalizing assumption, leading him to present a critique of imperialism through language that often anticipates, if it does not quite match, the later works of Melville.

Incommensurable Economics in *Mercedes* and *The Crater*

As *Mercedes of Castile* demonstrates, the representation of linguistic difference is a good indicator of Cooper's attitudes toward non-Western cultures, but language was not the only arena in which the battle for cultural dominance and survival was played out. Rather, it is only one example of a variety of epistemological systems at stake in the cross-cultural encounters of American expansionism. The incommensurability of concepts that caused Columbus, and Cooper's Luis, such problems communicating with the strange peoples of the New World has a strong parallel in the similar incompatibility of value systems. As in the colonizer's attempts at linguistic translation, the problem is not merely finding which terms are equivalent—matching “one” to “*uno*” or “*eins*”—but that, in many cases, the concepts the words name do not align, just as “cacique” does not match any Spanish title. Analogously, economic exchange requires more than a conversion of dollars to pounds or yen, because the entire system of value may be incompatible, just as Western currencies are not directly translatable into a gift-based economy.²⁴ Thus, Todorov argues, “Nor more than in the case of languages does Columbus understand that values are conventional, that gold is not more precious than glass ‘in itself,’ but only in the European system of exchange” (38). Just as Columbus

²⁴ See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*.

cannot comprehend that “savage” cultures may have different concepts than Europe, he does not understand that the hawk’s-bells and other trinkets given to the natives are not inherently less valuable than the gold sought by the Spaniards. And just as Columbus views the natives he encounters as lacking a real language, he also deems them childish or irrational for the trades they are willing to make rather than recognizing their equally valid yet radically different system of value.

Before turning to the issue of economic incommensurability in both *Mercedes of Castile* and *The Crater*, it is useful to take a brief look at the theoretical and historical concept of the “fetish” in order to clarify the connection such incommensurability has to language. Although there are obvious differences between the native peoples of the Americas and the people encountered by the Portuguese on the coast of Africa, the concept of the fetish that arose from the latter encounter offers valuable insight into both cultural clashes. In a series of articles about “the problem of the fetish,” William Pietz argues that the fetish “not only originated from, but remains specific to, the problematic of the social value of material objects as revealed in situations formed by the encounter of radically heterogeneous social systems” (“Fetish, I” 7).²⁵ In other words, European

²⁵ Pietz’s primary focus is the history of the “fetish” as it “originated in the cross-cultural spaces” of the African coast, developed into a theory of religious “fetishism” by 1800, and was then adopted into numerous theoretical models throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as those of Marx and Freud (“Fetish, I” 5; “Fetish, II” 23). The term “fetish” itself may be tangential to the study of imperialism in Cooper, but the disconnect in value systems that produces it, and the inextricability of such problems of exchange from problems of language, illuminate an important connection between the play with linguistic sign systems evident in *Mercedes of Castile* (as well as in *Homeward Bound* or even in Katharine’s signal language in *The Pilot*) and the critique of U.S. expansionary trade policy and missionary activity found in *The Crater*. With or without the particular discourse of “fetishism,” an encounter with radically different cultures will produce this disconnection of value, this untranslatability.

traders found African value systems incompatible not only with European terminology for the use and worth of objects but also with their prior understanding of how objects could be used and valued. Just as the Africans' valuation of objects was incompatible with European systems of value, the concepts Europeans had for ceremonial objects, such as the idol, were incompatible with the Africans' concepts of the culturally particular objects classed together under the term "fetish." The kind of object-use found in Africa was simply untranslatable into European language. The traders responded to this utter incompatibility with a new term for a new idea, one which served as a kind of stopgap for this radical incommensurability but which never resolved into easy understandability. Moreover, the word "fetish," which Pietz describes as both "the failed translation of various African terms" and "a novel word responsive to an unprecedented type of situation," came into being to explain the problems of trade as well as to fill a gap in European terminology ("Fetish, I" 6). Just as the incongruity of concepts prevented a simple one-to-one translation, the radical incompatibility of value systems prevented a straightforward exchange of commodities.

One example Pietz offers of the incompatibility of value systems is the "category of the trifling," the tendency of "European traders [to remark] on the trinkets and trifles they traded for objects of real value" ("Fetish, I" 9). As Pietz explains, "While it was precisely such 'false' estimation of the value of things that provided the desired huge profit rates of early European traders, it also evoked a contempt for a people who valued 'trifles' and 'trash'" ("Fetish, II" 41). In *Mercedes of Castile*, Sancho Mundo is the master of the exchange of trifles. Never "forgetful of his duty on the subject of searching for gold," he eschews any attempt at linguistic communication, having "neither acquired

a single word of the Haytian language, nor taught a syllable of Spanish to even one of the laughing nymphs who surrounded him,” and instead “[decorates] the persons of many of them with hawk’s-bells, and [contrives] to abstract from them, in return, every ornament that resembled the precious metal, which they possessed” (II: 107). Greedy for gold, Sancho is quick to gain the most profit possible in his exchange of trifles for treasure. Cooper criticizes Sancho’s principles of “free trade” because they “[maintain] that trade is merely an exchange of equivalents; overlooking all the adverse circumstances which may happen, just at the moment, to determine the standard of value” (II: 107). In other words, Cooper denies that the items are “equivalent” at the going rate of exchange, just as he elsewhere insists that translations of a word are never precisely “equivalent” to the original. He suggests that allowing the free market to determine value might compromise other moral considerations.

Cooper’s ethical issues with free trade become clearer when Sancho shows Luis his acquired gold and exclaims:

“Double that, Señor Conde; just double that; and all for the price of some seventeen hawk’s-bells, that cost but a handful of maravedis. By the mass! this is a most just and holy trade, and such as it becomes us Christians to carry on. Here are these savages, they think no more of gold than your excellency thinks of a dead Moor, and to be revenged on them, I hold a hawk’s-bell just as cheap. Let them think as poorly as they please of their ornaments and yellow dust, they will find me just as willing to part with the twenty hawk’s-bells that remain. Let them barter away, they will find me as ready as they possibly can be, to give nothing for nothing.” (II: 107)

While it is clear that Cooper does not condone Sancho’s actions, he gives the early capitalist a sophisticated defense. Sancho rightly observes that the “savages” care as little for their gold as the Spaniard does for his bells, making the trade one of “nothing for nothing.” Yet the invocation of “a dead Moor” emphasizes the other atrocities undertaken

by the Spanish in the name of the Catholic Church, suggesting that such arguments are a poor excuse for the injustices resulting from “free trade.” This objection is voiced by Luis, who questions whether such trade is “quite honest” and suggests, “Remember thou art a Castilian, and henceforth give *two* hawk’s-bells, where thou hast hitherto given but *one*” (II: 108). With “a nobleman’s contempt for commerce,” Luis then reasons, “If it be honest to profit by the ignorance of another . . . then it is just to deceive the child and the idiot” (II: 108). While Sancho advocates the capitalist’s ruthless drive to make as much money as possible, however unjust the means, Luis’s “noble” solution is that those with the lion’s share of power and money be just a bit more charitable. In the process, Luis equates the less fortunate with other dependents incapable of making their own rational decisions, and such paternalism can be just as dangerous as Sancho’s ruthless acquisitiveness.

In his characterization of Sancho and Luis, Cooper presents two equally problematic extremes. The free market might allow for the most equitable exchange of goods when all other factors are equal and everyone is playing by the same rules, but when two radically different cultures clash, commodities not only have different values, but they are valued *differently*—a difference that is not only quantitative but qualitative. When colliding systems of value prove incommensurable, the “free” market can easily become distorted by the party with the most power. This is the problem with Sancho Mundo’s exploitative trade practices. On the other hand, Luis’s aristocratic solution of philanthropy is problematic as well. Rather than attempt to understand and negotiate the differences in value systems, Luis’s philosophy places the “savage” in a dependent position, showing greater kindness than Sancho’s cutthroat capitalism, but affording no

greater respect for cultural difference. This divide mirrors the imperialist's paradoxical desire to see radical difference as either too easily translatable (convertible into Western economics) or utterly unknowable (and thus unworthy of respect or preservation). Thus, in terms of economic exchange as with language and culture, Cooper maps out both extremes, but while he criticizes some unjust practices, he seems unable to imagine the middle ground of cultural relativism that he advocates so strongly in his European writings.

This division between exploitation and the West's civilizing mission is even more obvious in *The Crater* (1847), which shows the continuation of Sancho's trading practices into the expansionary policies of Cooper's present. One of Cooper's last novels, *The Crater* depicts the rise and downfall of a society due to the kind of democratic excesses that Cooper criticizes in many of his later works, and it engages directly with America's expansionary policies.²⁶ Cooper was personally acquainted with Charles Wilkes, head of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, and it is clear that Cooper drew on

²⁶ Several critics have equated the novel to Thomas Cole's famous series of paintings, *The Course of Empire* (T. Philbrick, *James* 234-35; Axelrad, 4-5). According to John P. McWilliams, "Cooper's obliteration of the Crater republic can only be viewed as the outgrowth of years of brooding about the inability of a republic to resist the powers of demagoguery" (*Political* 347). George J. Becker argues that the novel "serves as a warning against the contemporary tendencies which are about to bring down the whole edifice of society" (332). More specifically, Dekker describes how the novel illustrates, "how 'the people' are easily duped and how they abuse their freedoms, victimizing Cooper's genteel, well-heeled heroes and heroines" (245). Although earlier critics of *The Crater* ignore the particulars of its setting, seeing the Pacific as "a blank slate" for a largely allegorical story (Motley qtd. C. Adams 204; see also McWilliams, *Political* 370; or Scudder 116), more recent work has shifted the focus to Cooper's treatment of the United States' Pacific expansion (Gentry; Suzuki). Among the many who read *The Crater* in its geographical context, Lisa West Norwood notes the somewhat surprising fact that Cooper published the novel after Melville's *Typee*, arguing that "these authors have a moment when they are engaged with similar subjects and issues at the same time" including "American presence in the Pacific."

Wilkes's narrative for his novel of Pacific colonization.²⁷ While the protagonist Mark Woolston's failed colony ultimately offers few solutions, Cooper's presentation of both sides of economic imperialism questions the proper attitude toward all kinds of cultural difference, religious and economic as well as linguistic. Cooper critiques the most obvious injustices of American policy, yet he ultimately fails to unmask the equally insidious cultural conquest of the West's civilizing mission.

Cooper's novel depicts the expansion of trade into the Pacific that motivated Wilkes's expedition, trade fueled in part by the high prices goods such as sandalwood and sea-otter pelts would bring on the Chinese market (N. Philbrick 13). It is on such a trading voyage, "to proceed to some of the islands of the Pacific, in quest of a cargo of sandal-wood and bêche-lê-mar, for the Chinese market" (I: 29), that Mark and his companion Bob Betts are first marooned on a barren reef. And mirroring the Expedition's military purpose, their ship "[t]he Rancocus carried several guns, an armament prepared to repel the savages of the sandal-wood islands" (I: 57). Commerce in sandalwood, though dangerous, was lucrative because it capitalized on discrepancies in economic and cultural value systems. When American traders exchanged worthless (by Western standards) trifles for this valuable commodity, they, like Columbus and the African-coast traders described by Pietz, reaped extreme profits from a society with a radically different economic system. These American traders could then profit further from the ceremonial value placed on sandalwood by the Chinese, another cultural difference that translated into major financial gains.

²⁷ The connection between Cooper and Wilkes was first noted in W. B. Gates's source study (243-45), and it was more recently examined by Charles H. Adams as a reason for exploring Cooper's engagement with "American expansionism" (205).

Such trading missions were so lucrative because they exploited the incommensurable economies of the islands where sandalwood grew. Like Native Americans or sixteenth-century West Africans, these natives seemed content to exchange valuable commodities for mere trifles. Cooper emphasizes the worthlessness of the items intended for trade when he explains, “The cargo of the *Rancocus* was of no great extent, and of little value in a civilized country,” and “[t]he beads and coarse trinkets with which it had been intended to trade with the savages, were of no use whatever” (I: 90). These “coarse trinkets” are the same kind of trifles used by Sancho Mundo to trade for gold, and like his hawk’s-bells, they are not worth much by Western standards. Cooper more clearly criticizes what he sees as an exploitative practice when he reiterates, “Of real cargo, indeed, she had very little, the commerce between the civilized man and the savage being ordinarily on those great principles of Free Trade . . . which usually give the lion’s share of the profit to them who need it least” (I: 97). As Rochelle Raineri Zuck argues, Cooper’s comments on the evils of “Free Trade” suggest that “commercial exchange with Native people is . . . another means of taking advantage of them” (75). The Americans involved in Pacific trade take this advantage whenever they can, never inquiring why the island natives might value the “trifling” trinkets they are willing to take in exchange for “valuable” sandalwood, and for Cooper, this is the worst kind of exploitation.

Yet this exploitative trade, which capitalizes on cultural differences without understanding or appreciating them, is not the only way in which Americans approached the Pacific and its inhabitants. In *The Crater*, Cooper opposes free trade to a more charitable alternative, which he seems to endorse, but which can be just as damaging to

native cultures. While describing the contents of the *Rancocus*, which are the only resources Mark has on his reef, Cooper explains the ship owner's misgivings about the sandalwood trade:

The provision of tools was very ample, and, in some respects, a little exaggerated in the way of Friend White's expectations of civilizing the people of Fejee. . . . Now, sandal-wood was supposed to be used for the purposes of idolatry, being said to be burned before the gods of that heathenish people. Idolatry being one of the chiefest of all sins, Friend Abraham White had many compunctions and misgivings of conscience touching the propriety of embarking in the trade at all. It was true, that our knowledge of the Chinese customs did not extend far enough to render it certain that the wood was used for the purpose of burning before idols, some pretending it was made into ornamental furniture; but Friend Abraham White had heard the first, and was disposed to provide a set-off, in the event of the report's being true, by endeavouring to do something towards the civilization of the heathen. . . . It is true that he expected to make many thousands of dollars by the voyage, and doubtless would so have done, had not the accident befallen the ship, . . . but the investment in tools, seeds, pigs, wheelbarrows, and other matters, honestly intended to better the condition of the natives of Vanua Levu and Viti Levu, did not amount to a single cent less than one thousand dollars, lawful money of the republic. (I: 102-103)

The profit potential of sandalwood is high because of its religious value in China, but for Friend Abraham, taking advantage of its value makes one an accessory to idolatry. To offset this potential sin, Abraham plans to provide the Pacific Islanders with useful material goods—commodities carefully calculated to be not “a single cent less than one thousand dollars, lawful money of the republic.” Yet, as with Luis's suggestion to give two hawk's-bells instead of one, the small portion of the voyage's potential profits spent on such tools seems hardly to address the moral problem.

Even more disturbingly, this “provision of tools” will prove valuable to the natives only so far as they adopt Western forms of agriculture. Despite Friend Abraham's amusing rationalization, Cooper presents the ship's vast store of seeds and other

instruments of civilization in a positive light. They allow Mark not only to survive on the reef, but also to literally plant the seeds of a colony that will eventually support hundreds of settlers. Thus, Cooper's novel mirrors another aim of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, to "make such arrangements as will insure a supply of fruits, vegetables, and fresh provisions, to vessels visiting it hereafter, teaching the natives the modes of cultivation, and encouraging them to raise hogs in greater abundance" (Wilkes xxvii). Although the instructions suggest that the expedition "neither interfere, nor permit any wanton interference with the customs, habits, manners, or prejudices, of the natives of such countries or islands as [it] may visit" (xxviii), they appear to overlook the cultural and ecological changes that new crops, livestock, and farming techniques will inevitably bring. The Americans designing the expedition are so blind to the culture of these islands, that they do not consider how teaching the inhabitants Western modes of cultivation might interfere with their native modes of subsistence—not to mention how American trade itself might upset the native economy. Wilkes further demonstrates the drive to Americanize foreign cultures when he boasts, "I have reason to rejoice that I have been enabled to carry the moral influence of our country to every quarter of the globe where our flag has waved" (xxii-xxiii). Despite its superficial intentions of observing native culture without interference, the result of the expedition, and of the increased trade it made possible, was the erosion of native culture alongside the extinction of "valuable commodities" like seals and sandalwood. Yet for most of *The Crater*, Mark's project of "civilizing" the island in order to grow crops and support livestock is depicted as a noble one, and his reef becomes the kind of hospitable port that the U.S. Exploring Expedition sought to create.

The U.S. government desired the Pacific Islanders to learn more advanced farming techniques so that they would have a surplus of food with which to supply the whalers and other commercial vessels seeking port in the Pacific. Another requirement for the security of Pacific commerce was that the native inhabitants respect Western ideas of property. The government's instructions warn Wilkes:

Among savage nations, unacquainted with, or possessing but vague ideas of the rights of property, the most common cause of collision with civilized visitors, is the offence and punishment of theft. You will therefore adopt every possible precaution against this practice, and in the recovery of the stolen property, as well as in punishing the offender, use all due moderation and forbearance. (xxviii)

Thus, property appears as a key distinction between civilization and savagery. The tendency of this economic incommensurability to lead to violence is one reason that the *Ranocous* is also supplied with a store of weapons. Despite the advice of "forbearance" in the above passage, the belief that the "civilized" idea of property should hold precedence even in foreign lands is clear, as is the smug disregard for the possibility that the Americans might do something considered equally unacceptable by the local culture, or that these offenses might be just as disruptive as native theft.

In *The Crater* as in his other writings, Cooper maintains the importance of property, as numerous critics have noted.²⁸ As soon as Mark progresses beyond the initial

²⁸ Steven Watts argues that, for Cooper, "[p]roperty . . . was the basis of all civilization and its protection was critical to social improvement" (70). Robert Lawson-Peebles's argument is particularly relevant to the changing economy of the Crater colony when he describes how Cooper's political beliefs are dependent upon an idea of property that was quickly becoming out of date as an agrarian system was replaced by a business-oriented one (341-42). Rochelle Raineri Zuck (65) and Daniel Marder (36) also note the importance of private property. In contrast to these views, however, Charles O'Donnell argues that Cooper had "an ambivalent attitude toward property," one in which the "inevitable initial action" of claiming the land "is the start of a chain of evil linking father and son" (404).

steps of cultivating his islands, and after he is joined by other colonists, he divides the land and gives each resident his own private property. Cooper explains that this decision will increase the productivity of the society because, “[s]o long as a man toiled for himself and those nearest and dearest to him, society had a security for his doing much, that would be wanting where the proceeds of the entire community were to be shared in common” (II: 93-94). Thus, Cooper is particularly careful to separate Mark’s colony from communal experiments like the one at Brook Farm. In addition to protecting each individual’s private land, Mark also takes great pains to protect the entire colony, the new white colonists’ property, from being invaded and looted by the hostile natives nearby. In the repeated efforts to keep the villainous Waally away from his *own* group of islands, Mark enacts the U.S. Exploring Expedition’s policing of theft. Both policies result in the killing of large numbers of natives.

The dual projects of cultivating the land and establishing private property are demonstrated on a smaller scale by the “success story” of one of Cooper’s “good Indians,” Unus. If this Pacific Islander’s name seems reminiscent of *The Last of the Mohicans*’s Uncas, there is little difference between the characters other than the much smaller part Unus has to play in his novel’s plot. After greatly aiding the colonists in one of the conflicts with his tribe, Unus marries Juno, a former slave of Mark’s wife, Bridget. The newly converted “Indian” is thus united to an earlier conquest of the West’s civilizing mission. Cooper reports of this happy couple:

We may add here, that Unus and Juno were united before the ship sailed. They took up land on the Peak, where Unus erected for himself a very neat cabin. Bridget set the young couple up, giving the furniture, a pig, some fowls, and other necessaries. (II: 60)

Thus, the couple's success, almost a fairy-tale ending, is defined by their ownership of property and their ability to raise livestock. Unus has been properly civilized. Eventually, after a minister joins the colony, the two are given a Christian marriage ceremony, "the governor considering it proper that regard to appearances and all decent observances, should be paid, as comported with their situation" (II: 91). In this additional concession to Western culture, Unus and Juno are joined by a similarly mixed couple, and another success story of civilization, "Peters and his Indian wife" (II: 91). The white Peters originally met his wife, Unus's sister, while living with her tribe after being shipwrecked, but the two make the "proper" decision and join Mark's civilization as soon as they are able. Although Peters joins these native siblings in acting as interpreters for the colony, the presumably difficult process by which Peters would have learned the language of the nearby natives is not a part of Cooper's novel, although similar encounters will be the focus of many of Melville's works. The value of such bilingualism and the genuine cross-cultural communication it permits may seem like a glimmer of hope for achieving a more balanced cultural intercourse, but these interpreters serve little purpose besides hastening the progress of Western values. With all religious formalities duly observed, the exemplary products of Mark's civilizing project slip into the background of the novel and would seem to live happily ever after, at least until the entire colony is swallowed by the ocean.

From one perspective, then, it appears that Cooper's only solution to Sancho's exploitative trading practices, like the solution of extreme cosmopolite Anacharsis Cloots to worldwide oppression and violence, is to gather all peoples under a single system of civilization. Supporting this critical view of Cooper's own imperialist tendencies, Paul

Lyons gives an excellent summary of the various encounters with natives in the novel: “Cooper’s allegory is specific and unambivalent. Those neighboring Islanders who assent to the colonial authority are treated with paternalistic kindness; those who resist are rolled over militarily” (*American* 69). Thus Lyons argues that “Cooper sees Oceanians being integrated into the world system to the degree that they adopt Euroamerican trading protocols and form nation-states” (71). Cooper does not necessarily wish to see these Pacific “Indians” vanish like the native peoples of North America, but he does not see a place for their native value systems in a global economy.

Such an apparent preference for Western civilization is undercut, however, by the novel’s cataclysmic ending. If the result of any civilization’s rapid progress is its speedier decline, are the Pacific natives best left alone to advance toward the inevitable downfall at their own gradual pace? Cooper’s conclusion only begins to answer this question:

Let those who would substitute the voice of the created for that of the Creator, who shout “the people, the people,” instead of hymning the praises of their God, who vainly imagine that the masses are sufficient for all things, remember their insignificance and tremble. They are but mites amid millions of other mites, that the goodness of providence has produced for its own wise ends; their boasted countries, with their vaunted climates and productions, have temporary possessions of but small portions of a globe that floats, a point, in space, following the course pointed out by an invisible finger, and which will one day be suddenly struck out of its orbit, as it was originally put there, by the hand that made it. Let that dread Being, then, be never made to act a second part in human affairs, or the rebellious vanity of our race imagine that either numbers, or capacity, or success, or power in arms, is aught more than a short-lived gift of His beneficence, to be resumed when His purposes are accomplished. (II: 227)

On one hand, the hubris that causes the colony’s downfall, its trust in the power of “numbers,” “capacity,” “success,” and “arms,” seems to point the accusing finger at the arrogance of imperialists who would presume to exert their creative power over the less

powerful or worse endowed. At the same time, Cooper's invocation of such an apparently Christian higher power cannot be reconciled with a plea for cultural relativism. It seems that Cooper, like America's more tolerant Puritan settlers, believes there is a universal right, but that it is never the place of mere mortals to impose that right onto others.

In the end, Cooper's critique of imperialist discourse, and his plea to treat others with greater sympathy and kindness, stops short of recognizing that different approaches to life may be equally valid. Cooper comes closest to this ideal in his portrayal of language, recognizing the incommensurability of cultural concepts that resists easy translation, but he does not fully question his own assumptions about cultural and economic value.²⁹ While Cooper begins to examine the problems of cross-cultural exchange, he never quite arrives at the realization that there is no proper set of concepts or attitudes, instead suggesting that all the world's peoples be assimilated into Western civilization. As examined in the following chapter, Melville will take Cooper's critique of language encounters further, not only depicting the paradoxical extremes of utter incomprehensibility and too easy translation, but actively seeking out a more liberatory middle ground.

²⁹ The greater cultural relativism of which Cooper falls short is not a modern construct. A nineteenth-century version can be found in *Walden*, in which Thoreau weighs the costs and advantages of "civilized" and "savage" life and seeks a way to "live as to secure all the advantage without suffering any of the disadvantage" (74). Thoreau's project of stripping away one's own cultural assumptions in order to choose what is really most advantageous from the many ways of approaching life mirrors Cooper's own approach to European difference, and may be a solution to the contentious contact of native and imperialist Cooper explores in his later works.

CHAPTER 3 FRAUGHT TRANSLATION IN MELVILLE'S COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the United States was expanding its commercial, political, and military interests beyond the boundaries of North America, and the wide network of whalers, merchants, explorers, scientists, and other sailors who drove this change traveled throughout the Eastern and Southern hemispheres. In works like *The Crater* and *Afloat and Ashore*, James Fenimore Cooper comments on his country's Pacific expansion from afar. But at the same time that Cooper was writing his final sea tales, the young Herman Melville was experiencing such voyages firsthand, gathering materials for a literary career that would extend Cooper's critique of imperialist discourse even further. Cooper's cosmopolitan approach to European language transfers at least partially to his portrayal of colonial language encounters, but Melville comes far closer to a cosmopolitan appreciation of non-white cultures and the languages they speak.

This chapter will examine how the language encounters Melville experienced in his Pacific travels led to a career-long engagement with the limits of translation and the failures of communication they cause. By connecting Melville's semiotic critique of language to the lived experiences of translation and cross-cultural encounter, I will combine the previous approaches of poststructuralism and postcolonialism, demonstrating how Melville's decentered approach to language and reality derives from the experience of travel.¹ Over time, Melville shifts the target of his critique from

¹ Addressing Melville's treatment of language through a poststructuralist lens, Maurice S. Lee argues that "*Moby-Dick* offers a kind of proto-deconstructionist critique—one in which intertextuality, self-reference, and parody turn language on itself" ("Language" 405). Similarly, William Spanos connects the linguistic decentering of Melville in *Moby-Dick* to the discourse of American exceptionalism when he contrasts "Captain Ahab's

imperialist views of “savage” speech to all universalist theories of language, thereby questioning the positivist vision of Truth that underpins such universalism.

Like Cooper, Melville also exposes and negotiates the double-bind of imperialist discourse, the paradoxical desire to both emphasize difference and to efface it. The first error can be seen in the U.S. Exploring Expedition’s expectation that the words of new languages will correspond perfectly to Western concepts. Eric Cheyfitz summarizes such linguistic blindness when he argues, “The imperialist believes that, literally, everything can be translated into *his* terms; indeed, that everything always already exists in these terms and is only waiting to be liberated” (*Poetics* 195). This connection between the will-to-power of colonialist discourse and the assumption of easy and “literal” translatability suffuses the literature of exploration and conquest that Melville uses as the source for his own books. By assuming that the language, culture, and value systems of

New World discourse of self-reliance” with “Ishmael/Melville,” who “call[s] language as naming into question” (*Errant* 123, 175). Other critics who have taken a poststructuralist approach include Nancy Fredricks, who argues that “Ishmael circumvents the totalizing thrust of teleological structures” and “directs attention to the limits of representation” (52); Bernhard Radloff, who calls “Melville’s thought . . . a confrontation with modernity understood as the program of humanist rationalism” (1); and Sam Whitsitt, who examines Melville’s treatment of the nineteenth century’s “naïve sense of the relation . . . between language and being” (59). Other readings have focused on the importance of travel in the development of Melville’s cosmopolitan or global perspective. For example, both Paul Giles (56) and Malcolm Bradbury (138) emphasize the centrality of travel in Melville’s body of work, and Thomas Farel Heffernan examines Melville’s interest in travel literature (35). Sanford Marovitz calls Melville “among the most widely traveled of American authors” (19), and Christopher Sten describes him as “America’s most cosmopolitan writer of his time—the most widely traveled, with the broadest cultural experience and the most carefully considered views on . . . colonialism and cultural imperialism” (“Melville’s” 38). Charles Waugh finds in Melville’s writings “a global consciousness at work” (205), and both Mary K. Edwards (xii-xiii) and Paul Lyons (“Global” 56) connect this global perspective to Melville’s own experience in America’s Pacific expansion. Peter Gibian perhaps best summarizes this connection when he argues that Melville “continually focuses attention on the dynamics of cross-cultural encounter and the question of intercultural mediation” (20-21).

the Other can translate seamlessly into English, American imperialists erase cultural difference while granting their own beliefs and practices universal status. But the opposite extreme, described by David Spurr as the “rhetorical tradition in which non-Western peoples are essentially denied the power of language and are represented as mute or incoherent” (104), can be equally dangerous, and the ideal mean between these two prejudicial extremes can be difficult to achieve. Accordingly, my argument that Melville explores the limits of translation must recognize that a too-easy capitulation to the incomprehensibility of difference risks sliding into a refusal to recognize the speech of the Other—a refusal to allow the Other a voice both in a political sense and as part of recognizing his or her humanity.

One alternative to these dual forms of linguistic prejudice would be the kind of fluency that occurs only after one begins to think in a new language, fluency that makes the act of translation unnecessary. A parallel cultural fluency would likewise require understanding a new culture’s beliefs and practices on its own terms. In the situations Melville depicts, however, such fluency is impossible for the traveler who has only recently arrived in a foreign land. In this contact zone of linguistic encounter, the only solution to the paradox of imperialist discourse is an ongoing struggle for mutual comprehension. It is out of such a contact zone that pidgin languages develop—linguistic compromises that facilitate the exchange of both ideas and goods. More often, simply recognizing the inherent difficulties of cross-cultural communication is the only alternative to the imperialist extremes of utter incomprehension and universalizing translation. To escape this prejudicial binary, it is necessary to understand that translation is only a linguistic compromise, not a substitute for real fluency.

In his earlier works portraying cross-cultural encounters in the Pacific, Melville, like Cooper, maps out a middle ground between the oversimplification of the translator's task and a capitulation to the utter incomprehensibility of the Other. In later works, Melville combines the influence of his own sailing experiences with broader philosophical inquiries, increasingly portraying the lack of cross-cultural understanding as inherent incommensurability. He thus develops his earlier examination of linguistic encounter into the realization that all language is a pidgin compromise between incomprehensibility and the universalist beliefs that justify imperialism's civilizing mission.

The Portrayal of “Savage” Language in *Typee*'s Imperialist Sources

A thorough examination of Melville's early works as travel literature must begin with the sources that shaped his writing. David Porter's *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* (1815) and C. S. Stewart's *A Visit to the South Seas* (1831) are two well-established sources of *Typee*.² John Samson argues that Melville's narrators dramatize the role narratives such as those of Porter and Stewart have played in the creation of imperialist stereotypes and the maintenance of American ideology (213).³ In his

² The links between Melville's writings and earlier, imperialist accounts do not end here. Amasa Delano's *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres* is the obvious source of "Benito Cereno," and many critics have also seen connections between Melville's work and Charles Wilkes's *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (Lyons, *American* 73, 96; Madison, "Literature" 287; Heflin 175), as well as Edgar Allan Poe's fictional account, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (Martin 27; Fanning 162; Renker 14; M. Berthold, "Portentous" 560; Brodhead 34). See Chapter Two for discussions of Wilkes and Poe.

³ John Bryant further describes Melville's complicated relationship with the narratives of Porter and Stewart. Although Melville critiques their more imperialist attitudes, these sources also demonstrate "a certain Hobbesian rationalism" (Porter) and a "half-baked

representation of colonial language encounters, Melville directly addresses the failures of cross-cultural communication previous works of exploration would seek to conceal. Examining the narratives of Porter and Stewart, it becomes clear that Melville's predecessors emphasize the savagery of native language while, paradoxically, minimizing the difficulties of translation. In other words, in Porter and Stewart, as in Columbus and Wilkes, the language of the Other either presents no interpretive difficulties or appears as animal noise not worthy of translation.

The narratives of Porter and Stewart also represent two sides of American influence in the Pacific. Porter's attempt to annex the Marquesas for the United States makes his narrative the more obviously imperialist.⁴ Christopher McBride connects Porter to the history of U.S. imperialism when he describes how "Porter's claim established [the Marquesas] in the American imagination as a possible site for overseas expansion and trade" ("Americans" 165). Stewart, on the other hand, is a missionary like those Melville critiques in *Typee* and *Omoo*. His narrative emphasizes both religion and science, echoing the militaristic imperialism of Porter with the parallel goals of expanding Western culture and ways of knowing.

Both sources contain the stereotype of primitive and childlike natives found in the writings of Columbus and critiqued by Cooper in *Mercedes of Castile*, and both extend

liberalism" (Stewart) that Melville draws on to develop his own "more radical anti-imperialism" (Bryant, *Unfolding* 236). In contrast, Justin D. Edwards argues that Melville could not break away from the "imperial frame of reference" of his sources, leading to "*Typee*'s reinscription of the same colonizing attitudes that Melville claimed to be critiquing" (23).

⁴ Porter also renamed the islands the Washington Group, mirroring Columbus by replacing native designations with his own language.

this stereotype to the denigration of native language. Porter belittles Marquesan culture generally when he asserts, “In religion these people are mere children; their morais are their baby-houses, and their gods are their dolls” (II: 119). He similarly devalues native language when he writes, “We had but little opportunity of gaining a knowledge of their language while we remained among them; but from the little we became acquainted with, we are satisfied that it is not copious; few words serve to express all they wish to say; and one word has many significations” (II: 49). In addition to the implication that the primitive Marquesans have little to say, the arrogance of thus presuming to judge the extent of a language that is only partially understood demonstrates the little esteem Porter holds for Marquesan culture. Lawrence Alan Rosenwald has called the creation of such a “value-hierarchy of languages . . . an error” and the “linguistic form of racism” (18). A more extreme version of such racism is “denying that a particular language is a language at all” (18), and this belittlement can occur not only through direct statements but also through the general characterization of supposedly savage speech. One example of this more subtle linguistic racism occurs in Stewart’s description of his arrival on Nukuhiva:⁵ “The reveillé had scarce been beaten this morning, before the Vincennes was surrounded by the noise, loud talking, hallooing, and various rude merriment of the islanders” (I: 207). Stewart thus depicts the incomprehensibility of the natives’ language as obstreperous and “rude” noise rather than proper speech.

At the same time, both Porter and Stewart minimize the difficulties of cross-cultural communication and interpretation. When Porter first arrives at what he soon renames the “Washington Islands,” he glosses over the possibility of misunderstanding or

⁵ In the interest of consistency, I will adopt Melville’s spellings of Marquesan names.

misinterpretation. He says of the natives, “They frequently repeated to us the word *taya*, which signifies friend, and invited us to shore, where they assured us, by the most expressive gesticulations, that the *vahienas*, or women, were entirely at our service” (II: 10). Both native terms in this passage are immediately translated into English, and even the Marquesans’ gestures are said to be instantly understood. Whatever the accuracy of these translations, they clearly ignore any cultural differences that might complicate Porter’s instantaneous, word-for-word translation, such as the island’s specific codes of friendship or the class of women that “*vahienas*” might indicate. At the same time, Porter’s interpretation of the Marquesans’ meaning optimistically expects that the natives will bow down before the advance of civilization. A similar minimization of cultural difference can be observed in Porter’s brief discussion of the complicated cultural code of the taboo, which *Typee* will examine in depth. When Porter writes, “The word taboo signifies an interdiction, an embargo, or restraint; and the restrictions during the period of their existence may be compared to the lent of the catholics” (II: 42), he easily translates the term while equating it to a known Western standard. In all of these examples, the act of translation is ignored or erased.

Porter’s general disregard for the difficulties of cross-cultural communication and understanding is facilitated by Wilson, a white beachcomber figure “gone native” who acts as the captain’s interpreter. Porter explains:

His knowledge of the people, and the ease with which he spoke their language, removed all difficulties in our intercourse with them; and it must be understood, in all relations of future interviews and conversations, which took place between me and the natives, that Wilson is the organ of communication and the means by which we are enabled to understand each other: I shall, therefore, in future, deem it unnecessary to say, I was assisted by an interpreter, it must always be understood that I had one. (II: 21)

It is likely that Wilson's understanding of the people and their language surpassed that of Porter, but Porter's assertion that Wilson "removed all difficulties" of communication seems both too extreme to be entirely accurate and also too indicative of the imperialist ideology described by Cheyfitz to be taken at face value. In any case, by letting his translator remain "invisible," to use Lawrence Venuti's terminology, Porter downplays the significance of cross-cultural interpretation and understanding, falling short of Melville's far more nuanced depiction of linguistic encounter.

Stewart also minimizes the acts of translation and interpretation. Even more than in Porter, the language difference between missionaries and Pacific Islanders remains invisible and unproblematic. One rare instance where interpretation is discussed at all is Stewart's description of a "Worship Ceremony at Hido" observed during his visit to Hawaii. After noting, "I had not, in my long absence, so entirely forgotten the native language, as not to understand much that was said," Stewart presents the speech of the congregation rendered in English (II: 77). The discussion that follows indicates how Stewart derives a theory of seamless translation from his religious convictions:

Could I be deceived in the interpretation of this case? Could I be mistaken in the causes and the nature of those varied emotions, under the circumstances in which they were beheld; and in one, of whom I had never heard, and whom I had never before seen? No I could not: and if so—what is the language they speak? They plainly say that this poor woman, grown gray in the ignorance and varied degradation of heathenism . . . sees herself to be a sinner The simple appearance and every deportment of that obscure congregation, whom I had once known, and at no remote period, only as a set of rude, licentious, and wild pagans, did more to rivet the conviction of the divine origin of the Bible, and of the holy influences by which it is accompanied to the hearts of men, than all the arguments, and apologies, and defences [sic] of Christianity I ever read. (II: 76-77)

Despite his admittedly limited understanding of native Hawaiian, Stewart presents a fluid translation into English. He then follows this seemingly unproblematic translation with

exclamations over the unambiguous language of Calvinist conversion. Because he believes his own religion to be universal truth, he has absolute faith in the accuracy of his interpretation of the Hawaiians' religious convictions. This is a perfect example of the imperialist's belief that "everything can be translated into *his* terms" (Cheyfitz, *Poetics* 195). More provocatively, when Stewart references the "divine origin of the Bible," he recalls the universalizing, monologic voice of God. Such an ideal of unified, prelapsarian speech is the religious analogue of the transcendentalist idea that language represents universal truth, a view which Melville will critique throughout his career.

Stewart is driven by science as well as religion, and the unproblematic universality he attributes to the language of conversion is mirrored in his incorporation of scientific discourse, particularly his use of Latin names to indicate the plants he encounters throughout the Pacific. His emphasis on the names of concrete and easily classifiable flora skews his treatment of language to emphasize cases where words are a clearer index of reality, where language most closely takes the form of Adamic naming. One of the many possible examples demonstrates the capacity of Latin names to conceal linguistic uncertainty. Stewart describes "a few small trees of ironwood (*casuarina*), here called koa" (I: 256). This immediate and unproblematic translation between three languages subtly suggests that all translation will be just as clear-cut. Of course, translation does seem easier when the referent is a physical object, but as Todorov's analysis of the Columbus journals has demonstrated, an unbalanced reliance on the names of things, on "that sector of language which serves . . . only to designate nature," can mask deeper misunderstanding (Todorov 28-29). Stewart's use of scientific terminology is also an example of what Mary Louise Pratt calls "planetary

consciousness,” which includes “the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history,” as when Linnaeus uses “Latin for his nomenclature precisely because it was nobody’s national language,” demonstrating “the continental, transnational aspirations of European science” (15, 25). Pratt argues that such “systematization of nature coincides with the height of the slave trade, the plantation system, [and] colonial genocide in North America and South Africa” (36). Through science as well as language and religion, then, Stewart universalizes and systematizes Western modes of “truth,” thereby justifying the analogous “systematization of human life” that grounds the atrocities of colonialism and imperialism (36). Conversely, when Melville’s problematization of translation and cross-cultural exchange reveals the *lack* of a universal, monologic truth, he undercuts these colonial systems. The following reading of Melville’s early, Pacific novels will focus on Melville’s decentering of colonial discourse in scenes of linguistic encounter.

***Typee* and the Perils of Cross-Cultural Communication**

In *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846), Melville demonstrates a thorough engagement with the tradition of colonial language encounter. As its subtitle suggests, *Typee* was originally marketed as an account of Melville’s own experiences on Nukuhiva, although some readers were always skeptical of the truth of his narrative. It has been long established that Melville’s supposed four-month stay on the island could have lasted no more than four weeks (C. Anderson 70). Robert C. Suggs finds factual errors and impossibilities in Melville’s account of Nukuhiva and argues, “whatever realistic elements there are in *Typee*, it remains first and foremost a literary romance” (83). Still, as *Typee* is the only source of information about Melville’s experiences in the

Marquesas available to scholars, the temptation remains to read it as autobiography (Heflin 137; Kelley, *Herman* 5).⁶ In the present study, however, it is useful to distinguish between the realism of Melville's account and its literal truth. The first relates to the question of Melville's engagement with issues of colonialism and race, the second, though integral to works of biography, is of less value here.

It is beyond doubt that the encounter between white Americans and exotic Pacific Islanders is a central concern of *Typee*, but Melville's position on the issues of colonialism and imperialism raised by such an encounter is a subject of much debate (G. Thompson 19).⁷ My reading of native language in *Typee* will follow those who focus on

⁶ The question of truthfulness or accuracy also affects *Typee*'s classification as a travelogue or novel. Janet Giltrow (18), Robert K. Martin (19), and James Jubak (133) all emphasize the importance of reading *Typee* as a travel narrative. Geoffrey Sanborn insists that, whether the work is "a reliable record of travel or an unreliable record of adventures[,] . . . Melville's foregrounding of that question does not transform the book from a travel narrative into a novel" ("Purple" 132). Wyn Kelley describes *Typee* as an ingenious combination of genres including "travel account, captivity narrative, anthropological study, escapist fantasy, [and] maritime yarn" (*Herman* 28-29). Indeed, those who argue that *Typee* is more than a travelogue seem to differ only in their judgment of how much philosophical errancy the genre can contain (see Springer and Robillard 128; Maloney 17; Dimock 38).

⁷ Many readings, particularly early ones, have viewed *Typee* as either "a whole-hearted defense of the Noble Savage" (C. Anderson 178; also see Wenke 252), or what Sanborn calls "a humanistic recognition of the identity of self and other" (*Sign* 134; see Herbert 172; Firebaugh 115). Others approach the issue of savagery more critically and directly: Anna Krauthammer argues that "Melville . . . uses the white savage motif in an examination of the dichotomy between savagism and civilization as it applies to non-white others in the South Seas" (28). Mitchell Breitwieser argues that, when Tommo's "rhetorical primitive encounters the actual primitive[,] . . . Tommo's narrative falls into a bewildered vacillation between portraits of the Typees as nobly innocent victims of colonialism and portraits of them as happy perpetrators of an appalling depravity" (398). Not surprisingly, more recent critics have read such primitivism as complicit in colonial stereotypes (Banerjee 212; J. Edwards 32; Ka'imipono Kaiwi; Kelleter 200; Maddox 58; S. Thomson 61-69). As Charlene Avallone rightly argues, "Too often critical claims assume Melville's humanistic or anticolonial intent without the support of convincing textual or biographical evidence" (44). On the other hand, many critics have read *Typee*

the unknowability of the exotic other in Melville's portrayal of encounter.⁸ Like Cooper in *Mercedes of Castile*, Melville does the most justice to Typee culture when he portrays the difficulties of both linguistic and cultural translation. The following reading will argue that Melville demonstrates a pervasive engagement with the difficulties of cross-cultural communication encountered by an American in the Pacific, that he critiques the depictions of language in his imperialist sources, and that he begins to explore the ways

as a decidedly anticolonial text (Robertson-Lorant 11; Greenberg 10; Grejda 23-26; Milder 11; D. Berthold 59; Otter, *Melville's* 10; Ivison 115-16; Kardux 270). Others, including John Carlos Rowe ("Melville's"), Nicholas Lawrence, and Robert Roripaugh, have connected *Typee* to domestic concerns like slavery or the Western frontier. The most persuasive arguments, however, recognize that, despite Melville's clear objection to the injustices of both American and European imperialism, his anticolonialism is limited both ideologically, by the unavoidable prejudices of his age, and economically, by the desires and demands of his readership (Sanborn, *Sign* 77, 122; Sanborn, "Motive" 368; P. West 142). Likewise, Christopher McBride ("Americans" 165; *Colonizer* 12), Jeffrey Hotz (*Divergent* 250, 256), and Malini Johar Schueller have all noted that Melville simultaneously questions and enacts colonialist, imperialist, and racist discourse.

⁸ For example, Rowe argues that "*Typee* rejects the prevailing ethnographic models of its time" by "destabiliz[ing] our very processes of understanding other peoples" (*Literary* 80). Likewise, Bruce A. Harvey argues that, "in *Typee*, the natives will be most real when they are least understood" (62). A number of critics also focus on the centrality of moments of encounter. T. Walter Herbert, Jr., contends that Melville "shifts the emphasis" from the travel writings of missionaries and other travelers "so that it rests upon the encounter, the experience of contact, rather than upon the Marquesans as a thing observed" (158). Gibian argues that "*Typee* turns on the failure of contact between its narrator and the foreign world he travels through, a failure based in the narrator's continued attachment to the conventional thinking of his home culture" (23). According to John Evelev, "The object of representation of *Typee* is, above all, primitivism: the encounter of civilization with the exotic primitive" (19). Lyons examines how "Melville begins in *Typee* to refigure the multiple fears brought about by intercultural encounter—fears about boundaries, or, rather, their porousness" (*American* 78). David Farrier argues that "*Typee* is concerned less with writing encounter as with defining it," and he describes how the narrative "plays with operations of difference, drawing parallels between apparently diverse cultures and offering unsettling conclusions" (8, 117). Ian S. Maloney examines the representation of monuments in *Typee*, arguing that "contact with memorials emphasizes the space and distance between cultures" (17).

translation exposes the inherent inadequacy of all language, a theory he will continue to elaborate throughout his career.

Although Melville's engagement with the experience of being immersed in an exotic and unknown language is a major focus of the novel, the seriousness with which Melville treats foreign language has long been concealed by the tradition of mistrusting his Polynesian. In his travelogue *In the South Seas*, Robert Louis Stevenson famously criticizes Melville's bad ear. He calls Melville's "Hapar" for "Hapaa" a "grotesque misspelling" and imagines that Melville was gifted with the abilities to "see," "tell," and "charm," but that he was not "able to hear" (23).⁹ Despite Melville's own claim in *Typee*'s preface to have transcribed Polynesian words in the "form of orthography . . . which might be supposed most easily to convey their sound to a stranger" (xiv), many critics have agreed with Stevenson's negative assessment. For example, Suggs notes that Melville's "Marquesan vocabulary includes many non-Marquesan or nonsense words" and that "his place names and tribal names are also often erroneous" (48-49). A few, however, have looked beyond the tradition of maligning Melville's Polynesian. Elizabeth Renker quite persuasively argues that any shortcomings in Melville's transliterations result from his poor spelling of standard English rather than from any inability to properly hear or speak Polynesian (5-7). In his study of a recently discovered section of the *Typee* manuscript, however, John Bryant traces editorial changes in Melville's spelling of Polynesian words and finds that they "indicate (*contra* Stevenson) that

⁹ See Vanessa Smith's *Literary Culture and the Pacific* for a more detailed discussion of Stevenson's comment (111).

[Melville] heard Polynesian well and initially transcribed the sounds with an informed (although not always consistent) sense of the conventional transliteration of Polynesian printed in Melville's day" (*Unfolding* 193). Bryant also notes that "*Typee* exhibits a Polynesian and Hawaiian vocabulary of at least 102 words, names, and place-names, most of which are accompanied with translations" (241).

One scholar in the field of linguistics has done even more to recover the value of Melville's Polynesian. Emanuel J. Drechsel points out that the majority of the *Typee* language in the work could be classified as "Maritime Polynesian Pidgin," which he defines as "a major linguistic compromise of the indigenous population with newcomers, who had willy-nilly attempted to learn indigenous languages, if only reluctantly and incompletely" ("Maritime Polynesian" 235-36). Unlike Pidgin English, which would commonly be considered "broken English," Maritime Polynesian Pidgin is the "broken Polynesian" of sailors like Melville who attempted to speak the native language. This classification highlights Tommo's capitulation to the language of his captors—his willingness to learn the native tongue instead of insisting that the natives, Squanto-like, must learn his own. Drechsel defends Melville's use of this pidgin language and concludes, "In spite of their Anglophone spellings, Melville's attestations of Maritime Polynesian Pidgin are reconstitutable by comparative evidence from Polynesian source languages, and deserve recognition for their accuracy" (253). Although I cannot claim Drechsel's technical knowledge of the language Melville depicts, the following reading will demonstrate Melville's interest in what actually happens when a white, European-language speaker is immersed in an exotic language and culture. Whatever *Typee*'s relation to Melville's own experiences on Nukuhiva, and despite the inevitable

limitations of his Polynesian, Melville's portrayal of linguistic encounter counteracts stereotypical portrayals of exotic languages by enabling readers to understand the lived experience of fraught cross-cultural communication.¹⁰

Melville's attention to language is also part of a larger engagement with previous narratives of exploration and encounter. Like Columbus, Tommo initially views Typee valley as a kind of Eden, but as Milton R. Stern observes in his examination of Melville's "struggle with the possibility that multiple signification is the product of a fallen world," "Tommo's language fail[s] him as society turn[s] out to be something other than he had foreseen in his expectations of paradise" (444, 452). Thus, while Melville does occasionally depict Typee valley as a kind of paradise, he does not repeat the mistakes of earlier explorers and assume that the seemingly innocent and childlike natives living there will share a universal language and culture with their colonizers. Instead, Melville

¹⁰ Indeed, this is not the first study to call attention to the importance of language in *Typee*. Farrier analyzes Pacific missionaries' difficulty with Polynesian language and argues that the Typees in Melville's work deliberately "use ambiguity to deflect attention away from the centre of Typee culture" thereby "preventing their textualization by another culture by maintaining their status as fundamentally ambiguous in all modes of discourse" (85-86, 120). Michael C. Berthold argues that the Typee language "force[s] upon Tommo [a] new, unsettling knowledge of the fluidity of speech" ("Portentous" 555-56). Hans-Georg Erney has asserted that "the crucial battleground on which *Typee* is fought is that of *language*" (144), but his primary focus is on how Melville/Tommo uses the English language to make sense of his experiences. Finally, with a focus most closely related to my own, Herbert notes how "Melville's gift for language . . . enables Melville to convey impressions of the ways in which various schemes of interpretation make sense, make nonsense, and wreak havoc in Polynesia" (159). In contrast, Winston Weathers's reading of "communication problems" in *Typee* demonstrates exactly the prejudiced denigration of supposedly "savage" language that Melville critiques. Weathers contends: "A second obstacle to communication is a far too heavy reliance upon subverbal and non-lexical media among the natives. On the verbal level, the Typee language is essentially a matter of 'chatter, chatter, chatter' . . . Like babies and children, the Typees communicate by signs . . . Even if Tommo were to learn the Typee language thoroughly, he would be faced with the problem of a language inadequate for communication" (74).

critiques the typical narrative of encounter by highlighting the inherent incommensurability of translation.

From the first encounter between the runaway sailors and two native children, Melville is careful to distinguish his narrative from the prototypical scenes of conquest he evokes. Tommo recalls, “I then uttered a few words of their language with which I was acquainted, scarcely expecting that they would understand me, but to show that we had not dropped from the clouds upon them” (68). Melville separates Tommo from figures like Columbus or Cortés in that Tommo does not want to give the impression that the white men are some kind of gods. Likewise, the Typees are not merely perceived as childlike, as in the typical narrative of encounter—they are actual children. Indeed, as the Typees lead the Americans back to their valley, Melville makes it clear that he is not interested in simply reproducing the norms of the linguistic encounters depicted in his sources. Although it first appears that the two Typee children do not understand the white men, it quickly becomes obvious that they are deliberately feigning ignorance. Tommo describes how, in response to his repetition of “Typee” and “Happar”:

They repeated the words after me again and again, but without giving any peculiar emphasis to either, so that I was completely at a loss to understand them; for a couple of wilier young things than we afterwards found them to have been on this particular occasion never probably fell in any traveller’s way. (69)

The native children pretend not to understand Tommo’s questions in order to trick the men into following them back to their village. By giving the Typees such agency, Melville plays with the stereotypical encounter of mutual incomprehension.

The pivotal moment when Tommo discovers that Marnoo understands English further demonstrates Melville's engagement with the complex multilingualism of Nukuhiva:

[A]s soon as our palms met, he bent towards me, and murmured in musical accents,—“How you do?” How long you been in this bay?” “You like this bay?”

Had I been pierced simultaneously by three Happar spears, I could not have started more than I did at hearing these simple questions! (139)

Tommo describes Marnoo's speech as “musical accents” and “simple questions,” but he does not find it necessary to specify that Marnoo is speaking in English, which is the reason for Tommo's happy surprise. In many works of linguistic encounter, as in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, dialogue meant to be spoken in native languages is written in English for the reader's benefit. This practice would have made it necessary to indicate, in contrast to previous “translations,” that these were Marnoo's exact words *in English*. That Melville does not use such a marker highlights the fact that all previous speech either has been transcribed in its proper language, paraphrased, or presented with a translation in parentheses.¹¹ By thus representing the true multilingualism of Typee valley, Melville avoids the seamless and silent translations that characterize more stereotypical literature of encounter. Just as Tommo constantly would be faced with his unsettlingly limited knowledge of Polynesian, Melville does not let the reader forget that the Typees' speech and actions are never immediately comprehensible. At the same time, by including a character who *does* speak English, Melville avoids the opposite extreme of

¹¹ Analysis of such a scene is greatly aided by Rosenwald's framework for classifying the representation of multilingualism (1-3; also see my Introduction). Tagging dialogue with the language in which it is spoken is a way to “translate” all foreign language for the reader without completely effacing the multilingual reality the author means to depict.

total incomprehensibility, demonstrating that some cross-cultural communication is already occurring in the contact zone between whites and Polynesians.

The nuance in Melville's depiction of fraught communication is perhaps best demonstrated by the vastly different impressions previous critics have had of how well Tommo can understand the Typees' speech.¹² Closer attention demonstrates, however, that Tommo's level of understanding is neither falsely asserted by himself nor unrealistically depicted by Melville. Readings of Tommo's level of proficiency vary so widely only because Melville avoids the easily classifiable extremes of seamless translation and irreconcilable difference. Because the Polynesian vocabulary presented in *Typee* is internally consistent, it is frequently possible for a reader to learn the meaning of a word such as "mortarkee" and then use that understanding to interpret a later phrase. By thus initiating the reader into his own partial knowledge of Polynesian, Melville illustrates how Tommo uses his limited vocabulary to make rudimentary translations and acquire new Polynesian words. If, even without the benefit of immersion in the language, the reader can begin to understand simple statements, it is not impossible to imagine how Tommo might acquire the same understanding. At the same time, as common experience

¹² While Daneen Wardrop (148) and Jeffrey Hotz (*Divergent* 260) both suggest that Tommo understands the language little if at all, McBride asserts that any lack of comprehension is feigned (*Colonizer* 18; "I Saw" 26). Similarly, J. Kerry Grant notes that "Tommo's deepest perplexity is rarely a function of his inability to understand the language of his captors" and that "[h]e very rapidly demonstrates his ability to communicate with the islanders at an effective if rudimentary level and in his ramblings about the valley he is not often hindered by the irritations of the ordinary tourist who has lost his phrasebook" (65). Far more skeptical of Tommo's ability with Polynesian, Bryant asserts, "Real, imagined, or falsely asserted, [Tommo's] linguistic proficiency is as baffling to us as Polynesian is baffling, and finally horrific, to him," but he concludes that "Melville needed to establish that Marquesan is translatable enough for him to appreciate certain Marquesan moments but not enough to explain its horrors and allow him to stay" ("A Work" 91-92).

can easily show, there is a great difference between rudimentary understanding and fluency, and thus it is only reasonable that, of the Typees' "thousand questions" that first night in the valley, Tommo and Toby "could understand nothing more than that they had reference to the recent movements of the French" and other occasional "indistinct idea[s] of their meaning" (75). Even as Tommo's understanding of the language increases, Melville is still careful to distinguish between basic phrases such as "'Happar poo arva!—Happar poo arva!' (the cowards had fled)," which give Tommo little difficulty, and Kory-Kory's "vehement harangue," which Tommo can only paraphrase with the disclaimer, "so far as I understood it" (13). Tommo, like Melville, understands a limited amount of Polynesian from the combination of a whaler's previous knowledge and his stay on Nukuhiva, but it would be wrong to extrapolate a total understanding from such basic phrases, as some critics would wish to do, or to assume, conversely, that a lack of total comprehension is evidence of no understanding at all. In contrast to his predecessors, Melville avoids the extremes of too-easy translation and utter incomprehensibility, presenting his reader with a depiction of cross-cultural encounter that is as credible as it is respectful of cultural difference.

Melville's own experiences on Nukuhiva contribute a level of complexity and sophistication to the linguistic encounters in *Typee*, but Melville also responds to the stereotypical portrayals of "savage" language found in previous narratives. From the beginning of *Typee*, he critiques the traditional ethnographical practice of using language to denigrate a supposedly savage people. After using quotation marks to highlight and distinguish Polynesian words, Melville employs the same typographical markings to

imply a message of cultural relativism when he describes Porter's violent actions and the islanders' just retaliation:

Thus it is that they whom we denominate "savages" are made to deserve the title. When the inhabitants of some sequestered island first descry the "big canoe" of the European rolling through the blue waters towards their shores, they rush down to the beach in crowds, and with open arms ready to embrace the strangers. (26)

By placing quotation marks around both "savages" and "big canoe," and thus visually and typographically aligning the terms, Melville shows how labeling an unfamiliar culture "savage" is akin to the seemingly less proper application of "big canoe" to a ship likewise outside of the other culture's comprehension. The inappropriateness or inadequacy of both terms derives from a lack of cross-cultural understanding. Melville's following statement, "How often is the term 'savages' incorrectly applied" (27), which he borrows nearly verbatim from Porter's insufficient defense of the Marquesans (Porter II: 62), is proof of Melville's desire to rewrite the most limited colonial perspectives.¹³ Not

¹³ A similar sentiment is repeated much later in the book: "The term 'Savage' is, I conceive, often misapplied" (125). However, as Bryant suggests in his analysis of the relative frequency with which the terms "savage," "islander," and "native" occur in *Typee*, such apparent anticolonialism has its limits, and "Melville is reserving the use of *savage*, despite his own advanced ideology, for the shock the word will induce in readers" (*Unfolding* 167-68). Bryant expresses Melville's ambivalent anticolonialism more broadly when he concludes from his analysis of Melville's revision: "But the deeper irony of his revisions is that while Melville was revising his text, on the one hand, to assert his personal, imperial dominance over the various colonized sexual identities he projected onto *Typee*, he was also revising, on the other hand, so as to castigate imperialism in the Pacific, and in particular his imperialistic predecessors" (*Unfolding* 60). Hotz offers another reading of Melville's use of "savage" when he argues: "The slippery connotations of 'savage' throughout the narrative reflect Tommo's ironic stance toward the *Typees*. The ironic voice of the narrator perhaps masks his uncertainties in addressing what he sees as the conceptual problem posed by the *Typees*: the incongruities in their not being conventionally 'savage' and yet the burden of writing an adventure narrative that would appeal to a wide readership with this very notion of 'savage'" (*Divergent* 258).

only does the conjunction of “savage” with “big canoe” reinforce a message of cultural relativism, but it also demonstrates a link between Melville’s critique of ethnographic prejudice and his engagement with issues of how language contains and communicates meaning.

Melville also critiques the use of linguistic ethnography to label other languages—and thus other cultures—as inferior. He writes:

I once heard it given as an instance of the frightful depravity of a certain tribe in the Pacific, that they had no word in their language to express the idea of virtue. The assertion was unfounded; but were it otherwise, it might be met by stating that their language is almost entirely destitute of terms to express the delightful ideas conveyed by our endless catalogue of civilized crimes. (126)

Melville criticizes such linguistic prejudice on two levels. On the one hand, by rejecting the tribe’s supposed lack of vocabulary, he suggests that such claims are often fabricated to serve an ideological purpose. At the same time, Melville points out how ostensibly true statements can be equally deceptive when they reveal only one side of the issue. For example, a popular bit of trivia asserts that the Inuit have many words for snow. While their language does have a significant number, linguists have demonstrated that English contains just as many.¹⁴ Though presented as science, such linguistic trivia more often distort the truth than reveal it.

Despite the potential for superficiality in Melville’s literal denunciations of colonialism, he makes a deeper critique of the classification of “savageness” in his depiction of non-verbal communication. At first glance, however, Melville seems to echo

¹⁴ For proof of this, see Anthony C. Woodbury’s “Counting Eskimo Words for Snow: A Citizen’s Guide.”

the presentation of gesture in his sources. The following anecdote, for example, contains many elements of the typical imperialist language encounter:

The natives of Nukuheva would frequently recount in pantomime to our ship's company [the Typees'] terrible feats It was quite amusing, too, to see with what earnestness they disclaimed all cannibal propensities on their own part, while they denounced their enemies—the Typees—as inveterate gormandizers of human flesh[.] (25)

As in earlier accounts, the whalers and Nukuhevans resort to gesture to communicate in the absence of a mutual language. This passage is also reminiscent of the origin of the term “cannibal.” As with the Caribs and the Arawaks, the white men only hear about the cannibalism of the Typees from their enemies.¹⁵ Unlike his predecessors, however, Melville makes it clear that the information received from these pantomimed accounts is doubly doubtful, first, because it is communicated in the imperfect medium of gesture, and, second, because it comes from the biased perspective of a situation of mutual enmity, us vs. them.

Toby's attempts to communicate with the two Typee children using gesture further question the possibility of cross-cultural communication in the absence of a shared language:

The frightened pair now stood still, whilst we endeavored to make them comprehend the nature of our wants. In doing this Toby went through with a complete series of pantomimic illustrations—opening his mouth from ear to ear, and thrusting his fingers down his throat, gnashing his teeth and rolling his eyes about, till I verily believe the poor creatures took us for a couple of white cannibals who were about to make a meal of them. (69)

¹⁵ Samuel Otter has similarly pointed out that the repetition of “Typee or Happar?” “echoes the founding European trope of colonial encounter in the Caribbean: Carib or Arawak? Fierce cannibal or noble savage?” (*Melville's* 11). Alex Calder also has argued that *Typee* “is now generally thought to unravel the binary [of “cannibal or friend”]. Neither version of Polynesia is at all adequate to the reality of Tommo's experience” (“Pacific” 99).

This scene recalls an extremely similar one in Cooper's *Homeward Bound*, in which a white character fails to communicate his good intentions to a captured Arab (see Chapter Two). In *Homeward Bound*, the white man's gestures "described, with sufficient clearness, the process of skinning, cutting up, cooking, and eating the carcass of the Arab, with the humane intention of throwing a negative over the whole proceeding, by a strong sign of dissent at the close," but the gestures have the reverse effect and convince the captive that he is about to be cooked and eaten (II: 16). Likewise, Toby's attempts at non-verbal communication show how easily an intended meaning can be reversed. And it is the American character who is the butt of the joke, not the racial Others with whom he is attempting to communicate. Similarly, during Mehevi's inspection of Tommo's mysteriously afflicted leg, Tommo describes how Toby, "throwing himself into all the attitudes of a posture-master, vainly endeavored to expostulate with the natives by signs and gestures" (80). Comically exaggerating Toby's ridiculousness, Tommo even remarks, "one would have thought that he was the deaf and dumb alphabet incarnated" (80). These passages exemplify Toby's mode of communication with the Typees. In addition to their comedic value, such scenes balance similarly comic descriptions of the Typees' communication by making a white character equally laughable, a fact that is too often overlooked by those who most harshly criticize Melville's portrayal of native Marquesans.

Thus, Toby's comic gesturing balances a scene that appears to mock Kory-Kory's speech, a passage which Bryant analyzes in Melville's manuscript of *Typee*. Even in the final version, the native's "harangue" gives Tommo "the headache for the rest of the day" (Melville, *Typee* 103), but Bryant describes how "in manuscript Melville derides Kory-

Kory's 'eloquence,' stating that the native would have used the standard rhetorical signposts (firstly, secondly, etc.) 'had he been anything other than the illiterate barbarian that he was'" (*Repose* 154).¹⁶ Comparing this scene with the above descriptions of Toby, however, reveals that what is notable about such comical linguistic displays is not that they are given by a "savage," but rather that they are attempts to make oneself understood to a foreigner. For example, when Kory-Kory first attempts to inform Tommo that he is to be the invalid's mode of transportation, Tommo describes how "Kory-Kory, leaping from the pi-pi, and then backing himself up against it, like a porter in readiness to shoulder a trunk, with loud vociferations and a superabundance of gestures, gave me to understand that I was to mount upon his back" (89). It would be easy to read this behavior as a bit of endearingly childish and savage silliness, but in comparison to Toby's similar displays, it becomes clear that Kory-Kory is only gesturing so comically because Tommo would not understand if he spoke normally.

In the very scene that Bryant describes, in which Kory-Kory lectures Tommo about the depravity of the Happers, Melville also makes it patently clear that the extremity of Kory-Kory's behavior is motivated by his desire to be understood:

Kory-Kory seemed to experience so heartfelt a desire to infuse into our minds proper views on these subjects, that, assisted in his endeavors by the little knowledge of the language we had acquired, he actually succeeded in making us comprehend a considerable part of what he said. . . . [H]e explained himself by a variety of gestures, during the performance of which he would dart out of the house, and point abhorrently towards the

¹⁶ Bryant concludes from Melville's deletion of a passage that "further mocks Kory-Kory's 'gibberish'" that, "[i]n toning down the burlesque, Melville preserves our growing regard for the island culture" (*Repose* 155). Corroborating my own emphasis on language, Bryant further argues, "If these 'amiable epicures' are worth emulating socially and morally, then their language merits serious attention. It deserves objective translation, not ridicule" (155).

Happar valley; running in to us again and with a rapidity that showed he was fearful we would lose one part of his meaning before he could complete the other; and continuing his illustrations by seizing the fleshy part of my arm in his teeth, intimating by the operation that the people who lived over in that direction would like nothing better than to treat me in that manner. (102-103)

Undoubtedly, this method of communication is comically ridiculous, but I would argue that, in light of the example of Toby and the similar scenes in Cooper, the genre of Kory-Kory's performance is not "savage inability to communicate in a civilized manner" but "the lengths a person of any race will go to be understood by someone who speaks a different language." As Bryant points out, Tommo is quick to judge Kory-Kory for the excessive heavy-handedness of his gestures, but the earlier examples of Toby's failed pantomimes demonstrate that Tommo is wrong in assuming non-verbal communication to be so transparent that less elaborate gesturing would suffice. In light of this shortsightedness, it would appear that Tommo is far from an authorial mouthpiece when he goes on to mock Kory-Kory's headache-inducing "strain of unintelligible and stunning gibberish" (103). After all, it is Tommo who does not fully understand the language, and if Kory-Kory's "harangue" were not so unintelligible to a foreigner, his ludicrous display of gestures would not have been necessary.

In contrast, the positive example of "native oratory" that Tommo finds in Marnoo differs from Kory-Kory's "harangue" in that its audience are the Typees themselves, not foreigners who can understand only rudimentary Polynesian. Tommo states, "Little as I understood the language, yet from his animated gestures and the varying expression of his features—reflected as from so many mirrors in the countenances around him, I could easily discover the nature of those passions which he sought to arouse" (137). At first this scene might seem to mirror Stewart's worship ceremony, but Tommo does not presume

to translate Marnoo's speech into English. Tommo goes on to explain how he can understand part of the address from some familiar words, but not all of it. That Marnoo's gestures, though "animated," are far from comical, demonstrates what was earlier implied: the Typee language and mode of communication is neither puerile nor primitive, but any attempt to communicate across a language barrier easily can become ridiculous. Melville further connects the example of Marnoo's speech to Kory-Kory's diatribe by calling it a "vehement harangue" (138), but Tommo still remains unqualifiedly positive about Marnoo's skill and eloquence.¹⁷ Thus, Melville uses the example of Marnoo, in contrast to the ridiculous gesturing and enunciation of both Toby and Kory-Kory, to highlight the difference between attempts to make oneself understood to a foreigner and monolingual communication.

Melville's depiction of foreign language encounters in *Typee* introduces the problems of linguistic and cultural translation that will concern him throughout his career. Like Cooper in *Mercedes of Castile*, Melville also uses such encounters to highlight the importance of recognizing cultural difference. Although Tommo seems to understand some cultural practices with ease while others remain mysterious, I disagree with those who read this variation as an inconsistent portrayal of Tommo's knowledge of the Typee language.¹⁸ Many of *Typee*'s ethnographic descriptions consist of details that

¹⁷ Bryant (*Repose* 184) and Gibian (26) have both read Marnoo as not only a positive but also a decidedly cosmopolitan character.

¹⁸ Bryant, for example, has asserted that "Tommo plays fast and loose with the language, choosing to know it and not know it to fit his rhetorical needs," because "Melville needed to establish that Marquesan is translatable enough for him to appreciate certain

could be gleaned from careful observation and clarified with basic vocabulary. A total understanding of the Typee language would not be necessary, for example, to explain how a bundle of tappa is “laid in the bed of some running stream, with a heavy stone placed over it, to prevent its being swept away” (47). In the cases of more complex cultural concepts, however, Tommo does not claim as thorough an understanding as when he describes the physical customs of dress or food. When Kory-Kory shows Tommo a “remarkable pyramidal structure” in the Taboo Groves, Tommo admits he can offer the reader no explanation of the monument (160). He writes, “My cicerone perceived the astonishment with which I gazed at this monument of savage crockery, and immediately addressed himself to the task of enlightening me: but all in vain; and to this hour the nature of the monument remains a complete mystery to me” (160). Tommo’s dramatic and humorous tone, developed from Melville’s own entertaining stories of his adventures abroad, does not refrain from poking fun at the outlandishness of this “savage crockery.” Still, while Melville’s depiction of the Typees is not free from prejudice and does not shy away from comic deprecation, it is a testament to his open-mindedness that he does not presume to understand their culture at a glance but confesses when some practice remains a mystery, when communication proves impossible.

Likewise, Tommo says of the tattoo, “Although convinced that tattooing was a religious observance, still the nature of the connection between it and the superstitious idolatry of the people was a point upon which I could never obtain any information. Like the still more important system of the ‘Taboo,’ it always appeared inexplicable to me”

Marquesan moments but not so translatable that Marquesan horrors might be explained away” (*Unfolding* 242).

(221). Once again, the disapproval implied in “superstitious idolatry”—and the possibility of being tattooed is one area where even Melville’s most ardent apologists admit that Tommo balks from full acceptance of the island’s culture—is undercut by Tommo’s admission that he has not been able to obtain sufficient information about the practice. As with the “Taboo,” the otherness of which is clearly marked by its capitalization and enclosure in quotation marks, the rationale of the Typees’ tattoos will not translate. Thus Melville does not fall into the common trap of imposing his own explanations onto the Typees. He does not, like Porter, claim the “taboo” is somehow equivalent to lent. Insistence on the utter unknowability of the Other would be prejudice of the opposite extreme, but at the early point of contact represented in *Typee*, true understanding of such complex cultural beliefs and practices is impossible. By admitting when something is incomprehensible, Tommo/Melville recognizes the barrier to easy translation imposed by cultural difference.

Melville also begins in *Typee* to examine the importance of the act of translation itself. In his discussion of Kory-Kory’s harangue, Bryant calls attention to a textual crux that represents the heart of this issue. Melville writes that he will give either a “literal” or a “liberal” interpretation of Kory-Kory’s speech, but the narrator’s handwriting makes it impossible to determine which he intended (Bryant, *Repose* 155). The word appears as “literally” in both British and American first editions, but “liberally” in the Revised American edition, and it is impossible to know for certain whether “liberally” is a correction back to Melville’s original intention, Melville’s deliberate revision, or a misprint of what should have been “literally” all along (156). Bryant argues in *Melville*

and Repose that “‘literally’ is the better word” (156). In the more recent *Melville Unfolding*, however, Bryant’s discussion of the crux becomes more nuanced:

Not only are the two words virtual antonyms, especially in the context of linguistic translation, but the two uses of the “L-word” come at a moment of cultural ambivalence in the narrative metonymically represented by this very lexical conclusion. Does Tommo wish to treat Typeean language and culture with objectivity and anthropological respect? Then he would opt to interpret Kory-Kory “literally,” if such a thing could be done. Does Tommo wish to deride Typeean language and culture with comic expansions of alien-sounding words into loose linguistic parallels? Then he would opt to interpret Kory-Kory “liberally,” perhaps (of course) as only any translation can be performed. (182)

Clearly, this ambiguity raises a question of cultural transference that gets to the heart of Melville’s treatment of linguistic encounter. Bryant gestures at the possibility that all translations must necessarily be “liberal,” but he does not fully explore the implications of such insight. This failure leads him to undervalue the potential significance of a claim to give a “liberal” translation and leads him to conclude, erroneously, that “literal” produces the more emancipatory reading. The analysis of cross-cultural communication in *Typee*, read in the context of the history of colonial linguistic encounter, works to debunk Bryant’s equation of attempting a “literal” translation and treating a foreign “language and culture with objectivity and anthropological respect.” Whatever word Melville intended, the idea that no translation can be purely “literal” is borne out by an examination of his treatment of translation in *Typee*. Melville follows Cooper in demonstrating that, in the absence of true fluency, it is often more respectful to allow a foreign culture the difference and complexity of not being so readily translatable.

By tracing Melville’s other references to the act of translation in *Typee*, it becomes clear that, whatever word Melville intended at whatever stage of the writing process, he begins to demonstrate that a literally “literal” translation is indeed impossible.

Nevertheless, in order to convey his basic knowledge of Polynesian to the reader, Tommo/Melville must include some translations of Polynesian vocabulary. Often, this transference of meaning seems straightforward enough, as in “‘whihenies’ (young girls)” (14). During his initial encounter with the Typees, Tommo calls attention to the transference of meaning between languages that such translations entail when he explains, “I now threw together in the form a question the words ‘Happar’ and ‘Mortarkee,’ the latter being *equivalent* to the word ‘good’” (69, emphasis added). Throughout the book, Melville is similarly meticulous in marking his translations, designating that a thing is “called by the natives a ‘pi-pi’” or “denominated in the language of the natives the ‘Ti’” (81, 92). In one case, Melville takes this fastidiousness to a comic extreme when he writes, “‘Marnoo pemi!’ which being interpreted, implied that an individual by the name of Marnoo was approaching” (135). This verbose deviation from the more common form of “native term” (English translation) calls attention to a process of interpretation that is neither instantaneous nor seamless. Such play with the act of translation makes Tommo/Melville seem far from optimistic about the ease of transferring meaning from the Typee language into English.

In several footnotes, Melville is even more careful to explain the complex nuances of Polynesian terms, demonstrating that they are never exactly “equivalent” to their English translations. For example, in a footnote for the term “tabooed Kannaka” (another interpreter), Melville explains:

The word “Kannaka” is at the present day universally used in the South Seas by Europeans to designate the Islanders. In the various dialects of the principal groups it is simply a sexual designation applied to the males; but it is now used by the natives in their intercourse with foreigners in the same sense in which the latter employ it.

A “Tabooed Kannaka” is an islander whose person has been made to a certain extent sacred by the operation of a singular custom hereafter to be explained. (74)

By explaining how “Kannaka” is “used” by certain people to “designate” a particular thing, Melville calls attention to the practical function of words instead of attributing to them any kind of universal or inherent meaning. He further highlights the fluidity of meaning that makes any “literal” translation impossible when he notes how the natives adopted a new definition from the foreigners’ mistranslation. In the second paragraph, the phrases “to a certain extent sacred” and “singular custom” again demonstrate how there can be no literal, word-for-word translation of “tabooed Kannaka” because it has no strict English equivalent.

Melville provides a similar footnoted explanation for the translation of “Arva Wai”: “I presume this might be translated into ‘Strong Waters.’ Arva is the name bestowed upon a root the properties of which are both inebriating and medicinal. ‘Wai’ is the Marquesan word for water” (153). While the translation of “wai” presents few difficulties (although making even this claim has led me to imagine the numerous cultural connotations and distinctions that might complicate the seemingly easy translation of “water,” such as bottled water, salt water, running water, ice, etc.), “arva,” which Melville translates as “strong” in the aggregate phrase, is not an equivalent adjective for “strong” at all, but rather a particularly strong medicinal herb. Taken together, such examples call attention to the process of translation while demonstrating that the transference of meaning from one language to another is rarely accomplished without complications.

A final example illustrates the difference between Melville's treatment of translation and that of his predecessors. When Tommo visits the "effigy of a dead warrior" with Kory-Kory, Melville departs from his usual practice by translating a bit of supposedly Polynesian dialogue directly into English:

"A very pleasant place," Kory-Kory said it was; "but after all, not much pleasanter, he thought than Typee." "Did he not then," I asked him, "wish to accompany the warrior?" "Oh no: he was very happy where he was; but supposed that some time or other he would go in his own canoe." (172-73)

At first it might seem that this seamless translation (similar to those found in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*) deviates from Melville's usual foregrounding of the difficulties of cross-cultural communication. However, Tommo quickly erases this impression of linguistic transparency with the following observations:

Thus far, I think, I clearly comprehended Kory-Kory. But there was a singular expression he made use of at the time, enforced by as singular a gesture, the meaning of which I would have given much to penetrate. I am inclined to believe it must have been a proverb he uttered Could it have been then . . . he answered by saying something equivalent to our old adage—"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush?" (173)

Thus, Tommo's initially clear comprehension is undercut by the possibility that Kory-Kory's remark is not meant "literally," but that it is a proverb, a culturally situated statement whose literal meaning is, by definition, not its actual meaning. By referencing this well-known translation challenge, and by enacting its conventional solution of finding an "equivalent" proverb in the target language ("A bird in the hand . . ."), Melville once again highlights the process of translation, thereby reinforcing language encounter as a major theme of his work while questioning the reliability of cross-cultural communication.

Typee offers such a wide array of linguistic examples because it is centrally concerned with issues of cross-cultural exchange across a language barrier. While novels such as Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* use conventional devices to sidestep the difficulties of a multilingual environment, as when Cooper tags English dialogue as a "translation" of Delaware speech, Melville confronts such multilingualism directly. Although his knowledge of pidgin Polynesian is limited, Melville incorporates the words he does know directly into his work, and his representation of what speech Tommo could not have fully understood engages the reader in a credible scene of linguistic encounter. At the same time, Melville undercuts the stereotypical portrayals of savage language found in his sources while also examining and beginning to deconstruct the act of translation itself. This extensive treatment of linguistic encounter establishes a set of concerns that will reappear throughout Melville's later works.

Language and Translation in *Omoo*, *Mardi*, and *Moby-Dick*

While issues of language and communication play some role throughout most of Melville's literary career, the nature of his focus on language varies across his Pacific writings. *Typee*'s nuanced treatment of foreign language is rooted in Melville's engagement with the genre of travel writing, and even at this early stage of his career, Melville already surpasses Cooper, not only in his recognition of cross-cultural communication's difficulties, but also in the respect and attention he devotes to native language and customs. Melville's next Pacific narrative, *Omoo*, presents a view of Polynesian language at a later stage of imperialism, continuing the emphasis on the limits of translation begun in *Typee*. *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* also follow the experiences of whalers in the Pacific, but as Melville's fiction becomes more figurative and

philosophical, so too does his treatment of language. The following section will look briefly at language in *Omoo*, *Mardi*, and parts of *Moby-Dick* before the focus shifts, in the final section of this chapter, to one of Melville's most significant treatments of translation, "Benito Cereno."

At first glance, *Omoo* (1847) seems to present the same smattering of Polynesian words and phrases as *Typee*. Drechsel, however, notes a key difference between the speech of the Pacific Islanders in Melville's first two works. While Drechsel praises Melville's accurate presentation of Maritime Polynesian Pidgin in *Typee*, he finds that the majority of language in *Omoo* is "Pidgin English, spiked with Polynesian terms for color" ("Pidgin English" 59). Drechsel argues that Melville thus takes "literary license for dramatic effects" (59), a view which is seconded by Mary K. Edwards, who finds that "[d]ialect and pidgin, typical of the American humorist writing of the period, sharpen and illuminate Melville's characterizations" (148). While this use of "broken English" appears on the surface to relegate its speakers to the position of low, comic figures, the shift from Polynesian to English pidgin is not a change from accuracy to literary effect, as previous critics have asserted. It is a change in focus from the beginnings of colonial/imperial encounter to a much later stage. Melville has been criticized for his anachronistic presentation of the Typees as a civilization yet untouched by white colonialism, but, as Alex Calder has argued, he thereby "deliberately introduces details that telescope the full history of the European encounter with the Pacific into a single adventure" ("Mapping" 118). Thus, the subject of *Typee* is the initial encounter between Westerners and a largely untouched civilization. The travels of the narrator of *Omoo*, however, occur along coasts already frequented by American and European whalers,

traders, and missionaries. A regular intercourse with the inhabitants of those islands has been well established, so, while some cultural misunderstandings still persist, pathways of basic communication already have been opened.

Drechsel unintentionally suggests this historical reading of Melville's shift to Pidgin English when he explains why he believes Maritime Polynesian Pidgin would have been the more accurate choice. Drechsel argues, "Sociolinguistically and politically, Pidgin English simply does not fit as a major medium in a Polynesian environment in which Europeans, especially English-speaking ones, had not yet consolidated their power over the indigenous population" ("Pidgin English" 61). If Melville stretched the truth in *Typee* to focus on the beginnings of colonial encounter, it is no surprise that *Omoo* stretches the truth in the other direction to demonstrate the eventual consequences of imperialism. Indeed, when Melville describes the Tahitians as "mournfully watching their doom," "all that is corrupt in barbarism and civilization unite," and, "like other uncivilized beings, brought into contact with Europeans, . . . [remaining] stationary until utterly extinct," he clearly indicates this final stage of colonial contact (192).¹⁹ In *Omoo* as in *Typee*, Melville uses language to characterize the trajectory of imperial encounter in the Pacific.

Calder's reading of the shift from *Typee* to *Omoo* further addresses both the changing representation of foreign language in Melville's works and the changing nature of American travel. Calder argues, "When *Typee*'s narrator-as-anthropologist becomes

¹⁹ Bryan Short has also found that rarely in *Omoo* does "language [form] a significant barrier to understanding," and he offers the similar explanation that, "[b]ecause the intentions of *Typee* and Long Ghost, and indeed of Euro-American culture in Polynesia, are rudimentary and exploitative, the natives understand and anticipate their desires at every turn. Not much linguistic sophistication is called for" ("Plagiarizing" 103).

Omoo's narrator-as-tourist, the problem is no longer 'too many signs I can't read' but 'so many signs that seem familiar'" ("Pacific" 107). Thus, *Typee* represents not only an early stage of colonialism but also an early stage of travel. Like Cooper and the other American travelers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Tommo must learn the language and culture of the foreign land he visits, and he is often faced with the uncertainty of not understanding the locals. As Calder so brilliantly notes, *Omoo* marks a shift away from this early mode of travel. Like the tourists discussed more fully in the following chapters, the narrator of *Omoo* is faced not with incomprehensibility but with an already established system of communication, an infrastructure that obviates the need to learn a foreign country's language and discourages any inquiries into native culture beyond what is covered in the standard tour.

The distinction between Tommo as traveler and *Omoo*'s narrator as tourist also calls attention to the new balance of linguistic knowledge and, consequently, of linguistic power represented in the later book. For the most part, the whites in *Omoo* do not need to learn Polynesian because the natives already speak a form of English. This pidgin English is by definition a market language, and its purpose is to enable the exchange of both ideas and goods across a cultural barrier. Thus, the islanders' "broken English" in *Omoo* is not an object of ridicule—it is evidence of their mastery of the market language, their capability within the system of colonial exchange. They use the language of power for their own benefit and even, as Eric J. Sundquist and Gavin Jones will argue of the slaves in "Benito Cereno," for the subversive purpose of reclaiming economic if not political power from their colonizers. Despite previous critics' characterization of pidgin English as demeaning dialect, the pidgin spoken in *Omoo* can be read as a sign of empowerment.

Moreover, beneath *Omoo*'s surface of seemingly comic "broken English," Melville also scrutinizes the act of translation, marking its potential for linguistic subversion while continuing *Typee*'s analysis of the inherent incommensurability of cross-cultural exchange. One example echoes the play with nautical jargon found in Cooper's sea tales. When the "shore doctor" visits the sailors incarcerated on Tahiti, he inquires after one's health, but he is unable to understand the nautical answer. First, the sailor in question replies, "'I'm afeard, doctor, I'll soon be losing the number of my mess!' (a sea phrase, for departing this life)" (134). Then, the doctor's appeal for clarification gets only this unhelpful response:

"Why," exclaimed Flash Jack, who volunteered as interpreter, "he means he's going to *croak*" (die). (134)

Only after further explanation does the shore doctor finally understand. By placing translations of these nautical phrases in parentheses, and implying that they require an interpreter, Melville follows Cooper in equating the sailor's jargon with foreign language. And the implication that even versions of English might require a kind of translation makes the possibility of perfect cross-cultural communication seem even more remote.

Another example of translation is the sermon the narrator hears at the "Church of the Cocoa-Nuts," a scene that recalls the worship service observed by Stewart. Unlike Stewart, the narrator is unwilling to trust in the universality of religious sentiment as illuminated by his own rudimentary Polynesian, so he has the native language interpreted for him by "an intelligent Hawaiian sailor" whom he asks to "hear every word, and tell me what you can, as the missionary goes on" (173). Before continuing with the content of the sermon, the narrator further notes:

Jack's was not, perhaps, a critical version of the discourse; and, at the time, I took no notes of what he said. Nevertheless, I will here venture to give what I remember of it; and, as far as possible, in Jack's phraseology, so as to lose nothing by a double translation. (173)

These comments indicate that the narrator does not fully trust either the original translation or his own transcription of it. Although the sermon's pidgin English seems comic, and Melville uses the episode to make offensive generalizations about the materiality of the Tahitian people, this comment about translation prefigures the inclusion of similarly translated accounts in *Moby-Dick* and "Benito Cereno." Mary K. Edwards sums up the subversive potential of translation in this scene when she asks, "With all these layers, how can we trust any words of the sermon as we read it in *Omoa*, and even more importantly, how can we trust any of its words at all?" (110). It would be disingenuous to argue that the sermon's multiple translations can entirely erase the negative characterization of the Tahitians it contains, or that they can erase all of the other stereotypical characterizations that have made *Omoa* a far less common subject of postcolonial readings than *Typee*. Still, it is important to note that this undercutting of official speech through its translation sets a precedent for Melville's unquestionably subversive treatment of the translated deposition that ends "Benito Cereno."

In a final example of translation, Melville more pointedly critiques the Christian missionaries. A minor character is introduced as "Ereemear Po-Po; or, to render the Christian name back again into English—Jeremiah Po-Po" (277). Like many of the odd habits and various vices of the natives, such "curious combinations of names" are produced by white civilization and by the missionaries who "insist upon changing to something else whatever is objectionable" in the patronymic (277). Consequently, the narrator explains, "when Jeremiah came to the font, and gave his name as Narmo-Nana

Po-Po (something equivalent to The-Darer-of-Devils-by-Night), the reverend gentleman officiating told him, that such a heathenish appellation would never do” (277). Just as the missionary likely misinterprets the significance of Jeremiah’s original name, his new Biblical appellation also gets altered in its translation, as do “Adamo (Adam), Nooar (Noah), Daveedar (David), Earcobar (James), Eorna (John), Patoora (Peter), Ereemear (Jeremiah), &c.” (277). With a final joke about the futility of such practices, Melville concludes, “And thus did he come to be named Jeremiah Po-Po; or, Jeremiah-in-the-Dark—which he certainly was, I fancy, as to the ridiculousness of his new cognomen” (277). The ridiculousness of the name derives from its repeated translation between English and Tahitian. Each translation is accompanied by a loss of original meaning until only nonsense remains.

These moments of problematic translation contribute to an aspect of *Omoo* that is too easily overlooked in favor of the novel’s frequent recourse to comic stereotypes: an enlightened critique of cross-cultural communication approaching the middle ground of true understanding that proved so elusive in *Typee*. For example, when Doctor Long Ghost dreams of staying in Tamai, he outlines the following outrageous plans:

I’ll put up a banana-leaf as a physician from London—deliver lectures on Polynesian antiquities—teach English in five lessons, of one hour each—establish power-looms for the manufacture of tappa—lay out a public park in the middle of the village, and found a festival in honour of Captain Cook! (245)

As with Melville’s earlier condemnation of European interference in Tahitian culture, these plans, however well intentioned, will likely serve only to corrupt the village the Doctor finds so pleasing. And, indicative of the short-sightedness and superficiality of such proposals, the plan to teach English in a mere five hours demonstrates once again

the characteristic failure of white colonizers to recognize the difficulties of cross-cultural communication. Whatever amount of English could be taught in such a short period of time could only produce a dialogue as superficial as the Doctor's proposed festival. And such a limited knowledge of standard English would likely leave any natives so briefly instructed babbling both comically and incomprehensibly.

Another example that undercuts a reading of *Omoo*'s pidgin English as simply demeaning is the seemingly deaf and dumb hermit, called by the chapter heading "A Dealer in the Contraband" (271). When the narrator and Doctor Long Ghost come upon the old man, they report: "with a variety of uncouth gestures, he soon made us welcome; informing us, by the same means, that he was both deaf and dumb; he then motioned us into his dwelling" (271-72). At first, the hermit seems to be participating in the same comically barbaric gesturing that often serves to degrade racial others. He attempts "to make himself understood by signs; most of which were so excessively ludicrous, that we made no doubt he was perpetrating a series of pantomimic jokes" (272). It is soon revealed, however, that this stereotype is actually a ruse. When the hermit does break his silence to berate the narrator and Doctor for not appreciating his liquor, the man exclaims, "'Ah, karhowree sabbee lee-lee, ena arva tee maitai!' in other words, what a blockhead of a white man! this is the real stuff!" (272). As the night progresses, Melville depicts the Doctor and his host in a scene of comic fellowship that anticipates Queequeg and Ishmael at the Spouter Inn:

Fancy Varvy and the doctor, then; lovingly tippling, and brimming over with a desire to become better acquainted; the doctor politely bent upon carrying on the conversation in the language of his host, and the old hermit persisting in trying to talk English. The result was, that between the two, they made such a fricassee of vowels and consonants, that it was enough to turn one's brain. (274)

Melville first used the phrase “fricassee of vowels and consonants” in the deleted passage describing Kory-Kory’s “eloquence” (see Bryant, *Unfolding* 385), but the humor here does not truly denigrate either the Doctor or Varvy. Such linguistic confusion is the natural result of the language barrier between them. In this idyllic scene, the barrier need not be a cause for dislike or aggression. Moreover, by attempting to meet each other halfway linguistically, Varvy and the Doctor enact the creation of a pidgin language. In this scene, which begins with Varvy’s subversive misrepresentation of his ability to speak, Melville posits an alternative to the decay of native culture represented elsewhere in *Omoo*. Instead of one dominating the other, the Doctor and Varvy represent an ideal of fellowship and equal, if imperfect, communication. Such moments may not entirely offset the work’s many stereotypes, but they provide a solution, a pidgin compromise, to the imperialist extremes of incomprehensibility and assimilation.

Melville’s next book, *Mardi* (1849), marks a shift away from the more realistic representations of cross-cultural encounter in the semi-autobiographical works that preceded it. But as Melville’s focus on the linguistic exchanges of colonialism and imperialism begins to break down, he extends his earlier critiques of translation to a critique of language’s power to convey a fixed and certain meaning. As the concrete depictions of colonial language encounters found in *Typee* and *Omoo* fall away in the midst of *Mardi*’s elaborate allegory, Melville begins to theorize language’s inadequacy as an index of truth, thus suggesting an inherent fallibility in all aspects of human speech.

Nevertheless, as Russ Pottle rightly observes, in *Mardi*, in contrast to *Typee*, “verbal communication presents no problem” and “[t]he language barrier is oddly done

away with, simply evaporates . . . and islanders begin to speak with a pseudo-Elizabethan syntax favored by the narrator during rhetorical flights” (147). This observation is accurate for the vast majority of the novel, but it is interesting to note that a shift in Melville’s treatment of multilingualism accompanies *Mardi*’s infamous shift in genre from sea adventure to philosophical allegory.²⁰ In the scenes before Taji begins his voyage around the archipelago, Melville still gives some attention to the actual languages being spoken. For example, Samoa says “Look there:—Annatoo!” in what is identified as “broken English” (66). Indeed, Merrell R. Davis suggests that Melville may have added the character of Samoa for his ability to “act as interpreter among the Kingsmill islanders” (58). When the party first lands in Mardi, Samoa does interpret the speech of the islanders for Taji and Jarl (Melville, *Mardi* 164). When Taji and Jarl meet with the priest Aleema, it is also clear that they do not understand his language, as Aleema communicates with “a significant sign” (132). Instead of quoting him directly, Taji indicates that the priest “gave [them] to know” (132). Likewise, Taji’s party “[make] signs of amity” in the absence of a shared language (134, emphasis added).²¹ All of these

²⁰ For an extremely thorough discussion of Melville’s process of writing *Mardi* and the novel’s various shifts in focus, see Merrell R. Davis’s book *Melville’s Mardi: A Chartless Voyage*. Watson Branch makes an interesting and persuasive argument for a modification of Davis’s chronology, locating the addition of Yillah and Hautia’s flower messengers at the final stage of *Mardi*’s composition. I would argue, however, that Melville’s attention to language in the first meetings with Yillah suggests that these scenes were part of the original, more realistic plan of the book, and not added in the final stages of composition. Both Davis and Branch agree that the opening sequences of the novel belong to a version of *Mardi* that would have been more like a continuation of *Typee* and *Omoo* than the final product.

²¹ The most concentrated attention to multilingualism occurs in the first interaction between Taji and Yillah. First, Taji notes, “unconsciously, I addressed her in my own tongue” (137). When Yillah replies, she “slowly chant[s] to herself several musical words, unlike those of the Islanders” (137). Then, Taji tries speaking Polynesian. Yillah

examples suggest that Melville originally intended *Mardi* to depict the same kind of linguistic encounter found in *Typee* and *Omoo*. Shortly after Taji arrives on the Mardian archipelago, however, such attention to multilingualism abruptly disappears, and no more is said of the difficulty communicating with the islanders Taji presumably would have had. It is never mentioned that the dialogue throughout most of the book, though presented in English, would really have been spoken in some dialect of Polynesian (or whatever Melville would have the inhabitants of Mardi speak).

At the same time, while the linguistic encounter of Taji and the Mardians is not Melville's focus in the way that communication between Tommo and the Nukuhivans was in *Typee*, Melville does address the incommensurability of translation, as well as the incommensurability of cultural and economic exchange, on a more theoretical level. For example, "Champollion Mohi" translates the hieroglyphics on Vivenza's arch: "In-this-re-publi-can-land-all-men-are-born-free-and-equal" and "Except-the-tribe-of-Hamo" (512-13). On one hand, these hieroglyphics appear to translate seamlessly to English, just as the country of Vivenza must "translate" into America for *Mardi*'s allegory to signify. But the translation is certainly not effortless, as evidenced when Mohi interprets the strange and sometimes small characters "slowly" and with "much screwing of his eyes" (512-13). Michael C. Berthold has even noted that this message, though written in stone, is "self-disintegrating, as in the syllabification of 're-publi-can'" ("Born" 19). Another

gestures that he should speak English again, but realizing that she does not understand him, Taji returns to speaking Polynesian and in this way elicits a "[b]roken" account of her history (137). Yillah's strange affinity for English hints at her true origin—the daughter of murdered missionaries. That her first language, though forgotten, might affect her pronunciation of Polynesian is a bit of linguistic realism similar to that found throughout *Typee*. The difficulty Taji has communicating with Yillah also serves to heighten the mystery surrounding her character.

example of Melville's play with translation is the flower language of Hautia's messengers, which Melville borrowed from the numerous books on the subject popular at the time (Kelley, *Herman* 46; Finkelstein 217; Davis 59). Hautia's heralds appear throughout *Mardi* waving various blossoms, and Yoomy attempts to interpret their meaning for Taji. Although Yoomy does not appear to struggle with these translations, the messages themselves remain vague. As Media remarks, "Was ever queen more enigmatical?" (268). Maxine Moore even points out an example where Yoomy's translation is incorrect, arguing that "Yoomy's interpretation of the flower messages is not to be trusted" (167, 184).²² Finally, Melville casts further doubt on language in general when he describes the naming of the Pontiffs of Maramma. Because the "the leading sound in [the Pontiff's] name was banned to ordinary uses[,] . . . the language of Maramma was incessantly fluctuating; and had become so full of jargonings, that the birds in the groves were greatly puzzled; not knowing where lay the virtue of sounds, so incoherent" (108). In Melville's subsequent digression about the inability of men and birds to understand each other, the conclusion of both that "it was impossible [the other] could be holding intelligent discourse" mirrors the kind of ethnographic disparagement born of linguistic misunderstanding that characterizes most colonial encounters (108).

One of the most interesting examples of cultural exchange is the maker of idols.

He describes his trade:

"When I cut down the trees for my idols," said he, "they are nothing but logs; when upon those logs, I chalk out the figures of my images, they yet

²² Moore further argues, somewhat less persuasively, that "[t]he reader is expected to recognize Yoomy's error of interpretation and to inform himself by referring to one of the many books of flower symbolism so popular in Melville's day" (167-69). Her book also contains a detailed chart of the flowers' interpretations (168).

remain logs; when the chisel is applied, logs they are still; and when all complete, I at last stand them up in my studio, even then they are logs. Nevertheless, when I handle the pay, they are as prime gods, as ever were turned out in Maramma.” (114)

David Simpson has argued of this scene:

With the insight that some people are making a healthy living out of fashioning images for others to worship, Melville touches on what I shall argue to be a dominant concern in nineteenth-century inquiries into the ethics of representation. In his conflation of the primitive with the civilized, and the implied ubiquity of the forgers of images, he seems to speak for a world in which there is no remaining recourse to a purer alternative. (*Fetishism* 9)

In light of Simpson’s reading, Melville’s critique of such a “[forger] of images” resonates with the argument that trading sandalwood is immoral because it makes one an accessory to idolatry, a charge which Cooper explores in *The Crater*. Simpson’s argument highlights the uneasy conflation of religion and capitalism, as well as the seeming inevitability of that connection in both savage and civilized cultures. Read alongside the absurd Mardian practice of using teeth as currency, the idol maker’s admission also shows the arbitrariness of value. Just as it is only convention that makes teeth function as money instead of gold, paper, or even the trifles discussed in the previous chapter, it is only the buyer’s belief that a log is an idol, represented by the purchase of said log, that makes it so. Moreover, as demonstrated in Melville’s footnote explaining the term “tabooed Kannaka,” only common usage and convention give a word any particular signification. Thus, the idol maker’s recognition that his logs are not inherently or universally gods, but only become gods when their buyers accept them as such mirrors the recognition that words have no inherent meaning and that the concepts they designate are not universal categories but only sets of particularities grouped by cultural convention. Melville, like Cooper in *Mercedes of Castile* and *The Crater*, augments his

play with systems of linguistic meaning with an examination of the analogous systems of economic and religious value, simultaneously tying all to the history of colonial encounter. But in contrast to Cooper, whose more conventional views of trade ultimately reinforced the West's civilizing mission, Melville's economic critique comes far closer to suggesting that any system of value, or any way of life, could be equally valid.

In *Moby-Dick* (1851) as in *Mardi*, Melville's earlier engagement with linguistic encounter in a colonial context develops into a more theoretical approach to the nature of language itself. Melville reacts not only to the expectations of easy translation found in the literature of imperialism, but also to the idealism that assumes one's own cultural concepts are universal truths that must translate easily into any human tongue. It is by similarly appealing to universality that the wish for a cosmopolitan brotherhood can slip into a coercive imperialism.²³ In nineteenth-century America, the most visible form of this idealism was the philosophy of the Transcendentalists. As Richard Hardack argues, "For the American transcendentalist, all languages and all human cultures are translated facets of One thing," and, as a result, "Emerson believe[s] that through boundless space and time, all physical forces and human languages and customs are translatable" (64-65). Emerson's comments on translation, particularly his statement that he does not "hesitate to read . . . all good books, in translations" because "what is really best in any book is translatable" (*Society* 182), demonstrate the same assumption of universal truth that fuels

²³ This slippage from cosmopolitanism to imperialism is most evident in the ideas of Anacharsis Cloots, as discussed in the Introduction.

the imperialist's disregard for cultural difference.²⁴ As Melville transitions away from the concrete depiction of colonial language encounter found in his early narratives, he continues to examine the inherent incommensurability revealed by translation, positing this incommensurability as an alternative to Transcendentalist universalism.

A brief examination of several key sections of *Moby-Dick* demonstrates Melville's increased theoretical interest in the nature of language and translation. From its beginning section, "Etymology," *Moby-Dick* demonstrates deep engagement with linguistic difference.²⁵ At first, the presentation of the word for whale in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Dutch, Swedish, Icelandic, English, French, Spanish, Fegee, and Erromangoan would seem to indicate its easy translatability (xvi). Indeed, all of the languages in the list except Hebrew look or sound like at least one other, showing the relation of words across different tongues and the presumable ease of understanding and translating these related languages. This linguistic certainty cannot survive further scrutiny, however. First, the entire "Etymology" section is undercut by the bathetic figure of the "Late Consumptive Usher . . . threadbare in coat, heart, body, and brain" (xv). Moreover, readers of *Typee* or *Omoo* might recognize that the Fegee version of "whale," "PEKEE-NUEE-NUEE" (xvi), might be translated more literally as "big-big-fish," revealing a different understanding of the creature that, like the "big canoe" in *Typee*, undercuts the fixity of any cross-linguistic equivalence.²⁶ Indeed, Yunte Huang calls

²⁴ See the Introduction for further discussion of Emerson's views of language.

²⁵ Robert T. Tally, Jr. (59), Paul Lyons ("Global" 53), and Mark Bauerlein (24) all suggest that "Etymology" introduces and prefigures the variety of perspectives that characterize the novel as a whole.

²⁶ Indeed, it could be translated with even less syntactic "liberality" as "fish-big-big."

attention to the way the list seems to promise a chronology of languages but offers only “structural incoherence,” which “suggests above all the failure of language to denominate the whale successfully” (76).

One of the most perplexing aspects of the section is the following quote from Richard Hakluyt:

“While you take in hand to school others, and to teach them by what name a whale-fish is to be called in our tongue, leaving out, through ignorance, the letter H, which almost alone maketh up the signification of the word, you deliver that which is not true.” (xv)

Previous critics have noted that this comment on the significance of the letter “H” is accompanied by errors in the Hebrew and Greek words for whale, where each alphabet’s equivalent of “H” is substituted for the proper letter.²⁷ Gordon V. Boudreau provides an excellent survey of the many explanations that have been given for this passage and concludes that, for Melville, “‘whale’ was not a dead word in a dusty library’s antiquated lexicons, but a living word articulated by aspiration, the breath of life” (6). Doubtless, Melville makes Hakluyt’s claim for the significance of “H” intentionally enigmatic by extracting it from its original context. A closer examination of the section of Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* from which the passage originates reveals that the quotation resonates with the issues of cross-cultural communication found in Melville’s earlier works.

In his discussion of Iceland, Hakluyt critiques an earlier historian, Sebastian Munster, for reporting that mariners had weighed anchor on the backs of whales, thinking

²⁷ See, for example, Dorothee Metlitzki’s “The Letter ‘H’ in Melville’s Whale.” According to Michael West, “the Hebrew characters Melville supplied form the word not for *whale* but for *grace*” (333).

them to be land (567). Hakluyt also critiques Munster's claim that "[t]hey are called in their tongue Trollwal Tuffelwalen, that is to say, the deuilish Whale" (568). The passage quoted by Melville is followed by this explanation:

for *val* in our language signifieth not a Whale, but chusing or choise of the verbe *Eg vel*, that is to say, I chuse, or I make choise, from whence *val* is deriued, &c. But a Whale is called *Hualur* with vs, & therefore you ought to haue written *Trollhualur*. Neither doeth *Troll* signifie the deuill, as you interpret it, but certaine Giants that liue in mountaines. You see therefore (and no maruel) how you erre in the whole word. (568)

In Melville's source, then, the significance of the letter "H" is that, without it, the word means something else entirely. Hakluyt further criticizes Munster's translation of "troll," which obviously (to a speaker of English) does not have the same meaning as "devil." Supported by these observations, Hakluyt explains the dangers of writing about a land without fully understanding its language, the same fault that Melville could find in the sources of *Typee*. Thus the true significance of "H" is how easily the meaning of a word can be lost, particularly when translating between strange languages, which is exactly what the pale Usher attempts in assembling this "Etymology."

The multiplicity of languages in "Etymology" is mirrored much later in the novel by the multiple interpretations given to the iconic doubloon. In the chapter of that name, the crew of the *Pequod* all examine the coin Ahab has set as the reward for sighting the white whale. As John T. Matteson notes, "As each crew member passes before this emblem, it acquires a new wealth of interpretation" (180). Mark Bauerlein lists these readings as "an image of self, a Christian icon, a pagan biography, an exchange value, and a demonic emblem" (25). Like the dental currency and the idol carver in *Mardi*, "The Doubloon" is another playful example of how the arbitrariness of value can be analogous to the arbitrariness of linguistic meaning. Accordingly, Flask calculates that one gold

doubloon is “worth sixteen dollars” and is thus equivalent to “nine hundred and sixty cigars” (433). But the coin is also an emblem of translation, as when Starbuck compares the coin to “Belshazzar’s awful writing,” from Daniel 5, an archetypal message requiring interpretation (432). The famous writing on the wall refers to units of weight and, like the doubloon, corresponding measures of value. At the same time, the coin has its own historical significance. Gesa Mackenthun examines the various appearances of Spanish doubloons throughout Melville’s works and argues that the sailors’ interpretations in this chapter mask the “historical realities of the colonial system” that the coin represents (“Postcolonial” 539). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, such colonial systems are built upon the exploitation of native economies’ incommensurability.

Finally, when Pip offers his own commentary on the doubloon’s many interpretations and interpreters with the “too crazy-witty” conjugation of “I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look” (434-35), he connects the various significations of the coin back to language. But language presented as conjugation is far from the transcendental view of language as divine naming.²⁸ Pip’s attention to grammar demonstrates the arbitrariness of language’s construction. Just as the coin itself is only conventionally rather than universally valuable, the rules of grammar have very little connection to actual things. Neither language nor currency points back to any transcendental truth. Furthermore, Ishmael’s response to Pip, “Caw! caw! caw! caw! caw! caw! Ain’t I a crow?” (434), reduces the already arbitrary grammar to animal noise.

²⁸ Nina Baym describes Melville’s developing sense of the arbitrariness of language through *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* when she argues, “given Melville’s Emerson-derived notion of language as proceeding from a divine Author or Namer, the loss of belief in an Absolute entailed the loss not only of truth in the universe but also of coherence and meaning in language” (910).

Thus, in “The Doubloon,” Melville provocatively connects the incommensurability of various systems of meaning, particularly economic ones, to the arbitrariness of language, undercutting any perceived universality of either monetary or linguistic sign systems.

A final section of *Moby-Dick* that speaks to the issue of translation is the “Town-Ho’s Story,” which recounts a sailors’ rebellion aboard the *Town-Ho* and the vessel’s deadly encounter with Moby Dick. The chapter’s framing and narration is quite unusual. Before commencing his story, Ishmael explains, “For my humor’s sake, I shall preserve the style in which I once narrated it at Lima, to a lounging circle of my Spanish friends, one saint’s eve, smoking upon the thick-gilt tiled piazza of the Golden Inn” (243). The tale is then punctuated by Ishmael’s digressive answers to the questions of his Peruvian audience. Although many critics have offered an explanation of this framing device, Robert T. Tally, Jr., is one of the few who acknowledges that Ishmael’s original Peruvian telling of the story would “presumably” have been in Spanish (63).²⁹ Thus, within the fiction of the frame as described, the “Town-Ho’s Story” included in *Moby-Dick* would have to be a kind of English translation of Ishmael’s original telling.

True to his ongoing focus on the unreliability of translation, Melville complicates the versions of the tale with numerous retellings until, as in the popular children’s game, it seems impossible that the first whisperings could contain the same message as the final account. First, Ishmael explains that there are two levels of information circulating

²⁹ Philip J. Egan (345), Heinz Kosok (54), and Mary K. Edwards (46-47) all read the framing in terms of Ishmael’s narrative art. Wyn Kelley and Amy Kaplan, on the other hand, focus on the geographical and political significance of Lima, interpreting the frame as commentary on colonialism (Kelley, “Style” 68) and as a “transnational [circuit] of knowledge” that “reinforce[s] the imagined truth of national character” (Kaplan, “Transnational” 44-45).

aboard the *Pequod*: The official version, known to all, was communicated in a “short gam” that included “strong news of Moby Dick” (242). There is also a “secret part of the tragedy,” unknown to the captain of either ship, that was told to Tashtego by “three confederate white seamen” and then recounted again to the common sailors, partly when Tashtego “rambled in his sleep”—not the most reliable method of communication (242). Ishmael reports that his own tale will combine these various versions. At the end of the story, moreover, Ishmael assures his listeners of the truth of his account by claiming, “I have seen and talked with Steerkilt since the death of Radney” (259). Therefore, the various versions of the “Town-Ho’s Story” circulated aboard the *Pequod* are complicated further by yet another retelling Ishmael heard after the ship’s destruction. Just as Ishmael’s Spanish telling is translated into English, these various versions are, in a sense, “translated” into one narrative. The tale itself can thus be read as a kind of double translation. A similar play with translation appears in the court documents at the end of “Benito Cereno,” another story of rebellion recounted in Lima, and there the emphasis on the unreliability of translation is both clearer and more deliberate.³⁰

Uncertain Translation in “Benito Cereno”

“Benito Cereno” (1855) is well known as a story of slave insurrection and as an adept treatment of the power struggle between master and slave.³¹ Such readings

³⁰ I am indebted to Donald Pease for his comments and invaluable feedback regarding “The Doubloon” and “The Town-Ho’s Story” during the conference *Shifting Tides, Anxious Borders* at Binghamton University, April 20 to 21, 2012.

³¹ Sundquist, for example, has emphasized “Melville’s invocation of Caribbean revolution” and “the historical dimensions of his masquerade of rebellion” (147). Carolyn L. Karcher, in contrast, asserts that “Benito Cereno” is not “primarily a dramatization of slave revolt . . . but rather an exploration of the white racist mind and how it reacts in the

understandably focus on Melville's treatment of domestic slavery, and indeed this is a valid and valuable interpretation of the tale. But reading the events aboard the *San Dominick* in the tradition of the literature of travel and exploration reveals a linguistic context that has as much in common with Columbus as with Nat Turner.³² As the following reading will demonstrate, Melville's earlier engagement with colonial language encounters culminates in the extensive play with translation contained within "Benito Cereno." Ultimately, the inherent difficulties of the translator's task—translation's inability to fully revoke the curse of Babel and unite the globe's multiplicity of languages—decenters any account of a fixed and universal truth, critiquing the Transcendentalist universalism that can too easily slip into the imperialist mission of converting all cultural difference to Western standards.

As Maurice S. Lee has argued, the most "provocative" interpretations of "Benito Cereno" treat it as a story about language ("Melville's" 497), but it is necessary to view the work's play with language in the context of colonial encounter to understand its full significance.³³ The story's combination of colonial and linguistic themes is signaled, as

face of a slave insurrection" (*Shadow* 128). Similarly, Joseph Schiffman also views Delano as "a microcosm of American attitudes of the time toward Negroes" (33). Other readings focus on Delano's status as a typical "American" (see Spanos, *Herman* 108-109; McWilliams, *Hawthorne* 179).

³² Indeed, with its references both to the largest successful slave rebellion and to the first Caribbean island colonized by the Spanish, the name *San Dominick* suggests both.

³³ There have been a number of insightful readings of Melville's treatment of language in "Benito Cereno." For example, Laura Barrett focuses on "[t]he novella's linguistic uncanniness" (405). Reinhold J. Dooley argues that, "by problematizing race, 'Benito Cereno' presents Melville's uneasiness concerning the indeterminateness of language and ultimately of meaning itself" (41). For Cesare Casarino, "Benito Cereno" "investigate[s] blockages of communication, representational impasses, [and] narrative conundrums" (56). Likewise, Jon Hauss focuses on the importance of language in the text and argues

Hester Blum (“Atlantic” 121), Darryl Hattenhauer (9), and Markus Heide (49) have all noted, when we learn in the concluding documents that “the ship’s proper figurehead” is “the image of Christopher Colon, the discoverer of the New World” (Melville, “Benito” 107).³⁴ The entire drama of the figurehead is Melville’s addition, so neither the reference to Columbus nor the mixed spelling of his name originates in the source text. Dominique Marçais notes that “Benito Cereno” is the only work in which Melville refers to the famous navigator as “Christopher Colon,” and argues that “[t]he pun on Columbus / Colon / colonization stresses the oppressive and negative aspects of [Columbus’s] whole enterprise” (55). Marçais uses Melville’s strange combination of the English and Spanish spellings of Columbus’s name, as well as the mixed French and English in “*San Dominick*,” to argue that the tale’s multilingualism “undoubtedly connects and indicts both the Old and the New World” (56). As the following reading will demonstrate, the partial translation of the name “Christopher Colon,” and the history of linguistic encounter that the man epitomizes, are but a small part of Melville’s treatment of the failure of imperialist translation in this renowned story.

that “the central form of masquerade examined by, and ultimately dominating, the text is linguistic” (5). Others have augmented readings of slavery and slave insurrection with interpretations that relate Melville’s story to “U.S. imperial history” (Doolen 189), “American expansionism” (Emery 54), “the expansionist effort at Manifest Destiny” (Goddard 235), and a “literary Pan-Americanism” that “illuminates colonial and postcolonial history” (Heide 53).

³⁴ Sanborn has even connected Melville’s Columbus reference to the history of the discourse of cannibalism. Sanborn argues, “By juxtaposing the skeleton of the slaveholder with the figurehead of Columbus on a ship named the *San Dominick*, [Melville] offers the legions of readers who were familiar with the history of Columbus’s voyages an indirect but emphatic warning: If you conclude on the basis of bones that a group of people are cannibals, you will be repeating Columbus’s monumentally self-interested mistake” (*Sign* 184).

“Benito Cereno” is also a kind of mystery, and as in any mystery, the beginning of the story is best understood in light of its end. After the climactic unmasking of the slave rebellion aboard the *San Dominick*, Melville, following *A Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres* by the real Amasa Delano, includes a lengthy section of legal documents, translated transcriptions of the depositions held to investigate the events aboard the unfortunate ship. Several critics have already acknowledged the significance of the tale’s seemingly tedious denouement, but it deserves closer attention for the additional level of unreliability Melville introduces to the supposedly official documents.³⁵

Unlike Melville’s main narration, which greatly expands upon Delano’s account, the translated deposition could be more aptly described as “revised” than “rewritten.” In the original version, the historical Delano gives the documents this introduction:

The following Documents were officially translated, and are inserted without alteration, from the original papers. . . . My deposition and that of Mr. Luther, were communicated through a bad linguist, who could not speak the English language so well as I could the Spanish The Spanish captain’s deposition, together with my Mr. Luther’s and my own, were translated into English again, as now inserted; having thus undergone two translations. These circumstances, will, we hope, be a sufficient apology for any thing which may appear to the reader not to be perfectly consistent, one declaration with another; and for any impropriety of expression. (331)

Such authorial modesty was by no means rare, but the convoluted history of the documents, which resembles the provenance of the “Town-Ho’s Story,” certainly leaves

³⁵ Spanos, for example, argues that, “in confirming [Delano’s] epiphany in the story proper, the poststory deposition precipitates its deconstruction” (*Herman* 124). Similarly, Mark C. Anderson (75), Joyce Sparer Adler (80), and Marvin Fisher (“Narrative” 449) also focus on how the deposition fails to provide the closure it seems to promise.

room to question their accuracy.³⁶ But Melville does not stop at the unreliability inherent in the original dual translation as described by Delano. As Susan Weiner has also demonstrated (3-4), a close comparison of Melville's version and its source reveals a series of deliberate alterations that highlight and then increase the untrustworthiness of the original transcripts.

One way Melville casts doubt on the translated deposition is by creating the impression that details have been omitted. Unlike Delano, who claims the “[d]ocuments were officially translated, and [were] inserted without alteration” (331), Melville states that his transcripts were “selected, from among many others, for *partial* translation” (103, emphasis added). While “partial” might mean that only part of the transcripts were translated, it also carries the second meaning of an only partial transference from one language to another—perhaps the partial translation is made only somewhat intelligible to the reader. When comparing Melville's version with his source, however, it becomes clear that Benito Cereno's deposition is not abridged as its introduction suggests, but reproduced almost in its entirety and then expanded considerably. Melville often replaces simple passages with more embellished versions. For example, the source's dry statement, “warning him that they would kill all the Spaniards, if they saw them speak, or plot any thing against them” (Delano 337), is replaced by Melville's verbose version, “warning him and all of them that they should, soul and body, go the way of Don Alexandro if he saw them (the Spaniards) speak or plot anything against them (the

³⁶ Warner Berthoff also describes the ambiguity inherent in Delano's original narrative and argues, “Melville's leading impulse in working out the sequence of his retelling was to capitalize on just this material ambiguity, and on the delayed double-exposure it results in” (152).

negroes)” (108). Because the suggestion that Melville has abridged and condensed the deposition is quite clearly false (as comparison demonstrates, it is actually elaborated and expanded), Melville’s claim appears to be a deliberate attempt to cast doubt on the “partial” translation provided to the reader, inventing cause to suspect its insufficiency or its suppression of potentially crucial details.

Throughout the text of the deposition, Melville makes the translated documents seem even more incomplete. Unlike its source, Melville’s version of Cereno’s deposition is punctuated by lines of asterisks. Like ellipses, these asterisks suggest that something is missing, that, somewhere in the dual transference of transcription and translation, some possibly valuable or essential information has been left out. But even on the rare occasions when parts of the source transcript are actually omitted, their length is only a fraction of that of the detailed passages Melville has inserted to replace and supposedly summarize them. The effect of these asterisks is compounded by the bracketed descriptions Melville inserts to describe the omitted material, such as:

[And so the deposition goes on, circumstantially recounting the fictitious story dictated to the deponent by Babo, and through the deponent imposed upon Captain Delano; and also recounting the friendly offers of Captain Delano, with other things, but all of which is here omitted. After the fictitious, strange story, etc., the deposition proceeds:] (110)

Part of this abridgement would seem to spare the reader from a repetition of events already detailed in the story proper, but the vague “with other things” and “etc.” imply that other details, perhaps unknown to the reader and perhaps important, may be withheld. In other cases, too, not only has nothing been omitted, but the descriptions themselves serve to cast further doubt on the documents. For example, Melville describes an alleged deletion as “*many expressions of ‘eternal gratitude’ to the ‘generous Captain*

Amasa Delano” (111), making parts of the document seem superfluous while characterizing Cereno, its source, as a fawning fool. The next bracketed comment claims to take the place of “*various random disclosures referring to various periods of time*” (112), unnecessary details that make the deposition seem disorganized and pointless.

Both Susan Weiner (4) and Carolyn L. Karcher (“Riddle” 214-15) have argued that the apparent imperfections of the court documents indicate the failures of law and of due process, particularly in such cases of slave rebellion.³⁷ In light of Melville’s ongoing interest in language and translation, however, it is easy to recognize that the unreliability of the testimony is also caused by the language differences between the parties involved, and by the variations in meaning and connotation inevitably introduced by their translation. Taking these translated transcripts as the starting point for a reading of language encounter in “Benito Cereno,” it becomes clear that a pervasive trope of translation supports the tale’s argument for the unreliability of cross-cultural communication.

The importance of language and translation in “Benito Cereno” is first signaled by the message on the prow of the *San Dominick*, which is reproduced in Spanish followed by its English translation: “‘*Seguid vuestro jefe,*’ (follow your leader)” (49). This motto—

³⁷ Brook Thomas (120) and Bruce L. Grenberg (164) also call attention to the legal documents’ failure to bring the certainty and closure that they seem to promise. Leonard Tennenhouse discusses how Melville “use[s] the court documents to think his way toward a kind of resolution of a historically intractable problem that was beyond the cultural scope of the novelistic imagination” (124). He concludes, “Because Melville asserts power similar to that of the court over the materials of the story that is set in type, *Benito Cereno* provides a stark example of how one diasporic group achieves and maintains its hegemony in relation to others” (125). Likewise, Peter West argues that “Cereno’s deposition provides Melville with a link between his story’s fictional narration and the rhetoric of factual writing that submerges the former mode’s complexities and indeterminacies” (178).

and its threat that colonial power and domination will only lead to death, violence, and insurrection—has been a major focus of criticism, but the motto’s linguistic significance has received less attention. Typographically, the contrast between italics in quotation marks and roman type in parentheses establishes the contrast between the original and its translation, while emphasizing the dominance of the Spanish version. Moreover, someone familiar with Spanish would note that even this short translation is not a perfect equivalent of the original. The Spanish “*vosotros*” form of second person used in the command is informal and plural. The English “you” distinguishes neither number nor formality, so the nuances of the Spanish version are lost. There are also nuances in the translation not present in the original. While “leader” means both an authority figure and a spatial director, the Spanish “*jefe*” carries only the first denotation, meaning “boss” but not “guide.” Finally, the game “follow the leader,” which predates Melville’s story and which the translated motto invokes, is called in Spanish “*jugar a lo que haga el rey*” (roughly, to play at what the king does), not as “*seguid vuestro jefe*” (“Follow”; “Follow-my-leader”). Thus, the typographical and linguistic differences between the juxtaposed versions serve to introduce the recurring themes of translation and of the unreliability of language. Interestingly, however, when the skeleton figurehead that accompanies the motto is revealed at the end of the story, the words are given only as “*Follow your leader*” (99), as if the unmasking of the actual state of things aboard the ship has translated the foreign language.

Such emphasis on translation is only part of Melville’s general treatment of colonial language. For Delano, boarding the ship is like arriving in a foreign land. He is “at once surrounded by a clamorous throng of whites and blacks” (49), echoing Stewart’s

description of the Nukuhivans' "noise, loud talking, hallooing, and various rude merriment" (6), as well as the countless similar arrivals in the archive of exploration and conquest. Delano's position as traveler is reinforced by the comparison between boarding the ship and "entering a strange house with strange inmates in a strange land" (Melville, "Benito" 50). Arriving on such a ship, the narration claims, is even stranger, immersing the visitor even more precipitously in the foreign: "The ship seems unreal; these strange costumes, gestures, and faces, but a shadowy tableau just emerged from the deep" (50). Much has been made of the gothic and supernatural description of the *San Dominick*, but the analogy to a foreign land is of equal importance. Like a traveler to an exotic country, Delano attempts to make sense of the strange behavior he observes there, but by assuming the actions and words of the "natives" can be easily interpreted, he misses the heart of their "culture."

As in *Typee* and *Omoo*, Melville pays close attention to the languages spoken aboard the *San Dominick*. Shortly after the theme of translation is introduced with the chalked motto, it becomes clear that most of the ensuing dialogue will also be a "translation" of things actually said in Spanish: "Captain Delano . . . [feels] no small satisfaction that, with persons in their condition he could—thanks to his frequent voyages along the Spanish main—converse with some freedom in their native tongue" (51). Delano is overly optimistic in this expectation of easy understanding, as he proves totally incapable of interpreting the real meaning and motive of the Spaniards' speech. Later in his visit, Delano again exhibits pride in his linguistic ability when he "with a free step . . . advanced to the forward edge of the poop, issuing his orders in his best Spanish" (92). Delano's seeming linguistic mastery is immediately undercut, however, by his belief that

the “few sailors and many negros” who obey him are “all equally pleased” (92). In truth, there is little equality in the positions of the Spaniards and Africans, and neither group is exactly “pleased” by Delano’s actions. Delano’s optimistic pride in his mastery of the Spanish language is matched by his appraisal of the speech of both the whites and the blacks on the *San Dominick* as he steps aboard: “But, in one language, and as with one voice, all poured out a common tale of suffering” (49). Despite his hopeful impression, the speech of the ship’s passengers is anything but monologic. The complexities of speech, both within and across languages, prevent the kind of total understanding that Delano naively expects.

Delano’s original impression that everyone on the ship is speaking together in one language is made possible by his blindness to the true meanings of the rebelling slaves’ speech and actions. Like Columbus in Cooper’s *Mercedes of Castile*, Delano imagines the blacks live in a state of nature. Thus, when he sees “a slumbering negress” with her “wide-awake fawn, stark naked,” Delano muses, “There’s naked nature, now” (73). Laura Barrett points out, however, that “[b]y associating the wind [also described in the passage] with the child . . . Melville reminds us that the absence of language is not an indication of simplicity, nature, purity, and docility, but of duplicity, ambiguity, untranslatability” (415). More generally, Bernhard Radloff has also argued that such “motifs of the natural man. . . [function] parodically . . . because the seemingly unreflective slaves are ultimately exposed as authors of conspiracy and deception” (120).³⁸ By aligning Delano’s impressions with the typical racism of colonial encounter,

³⁸ Edward S. Grejda has also examined the use of animal imagery to characterize the blacks aboard the *San Dominick*, but he points out that “[t]he animal images associated with the slaves likewise characterize the whites” and concludes that “[t]he similarity of

Melville highlights the failure of both to account for the real complexities of other cultures and peoples.

As in much imperialist literature, Delano also finds the native language of the slaves incomprehensible, but instead of seeking to learn it and understand them, he discounts non-white speech as not worth understanding. The oakum-pickers are described as producing a “continuous, low, monotonous chant; droning and druling away like so many gray-headed bag-pipers playing a funeral march” (50). Whatever they may be saying in their native language does not seem to warrant a translation. Similarly, the general background noise on the ship is a “hubbub of voices” (51), again without meaning. The speech of the blacks is further described as “noisy indocility” (52) and “noisy confusion” (54). Like his vision of mother and child as untutored nature, Delano’s perception of the slaves’ language as pure noise conceals their true threat. In contrast to Delano’s underestimation of the blacks’ speech, Sundquist has examined the links between the clashing of the hatchet polishers and Ashanti drum language (166-67). Jones disagrees with Sundquist’s assumption that all of the slaves would speak the same African language, but he uses their lack of a common African language as an argument for Melville’s depiction of “an active and adaptable community capable of breaking through the barrier of tribal division by assuming the language of colonial power” (49). Either way, the true state of things aboard the ship indicates that the “noisy indocility” of the slaves is a mask for linguistically capable insurrection. Thus, Jon Hauss concludes from the deposition’s assertion that Babo “understands well the Spanish” that,

images attached to both blacks and whites can hardly lead to a precise dichotomy of evil and good” (142-43).

“[c]ontriving and enforcing a usage that shields a revolutionary restructuring of Spanish society, Babo turns the Spaniards’ own language against them” (9). Because Delano underestimates the speech of the rebelling slaves, he remains ignorant of their true power.

Furthermore, Melville’s illustration of the blindness produced by cultural stereotypes extends beyond Delano’s most obviously racist attitudes. Delano’s underestimation of the Africans is mirrored by his inability to look beyond Spanish stereotypes to analyze Benito Cereno’s strange behavior.³⁹ Delano decides that, “to the Spaniard’s black-letter text, it was best, for awhile, to leave open margin” (65). Not only does Delano equate the captain with language requiring interpretation (however postponed), but, by referencing a “black-letter text” in particular, he also invokes a type of print that is emblematically dark and arcane. Furthermore, while musing over all of the strange things he has witnessed, Delano discounts Cereno’s “capricious” behavior by thinking, “But as a nation . . . these Spaniards are all an odd set; the very word Spaniard has a curious, conspirator, Guy-Fawkish twang to it” (79). Because he is so quick to attribute any of Cereno’s oddities to his Spanishness, Delano fails to realize that something is truly amiss. Despite his reliance on stereotypes, however, Delano also collapses all cultural difference. He muses, “Spaniards in the main are as good folks as any in Duxbury, Massachusetts” (79). This is the same kind of paradoxical attitude that

³⁹ Thus, Peter West has argued that Melville highlights the “slipperiness of ‘Spanish’ as a racial and national signifier” (176). Further emphasizing the importance of Spain, Sundquist argues, “The aura of ruin and decay that links Benito Cereno and his ship to Charles V and his empire points forward as well to the contemporary demise of Spanish power in the New World and the role of slave unrest in its revolutionary decline” (137). María DeGuzmán calls Melville’s tale “an allegorical history painting about the historical relations of the imperial powers of Spain and the United States and their respective involvement with slavery” (54). See also Iván Jaksić’s argument for the significance of Spain in nineteenth-century America, which includes a reading of “Benito Cereno.”

allows explorers and colonizers to perceive native language both as incomprehensible noise and as a series of easily translatable universals. Both extremes refuse to recognize that other cultures have legitimate differences that can only be understood after careful and extended attention. By comparing the Spanish people both to Americans and to British conspirators, Delano erases all cultural distinction, the better discernment of which might have allowed him to apprehend the true political implications of the events aboard the ship.

As Sundquist, Jones, and Hauss have all demonstrated, “Benito Cereno” recounts the implications of underestimating the language of the racial Other. In addition to these overt examples of linguistic encounter, the entire masquerade acted out before Delano is an allegory for the failure to interpret. As Sanborn aptly puts it, Melville makes his readers “recognize that the seemingly natural links between signs and meanings are in fact arbitrary” (*Sign* 191).⁴⁰ Thus, in “Benito Cereno,” Melville expands *Typee*’s treatment of colonial language into a full-fledged critique of semiotics. While on board, Delano is constantly involved in the act of interpretation as he observes one peculiar occurrence after another. After seeing a white boy hit by a black one, “Captain Delano inquire[s] what this meant” (59). When the American first observes the “prisoner” Atufal, the African lowers his head “*as much as to say*, ‘no, I am content’” (62, emphasis added). Then, Delano sees the key around Cereno’s neck and, “from the servant’s muttered syllables divining the key’s purpose,” says, “So, Don Benito—padlock and key—significant symbols, truly” (63). The narration then calls further attention to Delano’s

⁴⁰ Robert Foulke (25) and Anna Krauthammer (17) also point toward the ways Melville dramatizes acts of interpretation.

failures of interpretation by noting that he is “a man of such native simplicity as to be incapable of satire or irony” (63). Later, as Delano observes some of the Spanish sailors, he thinks “that one or two of them returned [his] glance and with a sort of meaning” (71). Still, their intended meaning remains unclear. Delano misinterprets all of these clues. He fails to translate the language of the deception until Cereno and his supposedly trusty servant are struggling at his feet.⁴¹

The most famous of Delano’s failed interpretations occurs with an old sailor tying a complicated knot. Robert E. Burkholder calls the scene “a focal point for the criticism of Melville’s ‘Benito Cereno’” and “a pivotal cipher for the stratified meanings of the story as a whole” (1). Likewise, Radloff asserts that the knot is “clearly emblematic of Delano’s own entanglement in undecipherable events, and of these events themselves” (168). If this incident is emblematic of “Benito Cereno” as a whole, it is also one of the tale’s most sustained plays with language. The man throws the knot at Delano “saying in broken English,—the first heard in the ship,—something to this effect—‘Undo it, cut it, quick’” (76). The reader is thus reminded that everything prior has been said in Spanish, but even this first bit of English is also translated into “something to this effect.” The sailor’s “broken English” is not totally comprehensible, so the dialogue given is only an approximation. Similarly, the “elderly negro” who then takes the knot speaks in only “tolerable Spanish” (76), again emphasizing the inconsistency and unreliability of speech

⁴¹ In an interesting corollary to Melville’s depiction of absurd and perplexing gestures in *Typee*, Radloff examines how, in “Benito Cereno” too, “gesture, which the text frequently foregrounds as an index of meaningfulness, is no less ambiguous and inherently enigmatic than ‘conventional’ signs” (169). He concludes, “Once the opposition between the conventional (language) and the natural (the body’s comportment; the gesture) has collapsed, both semiotic systems appear as representational schemata posited by human subjectivity” (174).

even when both parties speak the same language. Finally, the “negro” who throws the knot overboard does it “with some African word, equivalent to pshaw” (76). The word “equivalent” heightens the phrase’s ambiguity, suggesting either that the African word had the same meaning as “pshaw,” or that it only sounded like “pshaw” with some other meaning unknown to either Delano or the reader. Either way, this is yet another example of unreliable translation and of the arbitrariness of linguistic signification.

As his benevolent racism proves impervious to the many hints the Spaniards are desperately trying to communicate, Delano’s continuous acts of misinterpretation result in an utter failure of language. As Lee succinctly puts it, “in ‘Benito Cereno’ no one understands anyone” (“Language” 511). Delano perceives Cereno as “apathetic and mute” (Melville, “Benito” 53), “too much overcome to speak” (97), talking in “tones so frenzied, that none in the boat could understand him” (98), and falling into a “speechless faint” (99). The old Spanish sailor splicing cable is unable to communicate the situation to Delano because, “as [the negroes] became talkative, he by degrees became mute” (72). When trying to broach the subject of payment for help, Delano says to Cereno, ““pardon me, but there is an interference with the full expression of what I have to say to you”” (90). Shortly afterward, the narrator states: “After this, nothing more could be said” (91). Later, the reader learns that “Captain Delano had *intended communicating* to Don Benito the smaller details” of his assistance, but he decides against it based on Cereno’s behavior (95, emphasis added). Throughout Delano’s visit to the *San Dominick*, Melville sustains a trope of troubled and unreliable translation to dramatize how speech fails when cultural stereotypes get in the way of perceiving reality.

At first glance, the “gray, surreal world of stasis, non-events, uncertain meanings, and dead-end clues,” which Bruce L. Grenberg describes as the setting of “Benito Cereno” (158), may seem like an odd addition to a study of travel literature, a genre usually associated with vibrant scenery and varied adventure. But Amasa Delano’s *Narrative* clearly belongs to a textual tradition of travel and exploration, and, as Heide notes, its “descriptions of commercial relations . . . reflect the United States’ economic and imperial interests” (47). Moreover, in its “direct engagement with the destructive histories of imperial Spanish America” (Wertheimer 139), “Benito Cereno” continues the treatment of colonial linguistic encounters begun in *Typee*, culminating Melville’s critique of translation. Delano’s failed interpretation of nearly everything aboard the *San Dominick* illustrates the danger of assuming an alien culture’s easy translatability. Offering a broader critique of Transcendentalism and similar forms of idealism, Melville demonstrates the error of viewing language as an index of universal truth.

Of all of the authors examined in this project, Melville is the only one to consistently take the cosmopolitan appreciation of linguistic difference that characterized early-nineteenth-century travel to Europe and extend that respect for linguistic difference to the non-white, non-Western cultures victimized by American expansionism and other forms of European colonialism and imperialism. *Typee* and *Omoo* demonstrate how the lived experience of linguistic encounter can lead to a recognition of the inherent difficulties of cross-cultural communication, at least when undertaken with an open mind instead of the imperialist drive of explorers like Columbus. This recognition is the essential first step in finding a golden mean between the extremes of too easy

translatability and utter incomprehensibility. As his works become increasingly philosophical, Melville develops his critique of cross-cultural communication into a demonstration of the inherent incommensurability of language. Finally, in “Benito Cereno,” Melville takes the theoretical investigations of language in *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* and reapplies them to the kind of colonial encounter that was the subject of *Typee*, using the trope of translation to critique U.S. imperialism. For Melville, translation generally, but particularly translation in the contexts of colonialism and imperialism, reveals the incommensurability of concepts across different languages and cultures, and this incommensurability highlights the ideological tint, subjective distortion, and downright opacity inherent in language. Thus, Melville’s treatment of language not only undermines the discourse of colonialism, it undermines the stability of language more generally. Melville decenters linguistic certainty by dramatizing the failures of translation endemic to cross-cultural encounter, going beyond a critique of linguistic stereotypes to collapse the universal idealism that justifies imperialism’s entire project. By criticizing the typical colonialist move of negating the language of the other through the assumption of transparent translation, Melville deconstructs the human dependence on sign systems, a move that transcends any “us vs. them” dichotomy.

CHAPTER 4 FROM TRAVEL TO TOURISM: THE SHIFT AT MID-CENTURY

In the 1840s, as the United States was expanding its influence throughout the Pacific, and Herman Melville was portraying the sailors who made that expansion possible, traveling Americans were also crossing the Atlantic Ocean in ever-increasing numbers. Although it would not fully materialize until after the Civil War, the first signs of the tourist boom were appearing as new technologies of travel made Europe accessible to more than the wealthiest and most culturally elite. The cosmopolitan appreciation of European culture evidenced in the works of James Fenimore Cooper began to erode as the motivation for and the nature of travel changed. Leisure and depth were being replaced by speed and superficiality.

These changes were often subtle and gradual, and it is impossible to date the rise of tourism at any particular moment.¹ Instead, this chapter will trace the incremental shift from cosmopolitans such as Cooper, who valued European languages, to the later generations of “ugly American” tourists who would find learning other languages unnecessary, or even undesirable. Since the American Revolution, travel’s most frequent purposes had been education, business, and politics (W. Stowe 76; Blanton 3). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, vastly increased numbers of Americans were traveling for pleasure and to acquire the cultural capital of having seen the sights of

¹ The history of American travel and travel literature is the subject of a number of insightful and comprehensive studies. For more detail than can be covered here, see in particular William W. Stowe’s *Going Abroad*, James Buzard’s *The Beaten Track*, Foster Rhea Dulles’s *Americans Abroad*, and Larzer Ziff’s *Return Passages*. These studies differ in the dates they give for the rise of mass tourism, but all trace a similar shift in nineteenth-century travel to Europe.

Europe (Dulles 1). The new technology and infrastructure of tourism—faster and less expensive transportation, pervasive guides and guidebooks, fixed tours and itineraries, and more numerous establishments catering to English-only speakers—made travel more accessible, more standardized, and more efficient. This change in the practice of travel both encouraged and was encouraged by a change in motive. In contrast to the older tradition of the Grand Tour, which promised academic, cultural, and social edification, the increasingly common reason for travel was not to gain substantive knowledge and experience, but to acquire the cultural capital of merely having been there.

As the following readings will demonstrate, both the extent to which travel literature values foreign language and the way it presents translation are more than indicators of this cultural shift. Rather, the traveler's degree of engagement with foreign language contributes to the changing attitudes toward cultural difference in direct and significant ways. Michael Cronin offers a succinct but insightful account of this connection. He explains, "If travel in the first stage was to facilitate national and international relations by making contacts and learning foreign languages, the second stage saw a marked preference for the eye over the ear and the increasing predominance of sightseeing" (*Across* 118). This important shift from the ear to the eye, from listening to what foreign people have to say to viewing their monuments and quickly moving on, puts more emphasis on sight than on understanding. And not only is the failure of travelers to speak and understand the local language both a cause and an effect of the increasing superficiality of tourism, but it also contributes to how Americans perceived the foreign on a more conceptual level. Earlier American travelers went to Europe with the expectation of learning something from the differences encountered abroad, but later

travelers' inability to hear and understand made the foreign land all that more intimidating and strange. Isolated by linguistic ignorance, the tourist began to feel more like an outsider in an alien world. Rather than seeing Europe as part of America's cultural heritage to be understood and appreciated, European differences became increasingly threatening. Moreover, the traveler's natural defense against the discomfort of the uncanny foreign (the fear of the incomprehensible), is to further exalt the customs of home. This increased preference for the language and culture of one's own national community makes the traveler less likely to learn the language abroad, further heightening the feeling of isolation.

This chapter will argue that, as European travel became more accessible to the middle class, and the numbers of Americans traveling to Europe grew, travelers increasingly saw the differences encountered abroad as inferior, and this lack of interest in the cultural content of Europe manifested in an increased emphasis on translation, and in the loss of cultural specificity that translation entails. To better illustrate the nuances of the shift in both travel and travel writing, I will examine several works of Melville alongside a broader selection of authors. The first section will argue that the figure of the guidebook, as exemplified by Bayard Taylor's *Views A-Foot* and dramatized in Melville's *Redburn*, illuminates the changing nature of European travel while revealing how one writer's experience can model a new set of values for future travelers. In the next section, the contrast between Margaret Fuller, who most thoroughly continues the cosmopolitan tradition of Cooper, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who represents the new attitudes of tourism, demonstrates how the changes in popular travel epitomized and encouraged by Bayard Taylor affected the experiences of even the United States' most

celebrated authors. The final section, which examines Melville's 1856-57 tour of Europe and the Levant and the epic poem *Clarel* inspired by that experience, argues that even Melville was not immune from the rise of tourism. Taken together, these writers illustrate the varied positions toward linguistic and cultural difference that occurred in the transitional period at mid-century, as well as the incremental shift from cosmopolitanism to cultural chauvinism that occurred in the progression from travelogue to traveler to future guidebooks and to ever-increasing numbers of traveling Americans.

The Role of the Guidebook in Bayard Taylor and *Redburn*

The shifting characteristics of American travel writing in the nineteenth century are best illustrated through an examination of one of its most successful authors. Bayard Taylor is a perfect example of the new comparative affordability of European travel. *Views A-Foot* (1846), his first and most famous travelogue, also demonstrates how, even when less wealthy travelers aspire to the literary elite, their failure to penetrate European society becomes the model for future travelers, gradually lowering the expectation of and desire for genuine cultural involvement. This gap between Taylor's aspirations and his actual mode of travel exemplifies the incremental decline of cosmopolitanism from text to traveler to text.

Although he is largely unknown today, Bayard Taylor enjoyed immense popularity during his extensive career. Despite his aspirations to be considered a great poet and author in the ranks of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Washington Irving, Taylor never could escape the public image of a travel writer (Wermuth 30, 157). He published nineteen volumes about travel as well as innumerable other works of literature and scholarship (see Wermuth 189-91), but none would surpass the popularity of *Views*

A-Foot. The book documents Taylor's two-year stay in Europe, and at first glance, his route does not seem to differ much from Cooper's. Taylor first visits England, Ireland, and Scotland, travels through Belgium and Heidelberg, and then resides in Frankfurt for nearly a year. Taylor's time in Frankfurt, particularly his account of visiting the university students, comes closest to the cosmopolitan experiences of Taylor's predecessors, but the pedestrian tour of Germany, Bohemia, Switzerland, Italy, and France that follows, occupying roughly two thirds of the book, is a touristic progression of inns, and sights, and scenery.² Not only was the volume one of the most famous examples of the genre in the mid-nineteenth century, but it is also a particularly representative example, so much so that Paul C. Wermuth calls it "the quintessence of the average" (35). In fact, Bruce A. Harvey writes that "Taylor quite likely comes the closest to being the most unexceptional travel author of his period" (21). Compared with Cooper's *Gleanings in Europe* and other earlier writings, *Views A-Foot* marks the beginning of a shift from cosmopolitanism to tourism both in the travelogue genre and in the nature of American travel to Europe.

In 1844, Taylor was only a young man of nineteen when he developed a plan to fund a tour of Europe by sending an account of his travels to the New York *Tribune*. In contrast to the previous genteel travelers he sought to imitate, Taylor could afford neither a typical Grand Tour nor the college education his extended trip to Europe would replace (Wermuth 17). Indeed, as Wermuth reports, Taylor "had, in the best American tradition,

² Wermuth is critical of both portions of the trip, noting that, despite Taylor's "mode of travel, he didn't comment much on the life of ordinary Germans, though he remarked about inns, food, or people he met," and further asserting, "he stayed in Germany a full year, and his observations there were not significantly better than elsewhere" (33, 37).

earned the trip all by himself” (29). In this way, Taylor represents the greater accessibility of European travel, and indeed, *Views A-Foot* became one of the original accounts of how to do Europe “on the cheap.” Unlike the wealthier classes who had been touring Europe for years, Taylor had to earn his money as he traveled and economize whenever he could. Lacking both status and means, Taylor was cut off from the high society Cooper enjoyed abroad, apparently to his chagrin. Considering himself “an intellectual and a literary man who deserved better,” as Wermuth explains, Taylor was “frequently annoyed that his lack of money forced him to live mainly with the lower class” (35-36). His walking tour of Europe, punctuated with thrifty meals, second-class passages, and inexpensive lodgings, rarely penetrated very far into the culture and society that was the previous focus of the Grand Tour’s cosmopolitan education.

Taylor’s situation thus illustrates his transitional status in the changing nature of American travel to Europe. On one hand, Taylor’s literary aspirations reflect his desire to tour Europe like the cultured and relatively wealthy gentlemen authors of the previous decades, who called on European society and visited with major literary and political figures. Although Taylor succeeded at least partially in establishing himself as a major author, an image he would continue to craft after his return to the U.S. (Wermuth 19), his lack of both money and status prevented him from participating in high society as his predecessors had done. Instead, he frequently took a spectator’s approach to local culture, anticipating the kind of tourism that would dominate after the Civil War. Taylor’s less wealthy childhood also limited his linguistic education before the trip. He eventually learns German, but his lack of previous education makes his initial experience abroad one of linguistic isolation. Although Taylor valued foreign language and culture more than

most of the tourists who follow him, his travelogue records his experiences rather than his aspirations. Taylor did not necessarily esteem European culture and language less than earlier figures, but his narrative places less emphasis on those things, minimizing their importance for the future travelers who would use *Views A-Foot* as a guidebook.

Although Taylor's walking tour was ostensibly more leisurely than the increasingly common travel by railroad and steamer, he often passed through places too quickly to establish any significant intercourse with the locals, or to observe their culture on more than a superficial level. He admits, for example, "With the rapidity usual to Americans we have already finished seeing Milan, and shall start to-morrow morning on a walk to Genoa" (246). Many previous critics, unintentionally mirroring Cooper's criticism of Dodge's travel journal in *Homeward Bound*, have charged Taylor's account with superficiality. Alfred Bendixen, for example, writes that Taylor's European travelogues "are not very good books" and "offer little more than superficial description along with the conventional patriotic and anti-Catholic assessments" (118). Likewise, Larzer Ziff asserts that "[t]he information he supplies about art and architecture, the foreign words he intrudes, the costumes and the manners that catch his eye, do not so much accumulate into a picture of European culture as they do into the portrait of a young man from rural America validating the culture he had acquired from books read by lamplight and dreamed about by day" (*Return* 125). Taylor's description of a village on his trek through Bohemia and Moravia offers a representative example:

The third night of our journey we stopped at the little village of Stecken, and the next morning, after three hours' walk over the ridgy heights, reached the old Moravian city of Iglau, built on a hill. It happened to be *Corpus Christi* day, and the peasants of the neighborhood were hastening there in their gayest dresses. The young women wore a crimson scarf around the head, with long fringed and embroidered ends hanging over the

shoulders, or falling in one smooth fold from the back of the head. They were attired in black velvet vests, with full white sleeves and skirts of some gay color, which were short enough to show to advantage their red stockings and polished shoe-buckles. Many of them were not deficient in personal beauty—there was a gipsy-like wildness in their eyes, that combined with their rich hair and graceful costume, reminded me of the Italian maidens. The towns too, with their open squares and arched passages, have quite a southern look; but the damp, gloomy weather was enough to dispel any illusion of this kind. (151)

As Ziff's analysis suggests, such descriptions of scenery, climate, and dress seem to offer readers an experience of seeing these foreign lands, but this vision rarely penetrates below the surface, and the content rarely moves beyond amusing curiosities and charming bits of local color. Like the typical tourist, Taylor not only sees rather than understands, but he often sees only what he has come expecting to see, doing little to challenge his own expectations or to change the preconceived notions of his readers.

Another marker of Americans' changing attitudes toward cultural difference is Taylor's treatment of American letters. Taylor's literary aspirations may align him with earlier, cosmopolitan figures, but he proves more interested in elevating the status of his own culture than in learning from the experience of being abroad. He emphasizes his interest in American literature by repeatedly alluding to the fame American authors have gained in Europe. For example, Taylor describes a publisher in Leipsic, Otto Wigan, who "has already published Prescott and Bancroft, and . . . intends giving out shortly, translations from some of our poets and novelists," as well as a "young German author" who is "well versed in our literature" and "is now engaged in translating American works" (128). In addition to Taylor's clear interest in the progress of American letters and their reception in Europe, another example of the writer's literary aspirations can be found in his meeting with "Freiligrath, the poet, who was lately banished from Germany

on account of the liberal principles his last volume contains” (224). Taylor reports that they “conversed much upon American literature” and describes Freiligrath as “a warm admirer of Bryant and Longfellow [who] has translated many of their poems into German” (224). On one hand, this literary meeting echoes Cooper’s encounters with Sir Walter Scott, although Taylor lacks the degree of fame enjoyed by the earlier figures, and he needed a letter from Nathaniel Parker Willis to obtain the meeting (225). At the same time, by turning the conversation to American literature instead of learning more about Freiligrath’s German poetry and politics, Taylor shows that he is more invested in furthering the esteem of his own country’s cultural production than in learning about Europe. Rather than aiming to become a member of a cosmopolitan intellectual community in order to learn from its foreign members, Taylor proves more interested in staking a claim for his own country, changing foreign views of America instead of his own views of the foreign.

Taylor’s nationalistic leanings are bolstered by his initial ignorance of foreign languages. First arriving on the continent, he describes an “agreeable and yet a painful sense of novelty to stand for the first time in the midst of a people whose language and manners are different from one’s own” (46). Despite Taylor’s excitement at the prospect of finally exploring Europe, with its “old buildings . . . linked with many a stirring association of past history,” he admits that “the want of a communication with the living world about, walls one up with a sense of loneliness he could not before have conceived” (46). Like Cooper and previous American travelers, Taylor stands in awe of Europe’s deeper cultural history, but his lack of linguistic education prevents him from becoming a part of the scene he admires. Perhaps to minimize the isolation caused by his own

linguistic inadequacy, Taylor turns to observations of “the endless sound of wooden shoes clattering over the rough pavements, and people talking in that most unmusical of all languages, low Dutch” (47). Rather than dwelling on his own inability to fully understand and experience Europe’s deeper culture and history, Taylor thus turns both local language and custom into anecdotal and quaint local color. Further anticipating the later mode of touristic travel, Taylor must hire a guide, “engaged because he spoke a few words of English” (48). Because of his monolingualism, Taylor’s first view of the continent is through the eyes of a tourist.³

In Heidelberg, Taylor begins to reduce his initial isolation from European culture by learning the language. At first, he once again presents foreign language as local color when he describes his “polite and talkative landlady,” who “much amused” Taylor and his travel companion with “her endeavors to make [them] understand” (61). Taylor adds, “As if to convey her meaning plainer, she raises both thumbs and forefingers to her mouth and pulls out the words like a long string; her tongue goes so fast that it keeps my mind always on a painful stretch to comprehend an idea here and there” (61). This almost grotesque description of the woman pulling a string of words out of her mouth, tongue wagging at lightning speed, makes speaking German seem more like a carnival trick than an intellectual pursuit. Nevertheless, Taylor demonstrates his legitimate interest in learning German by taking formal lessons (61). And, as Ziff notes, Taylor’s extended residence in Germany does lead to his eventual mastery of the language and life-long

³ Nevertheless, Buzard finds that most travelers seek to differentiate themselves from the common rabble of superficial tourists to which they inevitably belong (6), and Taylor is no exception. Thus, despite Taylor’s own reliance upon guides and guidebooks, he criticizes “[t]he English tourists” who “sat and read about the very towns and towers they were passing, scarcely lifting their eyes to the real scenes” (Taylor 54).

study of its literature (*Return* 123), although this seriousness is far more evident across a broad consideration of Taylor's career than in *Views A-Foot*. After his initial "tough grapple" with the German language, Taylor demonstrates his dedication when he reports, "I am just beginning to master the language, and it seems so necessary to devote every minute to study, that I would rather undergo some privation, than neglect turning these fleeting hours into gold" (89). Despite his cosmopolitan motives, the metaphor Taylor uses here suggests the general shift in American attitudes toward travel. The decision to learn a language has become an economic one, and Taylor demonstrates his monetary preoccupation by describing linguistic education as a conversion of time to gold. Over time, the initially practical decision to avoid the expense of foreign language education would grow into an aversion on principle.

Even after learning German, Taylor does not seem to enjoy the experience of immersion in a foreign language, and he portrays it as an unpleasant necessity rather than an invaluable opportunity. In his account of listening to "Strauss's band" in Vienna, Taylor describes how the Viennese "talked and laughed sociably together between the pauses of the music, or strolled up and down the lighted alleys" (161-62). He reports, "We walked up and down with them, and thought how much we should enjoy such a scene at home, where the faces around us would be those of friends, and the language our mother tongue!" (162-63). Although Taylor is experiencing some of the best of European culture, and he can speak German well enough for a passport inspector to mistake him for an Austrian (169), he would still prefer the company of his countrymen, and even more tellingly, the sound of his native language. Such homesickness is certainly understandable, but the frequency with which Taylor notes his sense of isolation

bespeaks a far lesser degree of comfort abroad than earlier writers describe. Other foreign languages seem even more daunting than German. Throughout the account, Taylor mentions his difficulties with Bohemian (145), Italian (238), Provençal (347), and French (348). These frequent complaints convey to his readers a sense of discomfort with both foreign language and culture that becomes ingrained in the model experience. Upon returning to England at the end of his continental tour, Taylor rejoices, “my tongue would now be freed from the difficult bondage of foreign languages, and my ears be rejoiced with the music of my own” (375). Despite his developing skill with German, foreign language ranks, for Taylor, among the annoyances of travel. And its inconvenience looms far larger than any intellectual or cultural edification that being immersed in the foreign might provide.

Although Taylor achieves the older ideal of cosmopolitan travel at least in part, he constructs his own text so that it will guide future travelers further down the path to tourism and linguistic isolationism. The success of *Views A-Foot* was not diminished by “the sheer superficiality of its observations,” but as Wermuth suggests, Taylor’s practice of “never penetrat[ing] very far into anything” may have attributed to its popularity (37). Indeed, the volume became a guidebook for subsequent tourists, and Taylor increased its value as a manual by appending “Advice and Information for Pedestrians” to its eighth edition (Wermuth 35). Taylor furthers the progress of tourism when he suggests “[t]raveling with a vetturino” so that “the tourist is freed from the annoyance of quarrelling with cheating landlords” (315). After engaging such a guide to make all of the arrangements for food and lodging, the tourist need not worry about learning enough Italian to procure these necessities for himself. Consequently, not only does Taylor offer

readers a comparatively superficial account of his own travels, but he advises them to seek even more efficiency abroad, encouraging convenience and the added superficiality that such convenience brings.

As if further promoting the removal of all foreign language from travel, Taylor goes on to state that “[a] translation of our written contract, will best explain this mode of traveling” (315). Like the vetturino he recommends, Taylor seeks to ease the difficulties of travel for the reader by eliminating the need to understand the local language. In fact, with its greater accessibility to the less wealthy and consequently less educated, the democratization of European travel mirrors both the act of translation and the way that any travelogue “translates” the foreign into a text that can be perused from one’s own parlor. On one hand, the increased access to the foreign provided by less expensive travel, literary translation, and travel writing seems to broaden America’s cultural horizons, and for the many who would have had no access otherwise, this is at least partially the case. But on the other hand, as Cooper emphasizes in his own travel writing, the act of translation tends to dilute the cultural content of the foreign text, eliding difference and homogenizing human experience. In much the same way, Taylor’s travel writing, as well as the translations it contains, provides access to more people, but only in a diluted form. And over time, as those who use Taylor’s writing as a guide mistake this mediation for the full experience, the aims of travel constrict, decreasing the level of cultural involvement future generations both desire and achieve.

The vetturino contract is one in a series of translations of poems and other texts throughout Taylor’s account. For example, Taylor presents his readers with his translation of one of Freiligrath’s poems, “as a specimen of the spirit in which they are

written” (80). While Taylor explicitly marks the act of translation in this example, he over-optimistically suggests that his own version could replicate the German’s “spirit” of the original. When Taylor describes a gathering of German students singing the “*Landsfather*’ or consecration song,” he presents the text in English without mentioning that the lyrics must have been translated (84-86). The English verses, interspersed with Taylor’s matter-of-fact explanations of the ceremony of drinking, clashing swords, and piercing caps, give the illusion of fully explaining everything, translating the ritual for readers so that they will not have to learn enough to decipher such a scene themselves. Similarly, in his description of the Austrian Alps, Taylor includes a translation of the ballad “The Mountain Boy.” The first stanza gives a sense of the piece’s general tone:

A herd-boy on the mountain’s brow,
I see the castles all below.
The sunbeam here is earliest cast
And by my side it lingers last—
I am the boy of the mountain! (188)

As in the previous examples, Taylor presents translation as both desirable and unproblematic. In all of these cases, Taylor positions himself as the gatekeeper of foreign language. Just as he suggests to readers that a good guidebook can replace a courier (391), Taylor acts as a translator of local language and culture so that his readers need not develop more than a passing acquaintance with them.

Moreover, Taylor’s later study of German literature (see Wermuth 20), and his translation of Goethe’s *Faust*, further demonstrate how Taylor discourages readers from learning foreign languages by acting as their cultural mediator and “guide” to the foreign. In his *Faust*, Taylor attempts to replicate both the content and versification of Goethe’s original, believing that there are “few difficulties in the way of a nearly literal yet

thoroughly rhythmical version of *Faust*” (Taylor qtd. Haskell 22). As Juliana Haskell demonstrates, however, because German words tend to be longer than English ones (in addition to other intrinsic differences between the languages), register suffers when content and form are held equivalent, and Taylor is forced to pad his lines with superfluous syllables (Haskell 38-41). The result is what one contemporary review called “Latinized words and literary phrases,” which deviate from the direct simplicity of Goethe’s German (Andrews qtd. Haskell 39). Taylor’s translation thus gives the appearance of a perfect substitute for the original when it is really an inferior version. Just as in the discourse of imperialism examined in the previous chapters, Taylor assumes that translation can be more straightforward than is possible, demonstrating a failure to understand and appreciate the original language and culture. The impression of equivalence is heightened further by one of Taylor’s stated principles of translation, the “abnegation of the translator’s personality through which alone the original author can receive justice” (Taylor qtd. Haskell 19). Taylor’s aim of concealing the translator’s work lulls the reader into thinking that this *is* Goethe in English. Not only does the mediation of translation lose some of the qualities of the original, but that loss is concealed from the reader.⁴

Of course no translation is perfect, but Taylor’s exaggerated claims of equivalence present his *Faust* as a perfect substitute for the original rather than a

⁴ Such a practice would lead to Emerson’s claim to not “hesitate to read . . . all good books, in translations” because “what is really best in any book is translatable” (*Society* 182).

compromise between content and accessibility.⁵ Haskell highlights this fault when she concludes that Taylor's *Faust* fails to "perform that higher office of a good translation, so potently to suggest the charm of the original as to win readers for Goethe in the German" (89). Because no person can learn all of the world's languages, translation is a necessary and culturally valuable method of bringing new literatures to those who cannot read the originals. Nevertheless, Taylor's fault, in his travel writing as in his translation, is that his translations of both culture and text do not encourage readers to learn more or to experience the originals directly. Instead, Taylor subtly but pervasively discourages readers from stepping outside their monolingual world. For example, a description of Taylor from the *New York Evening Post* explains, "As a journalist it was his business to make his learning vicarious; he observed and studied that other men might know" (qtd. Haskell 83). By extension, although Taylor modeled his travel on his cosmopolitan, literary predecessors, he learned German so that his readers would not have to. Wermuth's analysis of Taylor's popular German literature lectures in the 1870s also demonstrates how the erudite writer encouraged monolingualism in his readers and students by making his subject seem *too* accessible.⁶ While Taylor unquestionably provided more knowledge of German culture to his audiences than they might otherwise

⁵ Wermuth defends the *Faust* translation, even calling it "Taylor's most important work," and he disagrees with Haskell's overwhelmingly negative conclusions, if not the particular faults she analyzes (156-60).

⁶ According to Wermuth, these lectures, which usually included a summary of the author's life and work accompanied by translations of "some passages to give the flavor," were so popular because "such was Taylor's skill that he was able to make these early essays interesting to those who knew little of German literature. Taylor had the ability, from his journalistic experience, to pick out the salient features of material and to eliminate the rest" (168-69).

have had, he simultaneously gave the impression that this was all there was to know, implicitly discouraging further study. In much the same way, although a lifetime of study converted the ignorant youth who first landed in Liverpool into a scholar of German language and literature, both his travel writing and his translation mediate his own knowledge and experience for a popular audience, implicitly discouraging readers from deeper cultural experiences abroad while concealing that any cultural content may be missing.

Melville addresses the increasing superficiality of travel encouraged by Taylor in *Redburn* (1849), a novel conspicuously missing from the previous chapter's account of Melville's early career. *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Mardi*, and *Moby-Dick* all draw on the author's Pacific whaling experiences from 1841 to 1844 (Heflin xxiii). In contrast, *Redburn*, Melville's fourth novel, is loosely based on his first voyage, a trip between New York and Liverpool on the merchant vessel *St. Lawrence* in 1839 (Heflin 4-5). In the novel, the young and inexperienced Wellingborough Redburn fulfills his longing to go to sea by enlisting on a similar transatlantic voyage—blundering over the customs and responsibilities of a sailor, seeing a bit of Liverpool, and making a strange nocturnal trip to London with his English friend Harry Bolton before returning home. While many critics have taken Melville's claim to have written *Redburn* for the money as a reason to disregard it, several have recognized its significance.⁷ Some of the most interesting

⁷ William H. Gilman, for example, defends the novel against those who “look upon it as mere apprenticeship,” and he includes among its “merits” a “tender and varied depiction of the woes of a disappointed adolescent” and “a penetrating psychological realism and a true pathos” (247). Gilman's reading is an example of those that focus on the

readings view the novel as a critique of America. Marvin Fisher argues that “Melville was already a subversive writer in *Redburn*,” and that the targets of his critique included not only religious and economic systems but “those qualities in the American character that abetted moral hypocrisy and an impoverished imagination” (49-50). Paul Giles calls *Redburn* “the most straightforward example of cross-cultural critique” in Melville’s works and examines how “stereotypes are dismantled and Liverpool comes to seem more like New York than Redburn has supposed” (56-57). Such readings recognize that *Redburn* participates in travel literature’s common purpose of giving new context to domestic issues through the experience of the foreign. Redburn’s experiences, those of a common sailor rather than a tourist, provide an interesting counterpoint to the superficial, guidebook-dependent travel of Taylor and his successors. Wellingborough Redburn and Bayard Taylor share the common experience of leaving America at an early age, dependent upon themselves for support, to see first-hand a land they have only dreamed about and studied in books. But for Redburn, the experience of travel also brings a new understanding of linguistic and cultural difference.⁸

Redburn initially views linguistic difference as a mark of foreign exoticism. As a child, when he fantasizes about his father’s travels, he thinks, “And who could be going to Bremen? No one but foreigners, doubtless; men of dark complexions and jet-black

psychological and biographical implications of Melville’s characterization of Wellingborough Redburn.

⁸ The similarity of Taylor’s motives to Redburn’s youthful fantasies is apparent in the opening chapter to *Views A-Foot*: Taylor explains his childhood dreams of visiting Europe to “behold the scenes, among which [his] fancy had so long wandered,” and despite his “want of means” admits, “I could not content myself to wait until I had slowly accumulated so large a sum as tourists usually spend on their travels” (1).

whiskers, who talked French” (4). For young Redburn, not only is speaking French akin to the surface differences of complexion and facial hair, but these men “talked” not “spoke” French. The youth does not care for the content of their *speech*, it is only meaningless *talk* with the same effect as exotic mustaches.⁹ Similarly, Redburn describes his wish to read one of his father’s French books: “I wondered what a great man I would be, if by foreign travel I should ever be able to read straight along without stopping, out of that book, which now was a riddle to every one in the house but my father” (7). The possibility of learning the language at home does not seem to cross his mind because French only interests him as a marker of having been to Europe, as just another souvenir.¹⁰ For young Redburn, knowing French has value only as evidence of being well-traveled.

In contrast to these early fantasies of foreign language as a symbol of the cultural capital of having been to foreign lands, Redburn’s experiences as a sailor give him a new perspective on linguistic alterity. When he first boards the *Highlander*, Redburn finds himself puzzled, not by the exciting European languages he fantasized about as a child, but by strange varieties of English. Melville thus continues the exploration of nautical jargon found in Cooper’s sea tales. When the first sailor Redburn meets asks, “have you got your traps aboard?” the youth, confused, reveals his ignorance by replying that he

⁹ In his discussion of Redburn’s growing understanding of alterity, Emory Elliott similarly examines how Redburn’s childhood daydreaming “reveals his inherent sense that the cultural ‘other’ will be linguistically and racially exotic and mysterious” (22).

¹⁰ That Redburn is more interested in what being able to read French represents than in the content of the French book is also suggested by Peter J. Bellis’s psychological reading, in which both Redburn’s father’s travel and his knowledge of French symbolize “[t]he father’s authority” (56).

“didn’t know there were any rats in the ship, and hadn’t brought any ‘trap’” (24). Shortly after, Redburn hears a “curious language . . . half English and half gibberish,” whose speaker turns out to be only “an English boy, from Lancashire” (26). As Melville will make even clearer as the novel progresses, the disorienting yet enriching experience of linguistic alterity is not had through the superficial kind of travel Redburn fantasized about as a child, the travel sought and described by Taylor, but through the genuinely cosmopolitan experience of shipboard life.

The voyage to Liverpool is filled with similar misunderstandings as Redburn slowly learns the business of sailing and its accompanying terminology. Redburn explains of the “puzzling and confounding” experience of sailing for the first time:

It must be like going into a barbarous country, where they speak a strange dialect, and dress in strange clothes, and live in strange houses. For sailors have their own names, even for things that are familiar ashore; and if you call a thing by its shore name, you are laughed at for an ignoramus and a land-lubber. (65)

Still uninitiated in the complexities of a sailor’s work, Redburn has the same lack of appreciation for nautical terminology that he does for foreign languages. Redburn’s comparison of sailors’ jargon to “a strange dialect,” like his later observation of “outlandish Dutch gibberish” (76), reduces foreign speech to content-less unintelligibility. As he gains sailing experience, however, Redburn learns the same lesson demonstrated in Cooper’s *The Pilot*. As Peter J. Bellis notes, “Where the boy’s father had mastered French, he must now learn the ‘Greek’ of sailing terminology,” and “learning this new language is equated with learning the skills the words describe” (58). Strange words, such as the obscure nautical jargon of his ship, are valuable for the meaning they convey; they are more than colorful aspects of foreign scenery. Redburn begins to

demonstrate this growing awareness when he notes that “the mere knowing of the names of the ropes, and familiarizing yourself with their places” are but “things which a beginner of ordinary capacity soon masters,” while “[t]he business of a thorough-bred sailor is a special calling” that demands much “adroitness” and “versatility of talent” (120). As Redburn gains some of his first worldly experience, he begins to recognize the extraordinary skill required to manage a ship. Redburn further learns that the sailors’ technical terminology is not superfluous obfuscation but, as David Simpson argued of Cooper’s nautical language, it is a precise system for designating particular and indispensable actions while avoiding the delay a more extensive explanation in land-English would cause (*Politics* 199). Nautical jargon is not, as Redburn first believed of his father’s French, difference for difference’s sake, but a legitimate language conveying specific and vital information.

In addition to his growing appreciation for the value of linguistic difference, Redburn gains a more mature perspective on his childhood fantasies through his disillusionment with his father’s guidebook, *The Picture of Liverpool*.¹¹ This sequence is one of Melville’s most pointed critiques of the growing practice of tourism. Melville

¹¹ Critics have read the guidebook as a symbol of Redburn’s disillusionment with his father (Sten, *Weaver* 107), of his youthful religious faith (L. Thompson 84; M. Smith 32), and of his naive trust in textuality (Weinstein 379). Lawrence Buell focuses particularly on Redburn’s travel to England when he describes Redburn’s disillusionment with the guidebook as part of “Redburn’s attempt to decolonize himself, to shake off the inbred genteel Anglophilia that initially makes him a maladroit sailor and leads to a pathetically naive pilgrimage in his father’s footsteps through Liverpool” (“Question” 222). Phyllis Cole likewise describes how Melville replaces the tradition of travel to “picturesque England” with an image of “an England closer to the negative image of the democratic nationalistic tradition” (297, 317). Ian S. Maloney makes a connection between travel and language when he compares the guidebook to Redburn’s father’s equally “useless” volumes in French (79).

signals his clear condemnation of Redburn's obsession with the book in the chapter heading "Redburn Grows Intolerably Flat and Stupid over Some Outlandish Old Guide-Books" (141). Although Redburn assiduously studies the minutest details of the book that guided his father through Liverpool, printed fifty years before, all of the landmarks he seeks are gone. On one hand, as Redburn's experiences emphasize the passage of time—he laments, for example, that the book is "nearly half a century behind the age! and no more fit to guide me about the town, than the map of Pompeii" (157)—Melville calls attention to the changes in travel to Europe. At the same time, Melville implies that all guidebooks are inherently unfit and that a traveler is better served experiencing a place anew instead of cleaving to old texts. Redburn tells himself:

And, Wellingborough, as your father's guide-book is no guide for you, neither would yours (could you afford to buy a modern one to-day) be a true guide to those who come after you. Guide-books, Wellingborough, are the least reliable books in all literature; and nearly all literature, in one sense, is made up of guide-books. (157)

As Taylor observed of the "European tourists" who barely see the sights because of their absorption by guidebooks (see note 3), and as Tommo experiences on Nukuhiva, an over-reliance on past texts prevents a real engagement with the world.¹² Guidebook in hand, one can tour the globe without becoming a jot more worldly.

John Samson adds an interesting economic aspect to this analysis of the failed guidebook when he argues that Redburn's "dreams of following the footsteps of genteel travelers to Europe" are "subverted . . . by the reality of a laissez-faire economic system that recognizes no superiority but financial" (9). Samson thus joins Benjamin S. West

¹² John Samson also connects Redburn with Tommo in that both "narrator[s have] been reading misleading narratives" (9).

(165) and Jeffrey Hotz (“Out” 118) in reading in *Redburn* what West calls “Melville’s Critique of Capitalism.” Indeed, the novel’s economic criticism is linked to its critique of tourism. Phyllis Cole describes the resentment Melville held for the easy success of Bayard Taylor, that “Taylor is able to do everything he wants, to see the whole Continent and lack ‘no necessary comfort,’ whereas Melville’s hero is really poor and therefore trapped for six weeks in Liverpool” (320-21). While travelers such as Taylor seem to be participating in the democratization of an activity that was once the exclusive domain of the very rich, Melville offers a truly democratized alternative, pointing out that the middle class to which Taylor belongs is far more privileged than the majority of people Redburn encounters. Moreover, by critiquing the poor conditions of industrialized England, Melville further emphasizes the superficiality of the pleasant and picturesque sights visited by tourists. As Shirley Foster explains, the “horrific sight of urban squalor and deprivation” found in Redburn is off of the “well-worn tourist paths” to which most travelers confined themselves (“Confusion” 131). Even as tourism makes European travel more accessible to the middle class, it still remains a leisure activity available only to the privileged minority, and the pervasive poverty produced by the same system of capitalism that sustains tourism is too often eclipsed by tourism’s superficial attention to quaint local color.

Melville’s ongoing critique of the system of transnational exchange that supports this inequity—evidenced in *Mardi*’s maker of idols and further explored through *Moby-Dick*’s doubloon—continues in his account of Redburn’s merchant voyage. One scene that particularly emphasizes economic incommensurability is Redburn’s nightmarish visit to a London gambling house with Harry Bolton. Bellis offers this fascinating reading:

Chips are substitutes for money, which is itself a substitute for real goods; and these signifiers, doubly removed from their referents, are then surrendered to the play of chance. Gambling, in this sense, represents a fundamental dissolution of the signifying order, and Harry, as a compulsive gambler, embodies this instability. (89)

Harry's gambling mirrors the larger-scale speculation of international trade, and both allow participants to play with conventions of equivalence for monetary gain, often at the expense of the unwary. In *Redburn* as in *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick*, Melville's play with the slippery signification of language accompanies a similar examination of the inherent incommensurability of economic systems and of the injustice caused when one party takes advantage of the imperfect translation of value across countries and cultures.

Despite the failure of his guidebook, Redburn's travels do make him more worldly, but Melville is careful to show that Redburn does not gain his newfound cosmopolitanism through sight-seeing and the usual itinerary of a tourist. Instead, Redburn's experiences demonstrate that the benefits of speaking to a variety of people, such as the sailors found at the Liverpool docks, far surpass any worldliness gained from seeing the notable sights. At first, Redburn despairs that his "prospects of seeing the world as a sailor [are], after all, but very doubtful," because sailors "would dream as little of traveling inland to see Kenilworth, or Blenheim Castle, as they would of sending a car overland to the Pope, when they touched at Naples" (133-34). Redburn initially views a sailor's travels as "go[ing] *round* the world, without going *into* it" (133), but he learns from his experience with the guidebook that seeing such sights can be far more superficial than he imagined, that touring is not really "going *into*" the world at all. At the same time, after returning to the docks from his failed touring, Redburn realizes that there is more of the world there than he previously thought:

Surrounded by its broad belt of masonry, each Liverpool dock is a walled town, full of life and commotion; or rather, it is a small archipelago, an epitome of the world, where all the nations of Christendom, and even those of Heathendom, are represented. For, in itself, each ship is an island, a floating colony of the tribe to which it belongs. (165)¹³

While tourists like Taylor can travel a continent without experiencing much of the true nature or daily life of its inhabitants, a common sailor can more fully experience international differences when diverse people are drawn together in the varied microcosm of shipboard life. Redburn learns that speaking with such people is a better way to experience the world than following the “beaten track” of a tourist’s itinerary, thus providing a counter-example to the ongoing replacement of understanding with sight.

Strolling along the docks, Redburn encounters a ship from Bombay. He first describes its sailors as “chattering like magpies in Hindostanee” (171), but when he takes time to converse with one who “spoke good English, and was quite communicative” (172), Redburn realizes that these chattering Asians might have something to say:

So instructive was his discourse, that when we parted, I had considerably added to my stock of knowledge. . . . If you want to learn romance, or gain an insight into things quaint, curious, and marvelous, drop your books of travel, and take a stroll along the docks of a great commercial port. Ten to one, you will encounter Crusoe himself among the crowds of mariners from all parts of the globe. (172)

Here, Melville clearly contrasts the false worldliness Redburn thought he could gain from guidebooks and tourism to the real cosmopolitanism of a sailor’s life. While Redburn’s initial impressions of the multilingualism of the ship led him to belittle any language

¹³ Robert T. Tally, Jr., calls Redburn’s view of the Liverpool docks “a figure for internationalism and even postnationalism” and argues that, although “Melville utters his most famous comment about the specifically *American* nationality . . . , he rejects that there is such a thing, arguing that the national identity of the United States can only be viewed in its fundamentally multinational character” (37).

difference that was not a mark of having traveled, the young sailor learns by the return voyage that the multilingual ship-board environment represents a truer cosmopolitan ideal than he could gain from superficial touring. As these examples demonstrate, Melville's appreciation of foreign language in *Redburn* does not differ drastically from his treatment of language difference discussed in the previous chapter, but the change of setting allows his focus to shift from a critique of imperialism to a critique of the rise of tourism. As in his Pacific writings, Melville once again maintains his unusually cosmopolitan attitude toward "savage" cultures as well as toward the foreign cultures of Europe. Unfortunately, this openness to difference remains the exception. In later decades, the cultures and languages of Europe increasingly are treated with the level of disrespect previously reserved for non-Western peoples.

Travel and Translation in Fuller and Stowe

Thus far, my study of American travel has focused regrettably, if necessarily, on male authors, but by mid-century, women were traveling to Europe with increased frequency, and many wrote about their travels in some form (S. Wright). There have already been a number of studies of women's travel writing, much of which either remained in private journals and correspondence or was originally written as such and then published later.¹⁴ While Taylor and Redburn (and the young Melville on whom Redburn is loosely based) traveled with a level of anonymity typical for most Americans

¹⁴ See, for example, Helen Barolini's *Their Other Side*, Annamaria Formichella Elsdon's *Roman Fever*, Cheryl J. Fish's *Black and White Women's Travel Narratives*, Sara Mills's *Discourses of Difference*, Susan L. Roberson's *Antebellum American Women Writers and the Road*, Mary Suzanne Schriber's *Writing Home*, and Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman's *Traveling Economies*.

abroad, this section will return to the travels of more famed and established authors by examining two writers who eagerly accepted a more public persona, Margaret Fuller and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Although these women traveled to Europe within a decade of each other, Fuller between 1846 and 1850 and Stowe in 1853, their published travel writings demonstrate how the changes epitomized and encouraged by travelogues and guides like *Views A-Foot* affected the European travel of more famous American authors. When examined in contrast to Fuller, who continues the tradition of literary cosmopolites like Cooper and Washington Irving, Stowe demonstrates how the shift from cultured traveler to tourist influenced even the most renowned literary celebrities, a class that was once the core of American cosmopolitanism.

Margaret Fuller is easily one of the most cosmopolitan figures of the antebellum period. From a very young age, she received extensive education in both modern and classical languages, and she could read Latin, Greek, French, and Italian by the age of eight (Durning 56). Like Taylor, but to a greater extent, Fuller was also a translator. Her first two published books were translations of Johann Peter Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* and "Bettina von Arnim's correspondence with the poet Karoline von Günderode" (Durning 20-21). Fuller also translated Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*, although it was not published until after her death (101). Indeed, Russell E. Durning's book *Margaret Fuller, Citizen of the World* is dedicated to analyzing Fuller's engagement with the languages and literatures of Europe and her role "in making European literature known in America" (14). Charles Capper, too, calls Fuller "one of America's first truly

cosmopolitan intellectuals” (xiii).¹⁵ Not surprisingly, when offered the opportunity to travel to Europe with friends in 1846, Fuller eagerly embraced the opportunity (Murray 281). Like Taylor, Fuller funded her travels, in part, by writing letters for the *New York Tribune*.¹⁶ She began her trip in England, visited Paris, and then remained in Italy until 1850, witnessing the unsuccessful Italian revolution of 1847-48.¹⁷

Harriet Beecher Stowe traveled to Europe for the first time in 1853, after the record-breaking success of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Hedrick 233). She spent the first part of the trip in England and Scotland, where she toured antislavery societies. Due to what Joan D. Hedrick calls “women’s enforced retirement from public speech,” Stowe herself did not speak at these meetings, but her husband (Calvin) or her brother (Charles) delivered speeches she had written, and sometimes Calvin composed his own (Hedrick

¹⁵ Bell Gale Chevigny describes Fuller’s shifting balance between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, arguing that, at first, Fuller’s “growing Italianization deepened and sharpened her Americanness[. . .] enabl[ing] her to discover how Italian and American concerns were actually married, and to better identify America’s peculiar needs” (107). However, Chevigny argues that Fuller’s focus on American concerns shifted as Fuller rejected the “myth of America’s unique destiny” and “urged instead an egalitarian cosmopolitanism, which would reposition America morally as one nation among many” (110).

¹⁶ After her death, Fuller’s brother Arthur B. Fuller collected much of her travel writing in *At Home and Abroad; or, Things and Thoughts in America and Europe* (1856). I will use the modern and more complete edition of Fuller’s *Tribune* letters, “*These Sad but Glorious Days*”: *Dispatches from Europe, 1846-1850* (Yale UP, 1991).

¹⁷ Famously, during these years in Italy, Fuller also became involved with Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, conceived a child, and likely married the Italian in secret. When they finally decided to return to America, their ship was wrecked less than a mile away from Fire Island, New York. Fuller refused to attempt to swim to shore, and the entire family drowned. This fascinating personal history can be found in Fuller’s private correspondence, but it plays little role in the *Tribune* dispatches, which are the subject of my reading. See Meg McGavran Murray’s biography, *Margaret Fuller: Wandering Pilgrim*, for more details of Fuller’s dramatic final years.

242; Foster, "Construction" 151-52). The result of this arrangement was that Stowe's husband drew all negative criticism in the partisan world of antislavery societies, while "the public could attribute its most cherished views to [Harriet] without any evidence to contradict them" (Hedrick 242). Exhausted by the constant criticism, Stowe's husband returned to the states while his wife continued with the rest of her party to tour the continent. After returning home, Stowe collected, edited, or composed a series of "letters" which she combined with sections of her brother's journal and transcripts of the various speeches given in her honor; the result is *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (1854) (Foster, "Construction" 152-53). Like *Views A-Foot*, Stowe's travelogue became a guidebook for large numbers of traveling Americans (S. Wright).

Comparing Fuller's *Tribune* dispatches with *Sunny Memories* reveals a clear decrease in cultural involvement from Fuller to Stowe, a difference which is indicative of the general, if gradual, shift from Cooper's travel to Twain's tourism. Fuller helps illustrate this change when she outlines what she sees as the three types of American travelers. In contrast to the extremes of the "servile American," who without reflection puts whatever is fashionable in Europe above anything at home, and the "conceited American," who finds nothing worthwhile abroad in comparison to his own provincial tastes, Fuller praises "[t]he thinking American—a man who, recognizing the immense advantage of being born to a new world and on a virgin soil, yet does not wish one seed from the Past to be lost" (162-63). Fuller's ideal relation to Europe is an appreciation of what is valuable both in the future of America and in the European past, the golden mean of this spectrum, and a fair description of Cooper's cosmopolitanism. All three positions might exist at any point in the history of American travel, but while early travelers tended

to be more in awe of European culture (often without sacrificing a concurrent sense of patriotism), later travelers had more culture to be proud of at home and felt less indebted to European history and monuments. Fuller's and Stowe's relative images abroad illustrate this gradual change.

One factor that both accompanied and influenced traveling Americans' decreased involvement in European culture was the United States' changing cultural status. In her first letter, Fuller notes modest increases in the prominence of American writing in Europe including passages from the *Bostonian Dial* included in an address by the Director of the Liverpool Institute and extracts of American writers in *Bradshaw's Railway Guide* (42-43). Fuller's own moderate fame as an American author allows her to meet with literary and cultural figures to which the average traveler would not have had access, including William Wordsworth and Thomas Carlyle (53, 100). In private correspondence, Fuller reports "that an English edition of her *Papers on Literature and Art* had 'been courteously greeted in the London journals' and that *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* 'has been read and prized by many,' including Mazzini" (Murray 300). It is clear, however, that Fuller was primarily known only in select intellectual circles and was not familiar to the general populace of Europe.

Stowe, on the other hand, was undeniably a celebrity in Europe as in the United States. Her biographer describes how Stowe's "receptions swelled in size and enthusiasm as Stowe made her triumphant tour of Great Britain, where the sales of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were more than triple the already phenomenal figures of the United States,

reaching a million and a half in the first year” (Hedrick 233).¹⁸ Stowe’s prominence is made clear in one of the speeches given in her honor, a speech she includes in *Sunny Memories*. The Rev. C.M. Birrell describes how *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is “going forth over the whole earth” and remarks on editions circulated in Belgium, published by the “priests of the church of Rome,” and, in St. Petersburg, even “translated into the Russian tongue” (I: xxi).¹⁹ Stowe travels in part to see the famous sights of Europe, but she also finds hundreds of Europeans flocking to see *her* (S. Wright). Throughout her travels, Stowe discovers that a Scottish family (I: 138), a musician at a French *salon* (II: 176-77), and Italian schoolchildren (II: 278), among others, are all familiar with her work. In a secluded village in the Alps, the villagers entreat the bestselling author, “O, madam, do write another! Remember, our winter nights here are *very* long!” (II: 198). Stowe may not have raised the value of American literature in European eyes singlehandedly, but another passage from a speech given in Stowe’s honor suggests the great difference *Uncle Tom* had made:

Let us hear no more of the poverty of American brains, or the barrenness of American literature. Had it produced only *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, it had evaded contempt just as certainly as *Don Quixote*, had there been no other product of the Spanish mind, would have rendered it forever illustrious. (I: xxxviii)

¹⁸ With an interesting correspondence to the commercialization of tourism, Whitney Womack Smith describes how, during Stowe’s visit to England, the popularity of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* “spawned an early example of a merchandising tie-in; abolitionist groups and English shopkeepers sold mass-produced ‘Uncle Tom’ goods, including almanacs, cups, picture books, card games, stationery, handkerchiefs, and dolls with likenesses of characters like Uncle Tom and Little Eva” (90).

¹⁹ Indeed, Denise Kohn, Sarah Meer, and Emily B. Todd note that “by 1853 the novel had been translated into French, Italian, Welsh, German, Portuguese, Spanish, Norwegian, and Slovenian, among other languages” (xviii).

This increased fame and recognition of American literature in Europe contributed to a growing sense of America's own cultural value and, consequently for many travelers, a decline in their appreciation of the European culture previously viewed as superior.²⁰

Unlike the trips of many of their female contemporaries, Fuller's and Stowe's experiences abroad are remarkable for their engagement in politics, Fuller in the 1848 Italian revolution and Stowe in the antislavery movement. In this sense, the travel writings of both show greater depth than Taylor's focus on local color and idle amusements. Apart from this similarity, however, Fuller's *Tribune* dispatches and Stowe's *Sunny Memories* represent a shift in the nature of travel from cultural participation to tourism. Fuller's dispatches describe the changing technology of travel that contributes to the rise of tourism. For example, she recommends taking passage, as she did, on a steamer rather than on an older sailing ship. The increased accessibility, speed, and convenience of steamers would set the tone for the new, shorter tour made more accessible to middle-class travelers (Sides 12). Yet, while Fuller praises the steamer, she calls the railroad "that convenient but most unprofitable and stupid way of traveling" (50). Speed and convenience make tourism pleasant and efficient, but, as with Taylor's vetturino, they prevent a more active engagement with the land and its people.

²⁰ Kohn, Meer, and Todd observe a similar change in the relative respect given to American culture abroad: "Oddly juxtaposing accounts of Stowe's literary pilgrimages (typical of an Old World tour) and her reception in Britain (crowds gathering to greet her train), *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* illustrates the beginnings of a cultural shift in British and American relations" (xxv). Taking this argument a step further, Schriber calls *Sunny Memories* "Stowe's declaration of independence from the Old World" and argues that Stowe "thinks it imperative that Americans free themselves culturally and stand on their own two feet" (181).

At the same time, Fuller is careful to distinguish her travel from what was already a growing trend of superficial tourism. This critique is made apparent when she writes:

The traveler passing along the beaten track, vetturinoed from inn to inn, ciceroned from gallery to gallery, thrown, through indolence, want of tact, or ignorance of the language, too much into the society of his compatriots, sees the least possible of the country. (131-32)

The conveniences of tourism's various guides, its standard itinerary of sights, and the ignorance of local languages such infrastructure allows all contribute to the superficiality of this new trend of European travel. Although Fuller's initial travels in England and France follow a touristic model (Roberson 153), and she admits, "Like others, I went through the painful process of sight-seeing, so unnatural everywhere, so counter to the healthful methods and true life of the mind," she is glad to report, "I now really live in Rome, and I begin to see and feel the real Rome" (Fuller 167-68). Beyond the usual practice of criticizing mere tourists, a ubiquitous trope which, as James Buzard argues, is as much a part of the "beaten track" of travel writing as any ciceroned gallery (153, 196-97), Fuller's thoughts on tourism, as well as her legitimate participation in Italian politics and society, demonstrate a clear allegiance to the earlier mode of European travel.²¹

In Great Britain, Stowe's fame and political activism may have separated her from the usual tourist, but her British sightseeing, her later tour of the Continent, and her

²¹ A number of critics have also examined Fuller's relationship to tourism and anti-tourism. Leonardo Buonomo emphasizes how Fuller "repeatedly expressed aspiration to be a part of the scene, a scene made of people to meet, places to explore, and historical incidents of great import" (31). John Paul Russo also asserts that "Fuller did not fall victim to the 'tourist gaze,'" but instead "stresses the need to see things slowly" (139-40). Taking a somewhat more complex view, Heidi Kolk describes Fuller's "'dialogic' negotiation with travel narrative" and her recognition of "a certain dissonance—between her real experiences and her provisional power as travel correspondent, between her status as leisure traveler and her vicarious participation in the revolution, between her identities as intellectual and as woman" (381, 403).

account of those travels in *Sunny Memories* all participate in and support exactly the kind of travel “along the beaten track” that Fuller critiques. Particularly in the Continental sections of the trip, Stowe’s travel is essentially touristic (Roberson 141-43; Hedrick 250; S. Wright). Like her fellow tourists, Stowe does not seek new and potentially enlightening experiences, but visits sights which are “already imaginatively familiar” in order to “confirm what [she] already believe[s]” (Roberson 143).²² The lack of depth in Stowe’s impressions comes across in one of her concluding discussions of national character. She writes:

I liked the English and the Scotch as well as I could like any thing. And now, I equally like the French. . . . So I regard nations as parts of a great common body, and national differences as necessary to a common humanity.

I thought, when in English society, that it was as perfect and delightful as it could be. There was worth of character, strength of principle, true sincerity, and friendship, charmingly expressed. I have found all these, too, among the French, and besides them, something which charms me the more, because it is peculiar to the French, and of a kind wholly different

²² In contrast, some critics have emphasized the significance of Stowe’s travel and travel writing beyond the merely touristic. Donald Ross, for example, argues that Stowe aimed “to capitalize on the publicity that her trip had created in order to bring together the American and British antislavery movements and mend fences among their factions” (132). While this may be a nobler goal than pure tourism, it still shows a lack of real concern for experiencing the culture of Europe. Instead, Stowe focuses on showcasing herself and using her position to help an American cause. She is touring as much to be seen as to see the sights of Britain. In an even more extreme attempt to recover the value of Stowe’s travel writing, Foster argues that Stowe presented herself in a self-consciously ironic way that “prefigures the multivocalism of Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad* and *A Tramp Abroad*, especially in its use of self-reflexive irony, with both writers exploiting the relationship between a public, representative persona and a more private, individualistic observer” (“Construction” 153-56). While Stowe may have had the ironic view of her position as tourist that Foster describes, it is too subtly (if at all) conveyed in *Sunny Memories*, so that even most modern readers have taken her position at face value. My purpose is neither to defend Stowe’s self-awareness nor to condemn her superficiality. For the purposes of the chronology of travel I am describing, the surface position most clearly avowed by Stowe has greater influence on her readers than whatever private views she might have held.

from any I have ever had an experience of before. There is an iris-like variety and versatility of nature . . . which is very captivating. (II: 406-407)

True to the sunniness her title promises, Stowe finds such national differences “perfect and delightful as . . . could be.” Beyond her enjoyment of regional idiosyncrasies, however, there is little substance to her observations. She is as pleased with varieties of character as any tourist is pleased with sights. For such a tourist, galleries and old buildings may be “delightful” in their minor differences, but little is gained from such observation.

Not surprisingly, Fuller’s and Stowe’s differing emphases on the actual culture and daily life of Europe—in contrast to its guidebook sights—corresponds to their understanding of local languages. As previously noted, Fuller left the United States with an already extensive linguistic education, and her immersion in European society gave her ample opportunity to become fluent in both French and Italian.²³ Indeed, when Fuller first met her future lover Ossoli, he spoke no English, so their growing relationship depended upon her own Italian (see Barolini 27; Murray 315). Fuller criticizes the kind of American tourist Stowe will become when she writes, “the American, on many points, becomes more ignorant for coming abroad, because he attaches some value to his crude impressions and frequent blunders,” adding, “It is necessary to speak the language of these countries and know personally some of their inhabitants in order to form any accurate impressions” (258). For Fuller, speaking the local language is an essential part of worthwhile travel.

²³ According to Durning, Fuller had some difficulty keeping up with French conversation in Paris, but during her residence in Italy, she became fluent in French as well as Italian (68).

In contrast, Stowe had only a limited understanding of foreign languages throughout her 1853 trip to Europe. While Fuller's prior education and dedication to improving her fluency allowed her to enjoy a true residence in Italy, Stowe, despite her fame, could never move deeper into European society than the company of those who knew English. In *Sunny Memories*, as Stowe tours the sights, this language barrier hampers her appreciation for what she is seeing. When the party goes to see the Luther relics, for example, they first have difficulty communicating what they want, and then, when a guide does arrive, she is "a little woman who spoke no English, whom, guide book in hand, we followed" (II: 362). Similarly led by a non-English-speaking guide in the vaults of the Pantheon, Stowe reports, "we were marched to a place where our guide made a long speech about a stone in the floor—very instructive, doubtless, if I had known what it was" (II: 398). Stowe's appreciation for what she tours is inevitably diminished when she cannot understand what she is seeing. Eventually, as the numbers of such monolingual travelers increased, hotels and other businesses of the tourist industry began to compensate for their linguistic limitations. Stowe already reports, "In every hotel of each large city, there is a man who speaks English. The English language is slowly and surely creeping through Europe; already it rivals the universality of the French" (II: 320-21). The problem with such accommodation, however, is that it encourages and supports the growing number of tourists who never learn more than a smattering of the local language. Taylor, like Stowe, arrived in Europe with little foreign language education, but he was forced to learn to communicate abroad. As the century progressed, and the numbers of English-speaking tourists increased, learning the local language became less and less of a necessity.

Another aspect of Fuller's and Stowe's disparate relations to linguistic difference is the role of translation in their travel writing and in their careers. Of all of the writers examined in this study, Fuller has been given by far the most attention as a professional translator. Durning is critical of Fuller's early translation of Goethe's *Tasso*, but finds a "progressive improvement" in her subsequent translations (Durning 103-105, 120). His analysis of this development, particularly of Fuller's realization that translation is more challenging than she might have first thought, suggests that Fuller developed an increasingly nuanced understanding of the nature of translation throughout her career.²⁴ Taking a more theoretical approach, Christina Zwarg uses Fuller's translations to examine "the way in which 'feminist' issues are often enmeshed and perhaps even articulated through the task of the translator" (463). Colleen Glenney Boggs devotes an entire chapter to Fuller's translations, arguing that Fuller "developed a strategy of fragmentation and suture that brings into being an American literature that is domestically and globally transnational—or, we might say, translational" (92). As evocative as arguments of the type made by Boggs and Zwarg can be, they seem somewhat too easily to find in Fuller's work all that is recognized as positive by modern transnational, postcolonial, feminist (and so on) theory, rather than examining Fuller's translations in a more historical context. Nevertheless, Fuller's role as a translator is central to understanding her relationship to Europe.

²⁴ Karen A. English similarly describes how Fuller is "initially mistaken about the ease of translating . . . noncanonical works of conversation and correspondence," but how, over time, she develops a more sophisticated theory of translation in her recognition "that different kinds of writing require different kinds of translation strategies" (133). After Fuller discovers that it requires six months' residence in Italy to become fluent in Italian, her understanding of the difficulties of bilingualism and translation develops even further (English 142).

Karen A. English is alone in devoting much attention to the translations embedded within Fuller's *Tribune* dispatches. She calls Fuller "an interpreter of Italian politics and culture for American newspaper readers" and counts "twenty-seven translated texts" in Fuller's dispatches (143). In contrast to Cooper's practice of leaving foreign language untranslated, Fuller's inclusion of these translations could be read as another aspect of the touristic apparatus encouraging monolingualism. However, in contrast to Taylor, Fuller does not aim to obviate further study of Italian language and culture. Joseph C. Schöpp confirms this difference when he argues that "Fuller regarded translation as more than just 'an act of simple importation,'" and that her translations "were meant to initiate a dialogue between cultures" (32). Further, Durning describes how Fuller desired her readers to learn foreign language, and how "she was eager to acquaint her readers with the proper tools and methods for acquiring their own knowledge of the German language so that they would not have to depend upon translations of its masterpieces" (129). While Taylor clearly intended his *Faust* to be a substitute for the original, Fuller translates documents of the Italian revolution in order to draw her readers into further engagement with Italian politics and culture.

Indeed, wanting more than merely to "initiate a dialogue," Fuller translated documents of the 1848 revolution as part of a call to action. In the winter of 1847-48, she writes, "I earnestly hope some expression of sympathy from my country toward Italy. Take a good chance and do something" (160). The following summer, in one of her last dispatches, Fuller emphasizes her call to action even further by writing, "I see you have meetings, where you speak of the Italians, the Hungarians. I pray you *do something*; let it not end in a mere cry of sentiment" (311). As English argues, "By making her readers

privity (through translation and publication) to the complex flow of historical documents and events marking the political upheavals of the Italian revolution, Fuller draws them into the circle of her personal experience and provides them with perspectives that transcend national boundaries and language barriers” (145). While Taylor’s translations gave readers linguistically picturesque tidbits of European verse for superficial enjoyment and local color, Fuller presents her translations of political documents with a sense of urgency. For example, Fuller introduces her translation of letters “from the Milanese Government . . . to the Germans at large and the countries under the dominion of Austria” by noting that she translates them, “thinking they may not in other form reach America” (217). Fuller sees such documents as politically essential yet ephemeral, and takes advantage of her residence in Italy at such an important historical moment to bring information to her American readers that they otherwise might not receive.

In striking contrast to Fuller, Stowe is unable to understand or translate much of the language of Europe, but she herself has been widely translated. For Stowe, all communication with Europe occurs at a remove. Because of the period’s protocols of female propriety, Stowe does not deliver her own speeches in Britain, and many of the Europeans she meets have read her novel in translation. While touring the Continent, Stowe also relies on her brother to translate much of what she cannot understand. When telling her brother to be careful of avalanches she says, only half in jest, “I could not spare you; first, because I have not learned French enough yet; and next, because I don’t know how to make change” (II: 235).²⁵ Indeed, the men in Stowe’s life act as mediators

²⁵ Stowe’s correlation of linguistic and economic exchange in this comic warning have echoes in Twain’s similar complaints about foreign language and money in *Innocents Abroad*.

throughout the entire tour—not only do they deliver speeches, translate conversations, and broker commercial transactions, but Stowe even allows her brother to speak for her in her own travelogue by including large sections of his journal with minimal alterations (Foster, “Construction” 153-54). An anecdote described by Boggs epitomizes Stowe’s touristic view of European language. As Boggs reports, “on her first trip to Europe, [Stowe] hired a native speaker to instruct her by reading ‘several pages from *Uncle Tom* in French’” (131). Thus, even when she does attempt to learn some of the local language, Stowe misses the opportunity to receive European cultural content at the same time and instead, with a hint of megalomania, listens to a translation of her own novel.

Like Fuller, Stowe also receives her own chapter in Boggs’s study of translation in nineteenth-century American literature, but not for undertaking any of her own translations. Instead, translation lies at the center of a lawsuit Stowe fought shortly before leaving for her tour. In 1852, Stowe sued F. W. Thomas for infringing on her copyright of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* with an unauthorized German translation published in America, Stowe herself having commissioned her own German translation (Boggs 127-29). In claiming that a translation should be subject to the same copyright laws as a reprinting, Stowe’s suit treats a translation as an exact copy of the original. As Boggs has examined in depth, the suit consequently raises the important issue of whether the act of translation requires sufficient creativity and invention to make it the translator’s own intellectual property.

As interesting as these debates may be, Stowe’s varied remarks about translation throughout *Sunny Memories* make it unlikely that she has contemplated it in these terms. For example, as Boggs also notes, the argument for Stowe’s side of the litigation appears

to contradict her praise of Madame Belloc's French translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was published in France. Stowe writes in *Sunny Memories*:

[Madame Belloc's] translation of Uncle Tom has to me all the merit and all the interest of an original composition. In perusing it I enjoy the pleasure of reading the story with scarce any consciousness of its ever having been mine. (II: 395)

Comparing this statement with the rationale of the lawsuit, Boggs argues that “Stowe distinguishes between translation as an international and an intranational practice” (131).²⁶ Although Boggs's subsequent analysis of the lawsuit provides a fascinating account of different contemporary views of translation, copyright, and authorship, her conclusion is not entirely convincing because it ignores the more obvious financial motive for Stowe's apparent double standard—the desire to secure as much royalty money as possible. Moreover, *Sunny Memories* contains yet another seemingly contradictory statement about translation:

Hamlet in French—just think of it. One never feels the national difference so much as in thinking of Shakespeare in French! Madame de Stael says of translation, that music written for one instrument cannot be played upon another. (II: 279)

While Stowe implies that the unauthorized German translation of *Uncle Tom* is an exact copy, and calls the French translation an original composition, she suggests here that a translation of Shakespeare should not even be attempted. To me, the most likely explanation for such inconsistency is that Stowe has not theorized the practice of translation much at all, and so her ideas about what it entails are subordinate in any given statement to other social, cultural, or economic factors. In the case of Stowe's lawsuit,

²⁶ Boggs further explains, “In international contexts, [Stowe] thinks of translation as a new composition, yet wishes for translation within the American context to be an exact copy of the original” (131).

treating a translation as its own work hurts her financially, so she wants it covered under her own copyright. When complimenting Belloc's French translation, Stowe is being gracious to a woman who has hosted her in Paris while praising a work that can only increase her fame in a country where there is no possibility of holding a copyright. Because Stowe accedes to Shakespeare's conventional status as an icon of English literature, her passing remarks on *Hamlet* in French fall into the "translator, traitor" school. It is clear that Stowe has not thought enough about the nature of translation to form any firm opinions about it. By extension, it is likely that she willingly accepts her mediated involvement in European society because she has not fully considered what might be lost in such a translation.

For all that Fuller and Stowe have in common—their interest in politics, their gender, their prominence as writers, and the closeness of their trips chronologically—a comparison of the roles that foreign language and translation play in their European travel writing illustrates how the general shift in American travel was also occurring in the travel of famed American authors. Like her cosmopolitan literary predecessors, Fuller spoke many foreign languages, and although she translated extensively to bring foreign literature and philosophy to American readers, she also demonstrated a clear desire for those readers to learn the original languages. Stowe's own writing was already extensively translated and reprinted, so she enjoyed greater fame upon her arrival in Europe than any of her American predecessors. But Stowe did not speak the languages of Europe, and so she relied upon interpreters while on the Continent. As technology made travel to Europe more accessible to Americans outside of the elite intellectual and wealthy classes, going abroad became less about participating in the cultural life of

Europe, with the knowledge of foreign languages such participation entailed. Despite her fame and access to European society, Stowe, like many other American travelers at mid-century, focused on seeing the sights along a beaten track—insulated from the necessity of communicating across language barriers and hence removed from any real cultural involvement. Thus, while writers such as Cooper and Irving, or Ben Franklin and Thomas Paine before them, were once the most cosmopolitan of American travelers, Stowe demonstrates how the decreased cultural depth of tourism—initiated by middle-class Americans with less access to wealth, education, and status—began to affect how even the more famed American authors approached their time abroad. As this new mode of touring grew in prominence, even Melville was not immune to its influence.

Melville on Tour

Before beginning his literary career, Melville traveled the world as a sailor, and the works inspired by those years depict travel as an occupation rather than a pastime. In 1856, however, Melville visited Europe and the Levant for a more touristic purpose. Although this study has previously drawn a clear distinction between travel to Europe and to parts of the non-Western world, Melville's tour of the Holy Land is a fitting conclusion to this chapter for two reasons. First, because Melville had always afforded "savage" languages a degree of cosmopolitan respect—incorporating Polynesian words in his texts in the same way that Cooper included French—a change in his treatment of any language marks a personal shift in the treatment of linguistic difference, a departure from the same kind of cosmopolitan appreciation with which Cooper and his contemporaries viewed European languages. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the inclusion of the Levant in a sightseeing tour bespeaks the general expansion of touristic

travel beyond Europe, foreshadowing the conflation of all linguistic difference by century's end. In this way, *Clarel* is an obvious precursor to Twain's *Innocents Abroad*. The once essential distinction between Western and non-Western language will become far less important in the following discussions.

In his introduction to Melville's journal of the trip, Howard C. Horsford contends that the author's visit to the Levant is much like those of "hundreds of accounts written by travelers," and that Melville's subsequent movements in Europe "followed tracks beaten wide and deep by English and American tourists" (10).²⁷ Melville's journal entry about his visit to Frankfurt is indicative of his largely touristic itinerary: "After dinner Smythe invited us to ride about town.—Goethe's statue. Faust's. Cathedral. Luther's preaching place. River side. Park. Jews quarter. Rothschilds home. &c &c &c" (252-53). It is important to note that these jottings differ from the other works examined here in that they are not finished and published prose. They are what Franklin Walker calls "the sort of account kept by a writer who intends to draw on it later for literary work," including primarily "day-by-day items of observation or sentences of reflection on these observations" (111). Still, Melville's abbreviated descriptions indicate a mode of travel primarily concerned with seeing the notable sights, checking off boxes in the tourist's typical itinerary. While Laurie Robertson-Lorant praises Melville's journal as having nearly "the depth and intensity of his best prose fiction" (13), in conjunction with *Clarel*,

²⁷ Other critics seek to distinguish Melville's travel from the usual mode of tourism. For example, Vincent Kenny insists that Melville's "religious pilgrimage" distinguishes itself from the superficiality of most travelers of the period (*Herman* 45). However, Kenny also notes that "Melville became more the tourist after [his] disheartening experience" in the Holy Land ("Clarel" 377).

it exemplifies a final shift in Melville's writing from an engagement with multilingualism to the circumvention of linguistic difference.

In spite of Redburn's realization that he can see more of the world at the Liverpool docks than by visiting the sights of England, Melville's own trip is full of both guides and guidebooks. Horsford notes that, "like most English and American tourists, [Melville] almost unquestionably carried a good supply of the various *Handbooks for Travellers* issued by John Murray of London" (10). Melville also frequently reports his use of a personal guide, including while in Constantinople (78), Smyrna (106), Jerusalem (124-25), Rome (212), and Venice (228). Martyn Smith, too, notes the discrepancy between Melville's own experience with guidebooks and that of his character Redburn, arguing that, "[t]raveling without the advantage of unlimited funds, [Melville] clearly understood the utility of these inexpensive guidebooks" (34). In Constantinople, Melville emphasizes this economic aspect of touristic travel when he notes, "Breakfast at 10 A.M. Took guide (\$1.25 per day) and started a tour" (79). As part of the middle class to which travel was becoming increasingly accessible, Melville cannot engage in the kind of extended stay in society enjoyed by Cooper. Instead, he must use the convenience of guided travel to maximize what he can see and do on a limited budget.

In addition to his typically touristic reliance on guides, the quality of Melville's travel is also affected by the new technologies Fuller observed. For example, at the beginning of January 1857, Melville complains, "It racks me, that I can only spend one day in Cairo, owing to the steamer," and he notes shortly after, "Steamer for Jaffa will not sail till tomorrow, so that I am wearied to death with two days in Alexandria which might have been delightfully spent in Cairo" (114). Although Melville would like to

follow his own itinerary according to his intellectual pursuits, he is forced to conform to the apparatuses of tourism. Melville similarly describes how the railroad, another technology of more convenient tourism, has the potential for further drawing the traveler out of any real engagement with his destination. Melville notes in his descriptions of the Cairo railroad, “From the car (1st class) you seem in England. All else Egypt” (122). Those who can afford to travel with the most luxury and convenience also remove themselves from any genuine experience of the foreign. Melville thus is both an observer and a participant in the increasingly touristic nature of American travel.

True to his presentation of foreign language in earlier works, however, Melville still demonstrates an interest in the experience of multilingualism, even if new technology and the availability of English-speaking guides lessen the impact of foreign language on the traveler. At first, Melville seems overwhelmed by the multiplicity of languages he hears at a steamer landing in Greece. As Kim Fortuny insightfully observes, “Diversity and dilapidation come hand in hand in the paragraphs, and Melville’s attraction to the first never seems tempered by his discomfort with the latter” (4). Melville describes: “Great uproar of the porters & contention for luggage. Imagine an immense accumulation of the rags of all nations, & all colors rained down on a dense mob all struggling for huge bales & bundles of rags, gesturing with all gestures & wrangling in all tongues” (73). With each person struggling with the logistics of travel, the multiplicity of languages and nationalities leads to chaos, and it is impossible to derive anything but further confusion from the hubbub.

Melville describes a similar experience in Constantinople:

Great crowds of all nations—money changers—*coins of all nations circulate*—Placards in four or five languages; [(Turkish, French, Greek,

Armenian) Lottery.] advertisements of boats the same. *You feel you are among the nations.* Great curse that of Babel; not being able to talk to a fellow being, &c.—Have to beware of your pockets. (84-85, brackets in original)

Once again, Melville couples linguistic difference with monetary exchange as the currency of one economic system is translated into another. In this multinational environment, there is no single accepted currency, but all parties must struggle to make different systems commensurable as “coins of all nations circulate.” Likewise, vendors use multiple languages to advertise what may be bought. Melville seems to relish the internationalism of the scene, but, while his respect of native language in *Typee* followed Cooper in its valuation of linguistic difference, Melville wishes here, as he imagines in *Redburn*, that the “curse of Babel be revoked.” Still, he does not, like Twain’s exaggerated American persona, shun the foreign altogether. Melville still recognizes the value of communication and exchange with other cultures, longing for a universal language that would make such communication less problematic. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize, as discussed in the Introduction, that this extreme form of cosmopolitanism has a tendency to slide into imperialistic coercion, forcing seemingly “inferior” cultures to lose their own sense of identity as they join a universal(ly Western) brotherhood. Moreover, Melville’s yearning for the global fellowship a universal language would provide is undercut by his apparent fear of theft. Just as the various lottery signs invite all nationalities to gamble their money away, the scene of international exchange becomes one of foreign threat as the confusion of multilingualism makes travelers easy marks for pickpockets.²⁸

²⁸ In this sense, the scene in Greece bears a marked resemblance to *The Confidence-Man*, the manuscript of which Melville had carried to London on the first leg of his journey,

The journal contains a number of such passages emphasizing the multilingualism of travel and the potential chaos of international exchange. Years later, however, when Melville used the impressions of his 1856-57 trip as inspiration for the epic poem *Clarel* (1876), much of this multilingualism was effaced. As Brian Yothers describes, Melville shaped the raw material of his journal into “a massive narrative poem” that “struggles to achieve a truthful reconstruction of the Holy Land precisely by using the latitude provided by fiction and poetry” (*Romance* 111). The majority of *Clarel* comprises the characters’ inner monologs and philosophical discussions, and those who have examined it in depth accordingly focus on the nature and possibility of religious belief instead of reading *Clarel* as a kind of travelogue. Vincent Kenny argues that *Clarel*’s “journey through the Holy Land is to be his initiation into the awful mystery of tragic existence” (*Herman* 71), and William Potter calls the work “nothing less than a hugely conceived study of the very nature of all belief” (xiii).²⁹ In contrast to more pedestrian works of travel literature (no pun intended), *Clarel* has a complex relationship to its place. On the one hand, as numerous critics have pointed out, the profound significance of the Holy Land inevitably shapes the philosophical content of the work, and Melville’s own

and which was published in both New York and London while he was in Italy (Horsford 4-13).

²⁹ Focusing on the centrality of philosophical discussion, Buell calls *Clarel* “a semi-omnisciently orchestrated dialogue among contending participant-observers” (“Poet” 146). Robert Milder also sees the work as “Melville’s attempt to sift the range of intellectual and emotional responses to the later nineteenth-century crisis of belief” (195). Stan Goldman represents an even more specifically religious reading in his discussion of what he calls Melville’s “‘protest theism’: a paradoxical combination and coalescence of both protest and love based on the need that the unsatisfied heart has for God” (4).

pilgrimage occurred at a moment of personal turmoil that influenced his impressions of the place (see Jonik 73; Kenny, *Herman* 221; Yothers, *Romance* 110). On the other hand, what Harvey calls the “[e]xceptionally cosmopolitan . . . pilgrim group” fosters a variety of intellectual issues that transcend the locality of their pilgrimage (134).³⁰ *Clarel* cannot be ignored in a study of Melville’s engagement with travel, although the issues I will examine here admittedly comprise only a small fraction of the poem’s depth.

To some extent, *Clarel* does continue Melville’s previous treatment of the nature of travel. At first, as in *Redburn*, Melville sets up a contrast between the youthful dreams inspired by books and the reality of actual travel. In the opening canto, Clarel muses, “Needs be my soul, / Purged by the desert’s subtle air / From bookish vapors” (I.1.66-68). Further comparing the reality of seeing the Levant to what he has read, Clarel reflects: “The books, the books not all have told” (I.1.84). This contrast between traveling and reading about foreign lands is accompanied by what Shirley M. Dettlaff calls the “Pilgrim/Tourist dichotomy” (201). According to Dettlaff, Melville contrasts “the Hebraic pilgrim, who realizes that the journey is a spiritual one like those taken by the great saints” with “the sightseeing trip taken by a Hellenic tourist,” and, as Dettlaff

³⁰ Several others have likewise emphasized *Clarel*’s cosmopolitanism. Dennis Berthold argues that “*Clarel* is not just about the author’s experiences, American politics, or Palestine; rather, it is a cosmopolitan epic whose manifold ideologies demand a transnational perspective” (232). Wyn Kelley argues that “*Clarel* provides a rich canvas of teeming human activity, within which people from every conceivable region, religious background, and racial and cultural identity converge at the world’s most cosmopolitan city, lending it the diversity of their many voices and opinions” (*Herman* 152). For Amy Kaplan, Melville depicts in *Clarel* a “polyglot world” that “represents an extraordinary interaction of peoples and cultures as they circulate through cities of the Levant” (“Transnational” 51). As the following reading will demonstrate, however, this potential multilingualism may be implied, but it is not depicted in the same way as the foreign languages in Melville’s earlier works.

argues, Clarel's "journey into the desert begins as the pseudo-quest of a mere traveler, since he still does not understand the nature of the true pilgrimage" (201, 210). The contrasts between tourist and pilgrim and between books and reality come into focus in Clarel's encounter with the tract dispenser Nehemiah. On the surface, "the elder" man seems to inspire Clarel to become a religious pilgrim instead of a touristic and superficial traveler:

A strain
Of trouble seamed the elder brow:
"A pilgrim art thou? pilgrim thou?"
Words simple, which in Clarel bred
More than the simple saint divined;
And, thinking of vocation fled,
Himself he asked: or do I rave,
Or have I left now far behind
The student of the sacred lore?
Direct he then this answer gave:
"I am a traveler—no more." (I.9.18-28)

In his reflections and his response, Clarel renounces the identity (shared with Redburn) of a youthful student of books traveling to see his dreams made real. The object of Clarel's study will become the land itself rather than the "sacred lore" he has read about it.

If Nehemiah is Clarel's model of a pilgrim, however, he is an exemplar of religious and psychological depth but not of linguistic diversity. Nehemiah is one in a series of Americans that Clarel meets in the Holy Land, coming from "[h]is home by Narragansett's marge" (I.8.5). Thus the meeting represents not an encounter with the foreign but a displaced form of the domestic, much like the expatriate communities traveling Americans found in increasing numbers toward the end of the century. Just as Nehemiah addresses Clarel in unproblematically understandable English, Melville associates his tracts with the curse of Babel's reversal: "His tracts all fluttering like

tongues / The fire-flakes of the Pentecost” (I.8.42-43). When the apostles began speaking in tongues, their speech was both the polyglot babble described by Melville in his journal and a model of universal comprehensibility. Nehemiah represents this transcendence of linguistic difference. The journal’s description of a similar tract dispenser is even more cynical: “The old Connecticut man wandering about with tracts &c — knew not the language — hopelessness of it — his lonely batchelor rooms [sic]” (142-43). Here, the Pentecostal hope of the curse of Babel’s reversal is undercut by the Connecticut man’s linguistic ignorance (see Horsford’s footnote 142-43n8). Although the tract dispenser’s religious propaganda may aim to overcome the curse of Babel, his ignorance of the local language prevents him from achieving a more practical level of understanding. He is a hopelessly lonely figure, cut off from real intercourse with his fellow men.

Clarel’s early encounter with the American Nehemiah is part of a larger trend throughout the work. In sharp contrast to the experiences of Tommo on Nukuhiva, Clarel meets more fellow pilgrims and travelers than locals, and, consequently, he has little need to understand languages other than English. Lawrence Buell emphasizes *Clarel’s* “medley of culturally disparate individuals,” but he admits that “America is disproportionately represented, most of the featured pilgrims being American expatriates or wanderers” (“Question” 230). In addition to Clarel and Nehemiah, two other central characters, Rolfe and Vine, are American. Derwent, Mortmain, and Glaucon are also visitors to the Holy Land, although they are from Europe. When the pilgrims are joined by three others after leaving Mar Saba, one of them, Ungar, is again an American. Tim Wood goes so far as to argue that the setting of *Clarel* “obscures an underlying American geography,” which he further describes as the “Puritan transplantation of a biblical

landscape” (86). Even critics who emphasize the diversity of Melville’s characters focus on extra-national characteristics such as religious belief (Potter 18), or, even more extremely, the work’s “catalogue of depersonalizations in which the landscape presses on characters and effaces boundaries of the individual and the human” (Jonik 72). The pilgrims may be cosmopolitan, but the effect of this diversity is not the broadening of Clarel’s cultural horizons but the discussion’s removal to a level beyond national difference. While Tommo found himself to be the rare foreigner among native Polynesians, Clarel remains in a substantial company of countrymen, and the vast majority of people he meets are travelers rather than locals.

The various nationalities represented by Clarel’s party could have provided an opportunity for multilingualism, but all conversation occurs unproblematically in English. While *Typee* and *Omoo* are interspersed with Polynesian in an effort to represent the multilingualism of the South Pacific, *Clarel*, despite the Babelian confusion Melville describes in his journal, contains only a smattering of foreign words. The few examples of such occurrences, notable for their rarity, include “‘*Resurget*’—faintly Derwent there. / ‘*In pace*’—Vine” (II.39.68-69); “ELOI LAMA SABACHTHANI” (III.7.1); and “Vented a resonant, ‘*Bismillah!*’ / Strange answer which pealed from on high— / ‘*Dies iræ, dies illa!*’” (III.19.171-73). Even these examples are all religious and ceremonial language, not the every-day foreign language that would indicate any real engagement with the present life of the Holy Land. When the “New-Comer” Don Hannibal Rohon Del Aquaviva appears late in the poem, his interspersed and easily understood Spanish—which includes “Hidalgos” (IV.19.12), “*reformado*” (IV.19.42), and “Good, excellenza—excellent!” (IV.19.151)—is still a language of the New World (and Western Europe) and

not of the ancient Near East that Clarel is visiting. Just as often, the narration states that something is either read or heard in a foreign language, but little of the experience of linguistic diversity is conveyed to the reader. One such example is the description of the “Paynim” arms held in Mar Saba:

Upon one serpent-curving blade
Love-motto beamed from Antar’s rhyme
In Arabic. A second said
(A scimiter the Turk had made,
And likely, it had clove a skull)
IN NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL!
A third was given suspended place,
And as in salutation waved,
And in old Greek was finely graded
With this: HAIL, MARY, FULL OF GRACE! (III.12.15-24)

These inscriptions suggest the diverse linguistic history of the region, but their multilingualism is denoted rather than performed. All translations are given directly and unproblematically, as if all were written in one universal tongue. Thus, while Melville occasionally describes the Levant as polyglot, he does not portray that multilingualism directly.

Indeed, while *Typee* demonstrates a genuine attempt to depict the complex linguistic situation on Nukuhiva, all of *Clarel* is essentially a translation—not only of the polyglot Levant into English, but of natural speech into verse. Most readings of *Clarel* spend some time examining the poem’s Hudibrastic, and often sing-song, prosody. Cody Marrs argues that “Melville’s crooked sentences, meters, and rhymes continually draw attention to the poem’s form” (111). Similarly noting the obtrusiveness of Melville’s extremely constricting verse form, Robert Milder calls the language of *Clarel* “cadences

removed at once from natural speech and mellifluous epic speech” (195).³¹ The constraints of Melville’s prosodic choices do not necessarily lead to an inferior product, of course. Samuel Otter, defending Melville against the more negative readings of his verse, argues that *Clarel’s* “meter and syntax often convey a divided spiritual, political, and sexual condition” (“How” 473). For my purposes, the important point is not what artistic or philosophical merits Melville’s metrical choices may have, but simply that *Clarel’s* language is doubly removed from the potential linguistic verisimilitude of the novel or the travelogue genres: not only is it verse rather than prose, but its particular prosody is less natural than most verse forms. In essence, Melville translates all language into this constricting doggerel.

Occasionally, when the main narration introduces a character’s history, the fact of *Clarel’s* pervasive intralingual translation becomes even more apparent. One such example is the preface to Nehemiah’s account of Nathan:

No willing haste
The mentor showed; awhile he fed
On anxious thoughts; then grievously
The story gave—a tangled thread,
Which, cleared from snarl and ordered so,
Follows transferred, with interflow
Of much Nehemiah scarce might add. (I.16.198-204)

³¹ Bryan Short gives an excellent explanation of why tetrameter sounds more sing-song than pentameter. He takes Northrop Frye’s assertion that “English epic verse naturally tends to a four-beat line” and argues that “the longer line of the English epic tradition—from alliterative to blank verse—permits four accentual stresses to appear in a line less frequently than every other syllable, thus providing a hedge against strict metrics” (“Form” 559-60). Conversely, Melville’s tetrameter, though not unique among other long poems, is more obtrusively metrical than the blank verse of Shakespeare or Milton, and its frequent rhyme takes the language even further away from natural speech.

Just as Nehemiah must transfer his own thoughts into his story, the “tangled thread” of his narrative is ostensibly converted into the regular verse of the poem. The story of “Arculf and Adamnan” is similarly introduced: “But let the page / The narrator’s rambling way forget, / And make to run in even flow / His interrupted tale” (I.34.75-78). Once again, while the original narrative of these stories is irregular and inflected, the reader gets only the smooth and unblemished verse translation. A final example is the introduction to Agath’s backstory:

But, more of clearness to confer—
Less dimly to express the thing
Rude outlined by this mariner,
License is claimed in rendering;
And tones he felt but scarce might give,
The verse essays to interweave. (IV.3.229-34)

The verse translation orders what was once chaotic, while simultaneously professing to reveal what was meant but not fully expressed. In all of these examples, the verisimilitude and polyglotism that characterize a novel (as well as a travel narrative) are subsumed into the regularity of Melville’s verse. Just as the pilgrims are traveling to behold religious history and not to experience local culture, the poem is not concerned with the everyday speech or the reality of present life in the Levant. Rather, the stories of the characters and the setting of the work are means to the end of presenting philosophical debates occurring on a level above language. Accordingly, while Melville as “pilgrim” may be less superficial than his touristic counterparts, he is equally uninterested in experiencing the real life of the places he visits.

The character of the dragoman, the party’s guide, is one area where the pilgrims’ sheltering from linguistic difference can be directly connected to the changing nature of travel. According to Ada Lonni, the dragoman in nineteenth-century Jerusalem was the

ultimate cultural mediator, one who “interprets, translates, and transposes words and ideas from one language to another, from one culture to another” (42). Yet this role changed with the emergence of mass tourism in the Holy Land, particularly as organized by Thomas Cook:

[E]verything would be easier: the travelers—whether tourists, pilgrims or scholars—were under protection, travelling without much risk, with a minimum of inconvenience. But also without any chance of fully experiencing the local atmosphere and its peculiarities. (Lonni 46)

Lonni describes how, in the wake of these changes, the dragoman was converted into a mere tour guide as Cook’s standardization of the tourists’ experience obviated the responsibilities of his previous position as cultural mediator (46-47). The dragoman’s new role is suggested by Melville’s depiction of the Druze’s isolation from the other characters: “Exiled, cut off, in friendless state, / The Druze maintained an air sedate; / Without the sacrifice of pride, / Sagacious still he earned his bread” (II.7.21-24). He may play an essential role for Clarel and his fellow pilgrims, but he does so quietly and without calling attention to the necessity of his office. After all, the logistics of the tour are far from the central concern of the poem. Clarel’s experience may not have the extreme standardization of Twain’s, but the limited attention given to what would have been the Druze’s traditional role of translator forecasts the lack of cultural exchange that will result from the convenience of modern travel.

Clarel thus serves as an interesting transitional example between the main body of Melville’s work and the representations of tourism found in, and largely espoused by, the travel writings of Mark Twain. It is easy to claim that Melville was more deeply concerned with philosophy and spirituality than Twain, but this greater philosophical depth does not continue the profound attention to linguistic and cultural diversity found

in Melville's earlier travel writings. Indeed, despite its setting and premise, *Clarel* is not so much about visiting the Holy Land as it is about the Holy Land's failure to provide the religious and ontological answers that Clarel and Melville both seek. Melville's travel in the Holy Land may differ drastically from Twain's in this philosophical profundity, but the monolingual expatriate community that Clarel finds there prefigures the travel and travel writing that will come to dominate in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The four authors examined in this chapter illustrate the many changes in American travel to Europe and the extension of European modes of touring beyond the continent. Although Bayard Taylor's idea of travel derives from his predecessors, genteel and cosmopolitan figures like Cooper who spoke the languages of Europe and moved in society, Taylor was unable to achieve those ideals. The apparatuses of tourism were not so developed in the mid-1840s that Taylor could avoid learning new languages entirely, but *Views A-Foot* expands the transformation Taylor was already experiencing by encouraging future travelers to seek further linguistic isolation. Fuller's inarguable cosmopolitanism demonstrates that such changes in travel were neither total nor immediate, but a comparison of her *Tribune* dispatches to Stowe's *Sunny Memories* further illustrates the rise of tourism, demonstrating how the experiences of literary figures also became increasingly mediated, even as Europe's valuation of American culture rose. Although Melville remained critical of the growing superficiality epitomized by both Taylor and Stowe in his fictional retelling of his earlier experiences as a merchant sailor, when he visited Europe and the Levant later in life, he too was influenced by the increasingly touristic nature of American travel.

Thus Melville, like Taylor and Stowe, and even Fuller to a lesser extent, demonstrates the gradual extension of superficial, touristic travel into the formerly cosmopolitan literary sphere. The lack of attention to local language and culture—which began, for travelers like Bayard Taylor, with an unavoidable lack of capital, education, and status—developed from an effect of the democratization of European travel into an ideological preference. As travelogues like *Views A-Foot* and *Sunny Memories* fixed the limited cultural experiences of their authors as a model to be followed, future travelers were not only less able to move in society as did Franklin or Cooper, but less interested in doing so. The reason for European travel had shifted, and rather than a mind-broadening means of exposure to different languages and cultures, it became an empty commodity, stripped of all engagement with meaningful cultural difference. Indeed, as the writings of Twain and James will demonstrate, European language and culture seemed no more valuable to many late-nineteenth-century Americans than the cannibal cultures of the South Seas.

CHAPTER 5
MARK TWAIN, MASS TOURISM, AND AMERICAN NATIONALISM

After the Civil War, the increased convenience and superficiality of European travel developed into a full-blown age of tourism.¹ In the 1840s and 50s, travelers like Bayard Taylor, Margaret Fuller, and Herman Melville had either observed with scorn or taken advantage of the new technologies of travel that streamlined Americans' movement through Europe, shortening trips, lowering expenses, and decreasing the traveler's engagement with anything resembling local culture or society. In the decades after the Civil War, these technologies defined American travel abroad even more than before. Trains and steamers allowed for faster travel from point to point, eliminating all substantial engagement with the real life occurring between. At the same time, a growing network of English-speaking guides and couriers obviated interaction with people outside of the tourist industry, making it unnecessary to learn the local language. In the last decades of the century, developments like the Kodak camera and American Express travelers checks streamlined travel and its documentation even further (F. Walker 25).² And for many American tourists, less difficulty meant less effort, and ultimately, less engagement with foreign culture and society.

¹ As Jeffrey Alan Melton describes it, "Americans were 'on the move' in unprecedented numbers For the first time in history, tourism was beginning to become the norm for a significantly broader segment of the population" (17). Foster Rhea Dulles also summarizes the rise of this new age of tourism: "In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a series of developments made travel more comfortable, and at least relatively less expensive. There were faster steamships, improved means of transportation on the continent, and new tourist services smoothing the way for bewildered Americans faced with unfamiliar customs and unintelligible languages" (102).

² James Buzard also highlights the economic aspect of tourism, noting the importance of "refinements made in instruments of finance, enabling tourists to change currency and replenish their purses while on tour" (79).

In his study of the tourist phenomenon, Dean MacCannell emphasizes the inauthenticity of the tourist experience and argues that tourists, unlike travelers, are commonly “reproached for being satisfied with superficial experiences of other peoples and other places” (10). While the divide between tourists and anti-tourists is never straightforward—with most travelers at least attempting to differentiate themselves from the superficial masses—by the end of the nineteenth-century, American travel had attained a degree of superficiality, speed, and emphasis on consumer culture that had never before been reached.³ As Cushing Strout has put it, rather than traveling for “truth or beauty,” Americans were going abroad for less elevated reasons including “pleasure, health, novelty, social prestige, or escape from the cares of dull routine” (111). The cachet of European travel remained a constant motivator, but while earlier travelers gained that cultural capital by experiencing European life and society, tourism’s goal became the distinction of *having seen* Europe, with an increased emphasis on sight rather than on understanding (Cronin, *Across* 118).

However amorphous the designation of “tourist” might be, there is little doubt that the characteristics of the late-nineteenth-century American abroad are epitomized in the travel writing of Mark Twain. Twain captures the essence of the American tourist

³ Buzard explains how the word “tourist” gradually changed from a straightforward synonym for traveler into a negative distinction, indicating one who “is the dupe of fashion, following blindly where authentic travellers have gone with open eyes and free spirits” (1). However, both tourists and anti-tourists shared the common “aim of making the tour pay in cultural capital accepted by home society” (197). Terry Caesar also cautions against being overly concerned with “locating . . . the precise moment when tourism can be distinguished from travel” (25). Although disparaging comments about American tourists “multiplied, often with added harshness, as American access to Europe became easier in the last third of the century” (Buzard 217), such disparagements were nothing new, and “[t]he ‘ugly American’ syndrome is virtually coterminous with the American travel text’s very origins” (Caesar 38).

through a combination of his fellow traveling companions and his own narrative persona.⁴ Although Twain often satirizes the typical traveling American, continuing the same tradition as Cooper's critique of Steadfast Dodge in *Homeward Bound* (see Chapter One), his semi-fictional travelogues celebrate other aspects of the American "innocent" abroad. Both Cooper and Twain critique pretention without substance. But instead of Cooper's nuanced appreciation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of both American and European culture, Twain champions a recourse to American simplicity. Similarly, Twain's comic misuse of foreign language echoes Dodge's linguistic foibles. But while Cooper demonstrates a nuanced understanding of linguistic difference, Twain presents translation as either doomed to failure or too easily made literal and transparent, the same attitude that characterizes the views of "savage" languages in imperialist discourse.

Moreover, Twain had a lifelong obsession with money and speculation (Dolmetsch 213), and he blurred the line between literature and commodity by publishing his travelogues as subscription books (Cook 151-52). This capitalistic emphasis illustrates another aspect of the tourist age: the commodification of travel empties the foreign of any real meaning, replacing previously mind- and character-altering experiences with souvenirs and snapshots.⁵ Just as what Karl Marx identifies as "a

⁴ As Melton points out, "For readers in the late nineteenth century, Mark Twain was first and foremost a travel writer instead of a novelist," and both "*The Innocents Abroad* and *A Tramp Abroad* make ideal travel-book companions, both books capturing the vagaries of the Tourist Age" (1, 59).

⁵ G. Llewellyn Watson and Joseph P. Kopachevsky, in their study of the commoditization of tourism, examine how "cheap, . . . mass-produced" souvenirs "symbolize the tourists' experience" (290).

fetishism of . . . commodities” severs the connection between “the commodity-form” and “the physical nature of the commodity and the material [*dinglich*] relations arising out of this” (164), such mass-produced representations of experience empty any meaning from the experience itself. Although Twain is not entirely earnest in the presentation of these touristic values, his satire is sufficiently open-ended so that it invites the reader to agree with many of the views he might seem to critique. This chapter will argue that, without a clear condemnation of touristic superficiality, Twain turns cultural difference into an empty sign resembling Marx’s commodity fetish.

In his three accounts of foreign travel, *Innocents Abroad*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Following the Equator*, Twain infuses the travelogue genre with the characteristics of mass tourism. Although his eventual status of literary celebrity and his extensive international travel gave Twain the opportunity to pursue the high-brow European experience enjoyed by Cooper—an experience eagerly, if only partially, emulated by later expatriate figures such as Henry James—Twain maintains the qualities of low-brow, popular literature in his accounts, appealing to the common American rather than to the literary elite. Furthermore, instead of learning European language, Twain suggests that the foreign is often not worth understanding. When he does attempt a translation, his mechanical and overly literal transference of meaning turns linguistic difference into absurd gibberish. As a result, Twain’s works embrace tourism in both content and form, denouncing the once-admired culture of Europe in favor of the tourist’s bric-a-brac of superficial impressions and asserting a nationalistic and exclusive preference for American culture and language.

Mark Twain's Enshrined Innocence

Twain's first published travelogue, *Innocents Abroad* (1869), offers a perfect illustration of the changes in European travel after the Civil War. Its subject is the steamship *Quaker City*'s 1867 tour of Europe and the Holy Land, which thanks in no small part to its immortalization in *Innocents Abroad*, is widely considered to be both the beginning and the archetype of the tourist boom.⁶ Indeed, the *Quaker City* excursion was "the first luxury cruise" (Ganzel 6). *Innocents Abroad* was also an innovation in the genre of travel literature, a satirical hybrid that is less reverent than its more serious predecessors, but whose humorous descriptions are also too earnest to be written off as pure mockery.⁷

Not only does Twain's book mark the birth of the tourist age, but, as several studies of Twain's publishing practices help demonstrate, it also contributes to the rise of mass culture more generally. In her examination of how *Innocents Abroad* was shaped by its publication as a subscription book, Nancy Cook describes Twain's publisher's emphasis on "what 'sells'" and his instructions "not that Mark Twain *write* a book but that he '*make*' one," resulting in "a process of compilation and revamping, even commanding material, rather than one of composing" (153-54). This attitude, and the

⁶ As Jeffrey Steinbrink argues, the voyage "not only signaled the beginning of middle-class American tourism but also gave rise to a book in which even the present-day American tourist can recognize something of himself" (284).

⁷ Franklin R. Rogers, for example, describes how Twain went beyond the typical conventions of burlesque travel literature that he had employed in an earlier series of letters from Hawaii to the *Alta California* newspaper by shaping those "conventions to his own artistic purposes" (38). Others have noted how the book skillfully combines the genre of travel literature with journalism, autobiography, and even fiction (Canby 90; Cook 170; Ganzel 68; H. Smith 22).

market for subscription books that encouraged it, made the volume more like a commodity than a high-brow work of art. Twain's decision to publish all his travelogues as subscription books demonstrates his abiding interest in popular literature and his emphasis on the conventional attitudes that sold best in the literary marketplace. Richard S. Lowry goes so far as to connect this low-brow aesthetic to tourism itself, calling Twain's artistic values "an aesthetics of mass culture, an aesthetics potentially outside the realm of taste, dramatized by the blissfully ignorant tourist vandalizing the hierarchies of culture" (25). While Bayard Taylor's travel writings aspired to the older model of cosmopolitan, literary travel, even as they served as guidebooks for the rising numbers of American tourists, Twain's *Innocents Abroad* is avowedly touristic through and through.

One thing that separated the *Quaker City* pleasure cruise from the extended tours of earlier travelers was its ambitious itinerary. This was no residence in European society but a comprehensively scheduled tour of all of the Old World's obligatory sights.⁸

Although the *Quaker City* cruise was a luxury only available to the very wealthy (or famous), its passengers did not enjoy the relaxed Grand Tour of their earlier counterparts. The itinerary of exciting places that opens the book is so extensive that, even though the cruise is to last several months, the party will spend no more than several days in most places. In fact, the phrase "a stay of one or two days" is repeated almost like a refrain

⁸ As Lawrence I. Berkove notes, "Wherever the Americans went, they had to cope with the frustration of 'doing' a place on a tight schedule" (192). Twain summarizes the appeal this program had for the *Quaker City* passengers: "Paris, England, Scotland, Switzerland, Italy—Garibaldi! The Grecian archipelago! Vesuvius! Constantinople! Smyrna! The Holy Land! Egypt and "our friends the Bermudians"! People in Europe desiring to join the Excursion—contagious sickness to be avoided—boating at the expense of the ship—physician on board—the circuit of the globe to be made if the passengers unanimously desired it" (23).

throughout the program, emphasizing that the pilgrims will arrive at each location, check off the main sights in their guidebooks, and then be quickly shuttled along to the next point of interest.

Another feature of a luxury cruise is that travelers need not bother themselves with the small details of navigating the culture and customs of each place they visit. As the excursion's program states, "The ship will at all times be a home, where the excursionists, if sick, will be surrounded by kind friends, and have all possible comfort and sympathy," and "[p]assengers can remain on board of the steamer, at all ports, if they desire, without additional expense" (22-23). A vetturino lessens the need for negotiating the local language to procure food and lodgings, but a pleasure cruise makes it unnecessary even to stay *within* many of the cities visited. The travelers will never truly be away from home because their floating home aboard the *Quaker City* will be an American oasis of familiarity in the midst of the potential strangeness of Europe.

As his time abroad increases, even Twain realizes how restrictive such rapid and preordained touring can be.⁹ While visiting Russia nearly three months into the trip, Twain reports, "we consulted the guide-books and were rejoiced to know that there were no sights in Odessa to see; and so we had one good, untrammelled holiday on our hands, with nothing to do but idle about the city and enjoy ourselves" (388). Of course, this jab at touring fits Twain's lazy and sacrilegious persona, but it also suggests how such a stringent itinerary can prevent the traveler from appreciating the opportunity to simply *be*

⁹ Melton summarizes Twain's disillusionment: "Twain marvels in his first exposure to the foreign, but his enthusiasm quickly wanes and his subsequent struggles between the beauty of his expectations and the too-often dismal reality mimic the struggle of tourists at large to reconcile the contrasts between the 'authentic' pictures in front of them and the delicately crafted images in their minds" (66).

in a new place. In all likelihood, their form of idling, which includes “saunter[ing] through the markets,” “criticis[ing] the fearful and wonderful costumes from the back country,” and “examin[ing] the populace as far as eyes could do it” incorporates more actual observation of foreign culture than the meaningless parade of galleries, churches, and statuary that otherwise occupies the pilgrims’ time (388).

Continuing the trend examined in the previous chapter, foreign language in *Innocents Abroad* is no longer a valuable conveyor of cultural content but a comical source of annoyance and confusion. But luckily for Twain and his traveling companions, the rise of tourism makes learning new languages unnecessary. Indeed, when moving from country to country at such a rapid pace, speaking every local language would be nearly impossible.¹⁰ Although Twain often satirizes American tourists, there is no indication in *Innocents Abroad* that he finds the linguistic skill of earlier travelers at all admirable or desirable. Previous travelers like Taylor aspired to the status of cosmopolites well versed in the languages of Europe, even if they did not achieve it. Although Twain spends much time calling attention to the language barrier and to amusing anecdotes of miscommunication, his work lacks the conviction that, whatever difficulties foreign language might present, there is inherent worth in multilingualism.

¹⁰ As Larzer Ziff argues, Twain’s lack of interest in language acquisition is part of the shift from older modes of travel to tourism: “The tour was laid out in advance and Twain embarked on it because everything had been prepared for him. He didn’t know the language of any country he visited and his foreign acquaintanceship was limited to guides, hoteliers, waiters, and shopkeepers. At no point did he pretend otherwise or wish to alter this condition” (*Return* 185).

One target of Twain's comic treatment of foreign language in *Innocents Abroad* is the Americans' failed attempts to communicate in the local languages. As David R. Sewell notes, "The 'innocence' Twain examines in *The Innocents Abroad* is in part linguistic incompetence. The Americans cannot speak a comprehensible sentence in any of the languages they encounter" (59-60). For example, the party's excursion to Paris inspires many jokes about the pretention of American travelers attempting and failing to speak French. One French boatman is apparently unable to understand the Americans' butchered version of his own language. Twain jokes, "He appeared to be very ignorant of French" (93). A similar scene occurs with a French waitress:

The doctor said:

"Avez vous du vin?"

The dame looked perplexed. The doctor said again, with elaborate distinctness of articulation:

"Avez-vous du—vin!"

The dame looked more perplexed than before. I said:

"Doctor, there is a flaw in your pronunciation somewhere. Let me try her. Madame, avez-vous du vin?—It isn't any use, doctor—take the witness."

"Madame, avez-vous du vin—ou fromage—pain—pickled pigs' feet—beurre—des œufs—du beuf—horse-radish, sour-cROUT, hog and hominy—any thing, any thing in the world that can stay a Christian stomach!"

She said:

"Bless you, why didn't you speak English before?—I don't know any thing about your plagued French!" (94)

The joke itself is hardly original, but this scene differs from previous jabs at uncultured Americans in that there is nothing obviously wrong with the French as printed. This is not Cooper's critique of "Nully" or "Notter Dam" (*Homeward Bound* I: 188-89). Instead, Twain indicates that even the basic, conversational French that should be recognizable to most readers is so hopelessly mangled as to be incomprehensible to a Parisian. (After all, "Avez vous du vin?" is a phrase anyone but the most stringent advocate of temperance

would learn before traveling to France.) Garbling the French in some way would place the doctor and Twain below the level of an even marginally cultured reader, making the American tourists objects of scorn for their *excessive* innocence. But, by suggesting that there is something wrong with a tolerable and apparently correct attempt to speak French, Twain questions the worth of learning the most basic phrases in a foreign country. Even readers who might understand the French in this exchange are placed on the same level as Twain's doctor.

Rather than lament the futility of communication with the locals, Twain further suggests that meaningful exchange is not really the point of travel anyway. Throughout the section, one traveler, Dan, is subjected to the derision of his party for preferring English over attempts at French. Twain, in contrast, favors the romance of speaking terrible French, even at the expense of useful information:

We never did succeed in making any body understand just exactly what we wanted, and neither did we ever succeed in comprehending just exactly what they said in reply—but then they always pointed—they always did that, and we bowed politely and said, “Merci, Monsieur,” and so it was a blighting triumph over the disaffected member [Dan], any way. (95-96)

The French language is part of the atmosphere the pilgrims have come to experience, and they are unwilling to forego using it, even if it leaves them wandering aimlessly through the streets. And Dan's alternative does not entail speaking the local language, either. He simply prefers that they take advantage of the innumerable Parisians who can speak English. Twain offers no ideal of foreign language acquisition—only the choice between insensible ambience or a retreat to monolingualism.

Later, Twain's multi-edged satire cuts back against the pretention of attempting to speak the languages of Europe when he mocks traveling Americans who “have actually

forgotten their mother tongue in three months” and “can not even write their address in English in a hotel register” (233). He provides the following example of such effrontery:

“John P. Whitcomb, *Etats Unis*.
“Wm. L. Ainsworth, *travailleur* (he meant traveler, I suppose,) *Etats Unis*.
“George P. Morton *et fils, d’Amerique*.
.

I love this sort of people. A lady passenger of ours tells of a fellow-citizen of hers who spent eight weeks in Paris and then returned home and addressed his dearest old bosom friend Herbert as Mr. “Er-bare!” (233-34)

While Twain may understand the desire to experience the local language as romantic ambience, he has no sympathy for those who wear their new-found linguistic ability as a badge of pride. Making mistakes with European language is amiably comic, but the linguistic pretention of using French when English will serve deserves true derision. For Twain, it is an even greater sin than the behavior typically attributed to “ugly Americans.” He asserts, “It is not pleasant to see an American thrusting his nationality forward *obtrusively* in a foreign land, but Oh, it is pitiable to see him making of himself . . . a poor, miserable, hermaphrodite Frenchman!” (234-35). However, Twain departs from Cooper’s critique of Dodge’s similar pretention by neither distinguishing between good and bad French, nor suggesting that there could be any legitimate reason to use a foreign term instead of an English one. There seems to be no possibility of effective yet unpretentious language learning. Any attempts at speaking French, or any European language, are either comically incomprehensible or utterly obnoxious.¹¹

¹¹ Of course, jokes like the passages quoted above require some rudimentary knowledge of French to understand, but Twain once again differs from Cooper in degree. Not only is Twain’s “broken French” accessible without a particularly thorough or correct understanding of the language, but Twain also fails to offer the reader a model of real linguistic skill such as Paul Powis, Eve Effingham, or Cooper himself. In Twain, there is

Not only does it seem futile for American travelers to attempt to learn European languages, but Europeans' attempts at speaking or writing English are doomed to equal failure. One such example follows a Franglish note Twain's comic sidekick, Blucher, writes to a Parisian landlord, including lines such as "*Monsieur le Landlord*—Sir: *Pourquoi* don't you *mettez* some *savon* in your bed-chambers? *Est-ce que vous pensez* I will steal it?" (189).¹² Immediately afterward, Twain provides a specimen of the mangled English of Italy:

“NOTISH.”

“This hotel which the best it is in Italy and most superb, is handsome locate on the best situation of the lake, with the most splendid view near the Villas Melzy, to the King of Belgian, and Serbelloni. This hotel have recently enlarge, do offer all commodities on moderate price, at the strangers gentlemen who wish spend the seasons on the Lake Come.”

How is that, for a specimen? In the hotel is a handsome little chapel where an English clergyman is employed to preach to such of the guests of the house as hail from England and America, and this fact is also set forth in barbarous English in the same advertisement. Wouldn't you have supposed that the adventurous linguist who framed the card would have known enough to submit it to that clergyman before he sent it to the printer? (189-90)

no contrast of proper and improper use of foreign language; it is always laughable or pretentious.

¹² Dewey Ganzel describes how the figure of Blucher grew out of Twain's earlier comic sidekick, Brown, and explains, “Brown-Blucher was, in fact, a caricature of Clemens himself, or at least that part of him which was still neophyte, and as such a means—through contrast—for making the other projection of Clemens, the persona ‘Mark Twain,’ appear *more* sophisticated” (72). But while “Mark Twain” may be more intelligent and urbane than Brown-Blucher, he is not considerably more worldly. Twain may be able to understand the differences of Europe and comport himself with a higher degree of polish, but he is far from cosmopolitan, and comes no closer to seeing any sense in the foreign than his ignorant sidekick. As William W. Stowe argues, Twain represents “a middling range of American men, neither boors nor aesthetes, neither plutocrats nor workers, but common-sense middle-class democrats determined to see and judge the Old World for themselves and to act out their senses of themselves and of their place in their society and culture” (129).

The basic content of this advertisement is understandable, but only by a slim margin. The juxtaposition of these two documents makes it clear that Twain criticizes all attempts at multilingualism. He thus avoids the common, narrow-minded assumption that foreigners should be under a greater obligation to speak proper English than Americans are to speak other languages. For Twain, all attempts to speak in a foreign language are liable to produce “barbarous” nonsense.

Twain also uses these examples to highlight foreign grammar as a major source of linguistic confusion. Sewell finds that, despite Twain’s frequent jokes about the subject, he demonstrates a clear “allegiance to prescriptive grammar,” and “his deep respect for the authority of grammar, even when he kicks against it, leads him to an implicit formulation . . . : grammar *is* power” (16, 35). In varieties of American English as well as second languages, proper grammar (or the lack thereof) is a mark of class and regional belonging. A non-native speaker’s grammatical mistakes thus emphasize how language marks the boundaries of a national community, just as the dialects in Twain’s fiction are markers of both region and class. Perhaps some of the errors in the Italian advertisement could have been corrected by the English-speaking priest, but Twain implies that all attempts to speak a second language will indelibly mark one’s origin. In *Innocents Abroad*, in contrast to earlier works like Cooper’s *Homeward Bound*, there is little chance of being mistaken for a native speaker. One may perhaps peek over the linguistic barrier, but it can never fully be breached. For Twain, as will become increasingly clear, this failure is at least partially desirable because it strengthens the boundaries between nations.

Most significantly, *Innocents Abroad* demonstrates how, when European language is stripped of all content and significance, the American tourist begins to view European culture with the disregard previously reserved for “savage” peoples. For example, rather than learn the languages of Europe, Twain resorts to renaming the unintelligible and unpronounceable, as in the running joke of calling all foreign guides “Ferguson.” Twain begins this practice in France, when one guide’s actual name, “Billfinger,” like Dan’s unromantic yet efficacious English, does not seem French enough (120). Later in the trip, however, Twain discusses a guide in Constantinople who, “[a]fter he has gotten himself up regardless of expense, in showy, baggy trowsers, yellow, pointed slippers, fiery fez, silken jacket of blue . . . considers it an unspeakable humiliation to be called Ferguson” (381). The pretension of such an ostentatious costume would be reason enough to mock the guide by renaming him Ferguson, but Twain further explains, “It can not be helped. All guides are Fergusons to us. We can not master their dreadful foreign names” (381). Twain implies that foreign words and names are not only difficult to learn and to comprehend, but that they are somehow inherently awful. Similarly, when Twain and his companions camp near “*Temnin-el-Foka*,” they rename it “Jacksonville,” which Twain admits “sounds a little strangely, here in the Valley of Lebanon, but it has the merit of being easier to remember than the Arabic name” (438). Twain’s rampant renaming effaces all trace of the local language and culture. Like Columbus in the Caribbean, Twain christens people and places anew at his own convenience, showing no respect for their native designations.¹³

¹³ Caesar also calls attention to the importance of this trope, but he sees it as a representation of Twain’s authorial power: “The guides are all re-named Ferguson, rather as a comic trope for the fact that Twain re-names himself as an American. . . . [H]e re-

Indeed, just as Columbus failed to recognize the speech of the native Caribbeans as a legitimate language, Twain implies that anything other than American English is at least slightly ridiculous. For example, he jokes, “(They spell it Vinci and pronounce it Vinchy; foreigners always spell better than they pronounce)” (185). Here, as elsewhere, it is obvious that such a comment is not entirely in earnest, but the joke implies, nevertheless, that foreign rules of pronunciation are somehow less valid than those of English, and particularly those of American English. Similarly, Twain describes how “distances in the East are measured by hours, not miles” (525), and complains of the trouble this new system of measurement gives him:

This method of computation is bothersome and annoying; and until one gets thoroughly accustomed to it, it carries no intelligence to his mind until he has stopped and translated the pagan hours into Christian miles, just as people do with the spoken words of a foreign language they are acquainted with, but not familiarly enough to catch the meaning in a moment. (525)

Making a clear analogy to linguistic translation, Twain calls attention to the difficulty of converting one system of meaning into another, the inherent incommensurability of cross-cultural exchange. Twain also implies that his own system of measurement is both more natural and simply better by joking, “I can not be positive about it, but I think that there, when a man orders a pair of pantaloons, he says he wants them a quarter of a minute in the legs and nine seconds around the waist” (525). Once again, Twain not only describes the difficulty of adapting to foreign language and customs, but he also uses such incongruous switching of sign systems to subtly convince readers that foreign customs are inherently ridiculous.

tropes himself—in part by seizing the power of those who would guide him and by reducing them all to the same figure, thus restoring his own power” (35).

Similar play with incommensurability can be seen in Twain's reactions to different systems of currency. When the party first arrives in the Azores, for example, Blucher throws a lavish dinner and then becomes mortified at the check. Twain exclaims, "TOTAL, TWENTY-ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED REIS!' The suffering Moses!—there ain't money enough in the ship to pay that bill!" (52). The punch line of the joke, of course, is that such a large number translates into a mere 21.70 in American dollars. Later in Tangier, Twain sends up a similarly unbalanced exchange rate by describing how one passenger, by attempting to change a napoleon, had "swamped the bank; had bought eleven quarts of coin, and the head of the firm had gone on the street to negotiate for the balance of the change" (81). Twain then remarks that he "bought nearly half a pint of their money for a shilling" (81). Once again, the humor of these anecdotes comes from the incongruity of replacing one system of measurement with another, volume for amount or time for distance. Twain makes the foreign seem both carnivalesque and silly by upending what Americans perceive as the "normal" ways of measuring things. Of course all of these examples have been couched as jokes rather than earnest deprecations of foreign language and custom, but the aggregate effect of these jokes has a subtle, or not so subtle, effect of positioning what is American as normal and logical in contrast to the absurdity of the foreign.

Twain's constant belittling of the foreign also results in an elevation of the domestic. Thus, not only does Twain's "innocent" perspective embrace the linguistic isolationism that would declare unblushingly, "'Hotel d'Europe!' . . . was all the Italian I knew, and I was not certain whether that was Italian or French" (248), but it also results in a more pervasive if more subtle argument for American exceptionalism and cultural

centrism. There is little self-deprecating irony, for example, in Twain's litany of the American traveler's complaints:

We are getting foreignized rapidly, and with facility. We are getting reconciled to halls and bed-chambers with unhomelike stone floors and no carpets—floors that ring to the tread of one's heels with a sharpness that is death to sentimental musing. . . . We are getting used to driving right into the central court of the hotel, in the midst of a fragrant circle of vines and flowers, and in the midst, also, of parties of gentlemen sitting quietly reading the paper and smoking. We are getting used to ice frozen by artificial process in ordinary bottles—the only kind of ice they have here. We are getting used to all these things; but we are *not* getting used to carrying our own soap. (98)

Twain calls getting used to such things “getting foreignized,” but his supposed tolerance is accompanied by the constant recognition that European customs are in many ways inferior to what the Americans are used to at home. Moreover, the one thing Twain says they cannot tolerate, the lack of soap, becomes another running joke at the expense of the foreign. Again and again, Twain plays on Europeans' ignorance of soap, saying of the Marseillaise, for example, that “they make half the fancy toilet soap we consume in America, but . . . only have a vague theoretical idea of its use, which they have obtained from books of travel, just as they have acquired an uncertain notion of clean shirts, and the peculiarities of the gorilla, and other curious matters” (189). Beneath this recurring joke more than any other is an undercurrent of American superiority—a cleanliness close to Godliness. It is no surprise, then, that the repeated calls for soap often occur in mutilated bits of European language such as “Here, cospetto! corpo di Bacco! Sacramento! Solferino!—Soap, you son of a gun!” (188). Americans may lack linguistic competence, but at least they have adequate ideas of hygiene.¹⁴ Indeed, such stereotypes

¹⁴ As David W. Levy argues, “the Europe that Twain presented to his readers and held up to derision was degenerate, superstitious, degraded, and filthy; its best days were behind

continue to this day as justification for American tourists' feelings of superiority, despite their comparative linguistic ignorance.

In the end, what is most significant about *Innocents Abroad* is not the touristic travel necessitated by the *Quaker City*'s ambitious itinerary, but how the persona of Mark Twain enshrines the shortcomings tourism encourages into an ideal of linguistic and cultural ignorance. As implied by Twain's avowed purpose, "to suggest to the reader how *he* would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who travelled in those countries before him" (v), the author does not write from a position of greater culture and cosmopolitanism than his readers, as James Fenimore Cooper or Margaret Fuller had done. Instead, he gives untraveled readers the same uncultured impressions that they would have if they were abroad, nationalistically affirming everything American in contrast to the absurdities of the foreign.¹⁵ Twain does not, therefore, proclaim to have gained significant elevation by his extensive travel—experience and wisdom worth sharing with readers at home. He instead experiences each sight anew as an "innocent" fresh from the American frontier. Twain's critiques of European language and culture may be humorous, but his claim to represent

it. Americans had no cause to drop their eyes and blush at comparisons between their country and the Old World" (92).

¹⁵ As Malcolm Bradbury describes, Twain "presumes that very little in Europe will match America's natural wonder and democratic splendour," and in this "comedy of assumed innocence" everything he experiences is "sifted through the filter of his simple Western vision" (167). For J.D. Stahl, the "complicated and troublesome character of Mark Twain's stance" lies in his "implicit claim to representativeness" (*Culture* 29). John C. McCloskey takes a more ambivalent, if not totally contradictory view, arguing that "Twain admires and gawks like any other tourist, and when he makes negative judgments it is often on far different grounds from the assumed ignorance of a coonskin Jacksonian catering to the ignorance of the mob" (141).

the vision of any one of his countrymen suggests that no American should take foreign culture any more seriously than he does.

Peter Messent attributes the popularity of *Innocents Abroad* to this narrow perspective, describing “the very assertive and new sense of American national identity which it, in part, promotes” (*Cambridge* 42). Manfred Pütz offers an even more critical perspective of the book’s hegemonic power:

While *Innocents Abroad* looks on the surface like a harmless, humorous description of early American tourist experiences, the book also reveals itself on another level as a potentially explosive mixture of aggressive culture bashing and cultural nationalism, American debunking and American self-celebration, similar to what fuelled the fantasies of proponents of American imperialism on a political plane. (220)

Twain’s satire targets both the fraudulent grandeur of the Old World’s famous sights and the sanctimonious pretention of American tourists, but his moments of self-deprecation ultimately fail to deflate the dangerous nationalism that Pütz describes, just as his satire of American tourists proves no less touristic than the travelers it targets.¹⁶ Likewise,

¹⁶ Berkove summarizes this dual satire: “While *Innocents Abroad* was mainly appreciated for its refreshingly humorous and sceptical view of the Old World, also present in the book is its cold undercurrent of criticism of the tourists for their sanctimoniousness, hypocrisy and small-mindedness, and of Americans as well as Old World people for their common venality and parochialism” (193). Nevertheless, Brian Yothers describes how the dichotomy between Twain’s own persona and the American travelers he criticizes collapses: “Twain undermines the dichotomy between deluded pilgrims who read their own meanings into the landscape and the plainspoken American Everyman who relates the experience of Holy Land travel to his readers in the precise form that they themselves would use for their own accounts. Twain’s persona is seen to be reliant on the very accounts that he exposes as utterly ridiculous, and his reader is able to see that the ultimate distinction between Twain and previous travelers is one of degree rather than kind” (*Romance* 105). Similarly, Forrest G. Robinson argues, “Mark Twain is impatient with inflated travel writing, but indulges himself at intervals in the very style he deplores. He is critical of other tourists for their blind surrender to romantic impressions, yet cannot conceal the fact that historical melodramas, not to mention popular travel books, have influenced his own expectations and responses” (“Innocent” 30).

although Twain follows Cooper in his critique of linguistic pretention, and, as a humorist, Twain finds absurdity everywhere, he offers no cosmopolitan counter-example of using linguistic difference to express precise cultural meanings. Learning a language is difficult, speaking it like a native is impossible, and there is little benefit to accomplishing either. Thus, while earlier generations of Americans still looked on European culture with respect, even while placing themselves far above the “savage” peoples encountered in the nation’s expansion, *Innocents Abroad* depicts a growing attitude that, in comparison to American attributes like simplicity, cleanliness, and efficiency, Europeans can be just as barbarous as South Sea savages. Twain critiques the pretentious display of European language and culture as an empty sign of cultural superiority, but he does little to differentiate fetishized cultural commodities from the real cultural value of Europe. Indeed, it is uncertain if he even believes the latter to exist.

Awful European Language in *A Tramp Abroad*

Twain’s second book of European travel, *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), goes beyond the burlesque of tourism found in *Innocents Abroad* to look deeper at issues of language and translation. From 1878 to 1879, Clemens and his family once again traveled to Europe, visiting Germany, Italy, and France (Baetzhold 35). The primary purpose of the trip was to write a new travel book, and Clemens had a contract with publisher Frank Bliss to do so (Hellwig 80).¹⁷ However, the account of the trip published in *A Tramp*

¹⁷ Most commentators are critical of the resulting narrative’s lack of coherence, agreeing with Everett Emerson’s assessment that “nothing holds the book together except the binding” (115). Many critics also join Richard Bridgman in characterizing the book as an “uneven performance” (70). Harold H. Hellwig calls it “notable for its flights of greatness and its moments of tedium,” adding, “Structurally it is weak, . . . lack[ing] one clear focus” (83). Similarly, Berkove concludes, “A mixture of the ludicrous and the factual, *A*

Abroad is even more fictionalized than that of *Innocents Abroad*. As Harold H. Hellwig points out, “the narrator seems to be a bachelor who wishes to learn German, and to study art” (81), a sharp contrast to the married writer traveling for material. But like his fictional persona, Clemens also aimed to learn German.¹⁸ *A Tramp Abroad* contains several admissions of his increased, though limited, knowledge. For example, at the Mannheim opera, Twain notes that, while he “understood nothing that was uttered on the distant stage,” he did understand two women speaking privately nearby (87). Elsewhere he explains, “I can *understand* German as well as the maniac that invented it, but I *talk* it best through an interpreter” (125). While there is some debate over Clemens’s degree of success with the language, most agree that he was unable to master it.¹⁹ Although

Tramp Abroad is entertaining but not gripping. Its organization is loose to begin with and is further weakened by individual episodes having little or nothing to do with the pedestrian tour” (198). Peter Messent (*Cambridge* 46-47) and Robert Sattelmeyer (262), however, find more value in the work.

¹⁸ Clemens began his lifelong study of German in his youth (Krumpelmann 1), and his wife began to learn the language in 1871 (Kersten 203). In preparation for his 1878 trip, moreover, Clemens “hired a German nurse named Rosina Hay, and the whole family began to study the German language” (Scott 91).

¹⁹ Arthur L. Scott goes on to note that, although Clemens “strewed German words and phrases throughout his notebooks,” eventually he found that “[h]e just could not write and study at the same time, so he dropped German” (91). John T. Krumpelmann concludes that “Mark Twain was really acquiring an ability to read German,” but admits that “[w]ith the spoken word he made less progress” (4-5). Interestingly, Robert Sattelmeyer compares Twain’s interest in learning German to his literary predecessors: “It was this language and this learning, broadly conceived, which had nourished the generation of Harvard-educated New England writers and intellectuals whom Twain had burlesqued in his Whittier birthday speech, and which was still exerting a powerful influence on American intellectual life a half century later. Moving to Heidelberg and taking up the study of German not only replicated the actions of several generations of American students but also paid a peculiar homage to the New England literary culture to which Mark Twain stood in such clear contrast” (267). Twain generally turns against this older tradition, but his interest in German is one counterexample.

Clemens devoted much time to his project of learning German, he could never gain the fluency of travelers like Cooper, Taylor, or Fuller.

In spite of this progress in foreign language education, *A Tramp Abroad* contains many of the same jokes about cross-cultural communication found in *Innocents*. When Twain goes to see “‘King Lear’ played in German,” for example, he claims: “It was a mistake. We sat in our seats three whole hours and never understood anything but the thunder and lightning; and even that was reversed to suit German ideas, for the thunder came first and the lightning followed after” (83). Not only does this complaint mirror Harriet Beecher Stowe’s comments about the impossibility of translating Shakespeare into any other language, but the joke about the reversed lightning and thunder echoes Twain’s numerous jabs at German grammar, making the entire production seem both incomprehensible and ridiculous. *A Tramp Abroad* also reprises the *Innocents* joke that Europeans can understand English better than they can understand Twain’s terrible renditions of their native languages. For example, Harris warns, “Speak in German,—these Germans may understand English” (103). Another familiar joke is the bad English of foreign materials designed for tourists. Reproducing “A Catalogue of Pictures in the Old Pinacotek,” Twain comments about the word choice of “‘Susan bathing, surprised by the two old man. In the background the lapidation of the condemned’” (148). Parenthetically, Twain adds, “‘Lapidation’ is good; it is much more elegant than ‘stoning.’” (148). In addition to its bad grammar, this “peculiar kind of English” commits the cardinal sin, for Twain, of making pretentious what could be said simply and more

eloquently (148).²⁰ Clearly, *A Tramp Abroad* continues many of the linguistic jokes found throughout Twain's first travelogue.

Moreover, Twain is again quite critical of European customs. For example, he complains of the rudeness of Baden-Baden shopkeepers, "especially," as "an English gentleman who had been living there several years" reports, "to ladies of your nationality and mine" (200). One frequent target of true scorn is foreign food. After an exaggerated lambasting of European fare, particularly of cream and coffee, Twain reports, "There is here and there an American who will say he can remember rising from a European table d' hôte perfectly satisfied; but we must not overlook the fact that there is also here and there an American who will lie" (573). Underlying all such examples is the strong sense of nationalism expressed in the book's conclusion:

On the whole, I think that short visits to Europe are better for us than long ones. The former preserve us from becoming Europeanized; they keep our pride of country intact, and at the same time they intensify our affection for our country and our people; whereas long visits have the effect of dulling those feelings,—at least in the majority of cases. (580)

While Cooper's travels in Europe caused him to return to America with a sharpened eye for his own country's shortcomings, albeit with an accompanying desire to see those shortcomings remedied, Twain advocates travel for the purpose of making all the

²⁰ At times, the jokes seem even more familiar, as in an encounter with another boatman. Twain's terrible German is incomprehensible while his companion's English ("Can man boat get here?") is easily understood, partly because it contains so many German cognates (163).

customs of home seem even more dear—making them seem all the more like the only rational practices in an insane world.²¹

As in his previous travelogue, Twain in *A Tramp Abroad* is what Jeffrey Alan Melton calls the “consummate leisured tourist, a man of his gilded age” (83).²² In contrast to earlier travelers such as Cooper, who highly valued the history and culture of Europe, as well as transitional figures such as Taylor, who, if failing to achieve the true cosmopolitanism of their predecessors, still aspired to the older model of literary world citizen, Twain mocks those who find the culture of Europe worthy of admiration and emulation. Moreover, the true target of Twain’s critique is not necessarily the particulars of European culture, but the act of imitation itself, and, in a way, this is what makes his attitude toward linguistic and cultural difference even more isolationist. Rather than Cooper’s cosmopolitan, but still patriotic, desire to find the best of both sides of the Atlantic, Twain adheres to what Pauline Kleingeld describes as the “nationalist manner” of viewing patriotism as “unconditional loyalty to one’s own national community (taken as a linguistic and/or cultural community)” (21-22). As Twain implies throughout *A Tramp Abroad*, this loyalty requires a kind of Emersonian self-reliance on national attitudes, as expressed in the national language. There is no need to speak to foreigners

²¹ As Scott argues, Twain is an example of Fuller’s “conceited American,” rejecting any insight that visiting Europe could provide in favor of an overbearing pride in all things American (66).

²² Moreover, as Messent argues, “Mass tourism and Twain’s own status as tourist . . . have even greater emphasis in this text than in *Innocents Abroad*. Here, he explicitly mocks the sensitive traveller—with her or his delicate awareness of the education to be gained from a foreign culture . . . and the elitist tendencies that accompany the separation from the general tourist mass” (*Cambridge* 47).

while dashing from sight to sight on the beaten track because all valuable ideas come from within and at home.

One important difference from *Innocents Abroad*, however, is that *A Tramp Abroad* pays more attention to foreign language, if only to show its ludicrousness. Just as he mocked the American travelers who turned themselves into “hermaphrodite Frenchmen,” Twain lampoons travel writers who include bits of untranslated foreign language in their works. He does not mention any particular authors, but this practice could easily be listed as one of James Fenimore Cooper’s “literary offenses.” When Twain does not wish to travel to the “Furka Region” of the Alps, he sends his agent Harris, who makes an official report peppered with foreign words and phrases (312).²³ Harris begins normally enough by describing his arrival “at the *maison* on the Furka in a little under *quatre* hours,” but quickly devolves into such nonsense as, “we formed a large *xhvloj* as we descended the *steg* which winds round the shoulder of a mountain toward the Rhone Glacier” (312). After nearly a hundred of such foreign inclusions, some of them recognizable French and German, others obvious gibberish, Twain criticizes the document for being “much too learned” (320). When Harris explains, “Dingblatter is a Fiji word meaning ‘degrees,’” Twain counters, “You knew the English of it, then?” (320). Twain repeatedly complains that Harris’s foreign words express the same concepts as their English equivalents. Such inclusions may be pretentious, but Twain, in contrast to Cooper and Melville, can imagine no conceptual nuance that might be more precisely

²³ David M. Wrobel identifies this scenario as satire of “the entire travel/adventure writing genre,” making the book “an anti-travel narrative of sorts” (23).

expressed with a foreign term. Unlike the Polynesian “taboo,” which, as Melville makes clear, cannot be translated literally into an English equivalent, it is always possible for Harris to “[know] the English of it.” As in Redburn’s youthful daydreams of travel, linguistic difference becomes an empty sign of foreignness when it conveys no substantive conceptual difference; the rare phrase of foreign language acquired from travel is just as substance-less as any cheap and mass-produced souvenir.

In the diatribe that follows Harris’s account, Twain criticizes authors who include untranslated foreign phrases, both those whose genuine erudition eclipses the understanding of most readers, and those who insert such phrases not because they better express a concept but because they lend the text a false air of cosmopolitanism. For Twain, anything foreign should be immediately translated, or better yet, languages other than English should be avoided altogether. As Twain says elsewhere:

I have a prejudice against people who print things in a foreign language and add no translation. When I am the reader, and the author considers me able to do the translating myself, he pays me quite a nice compliment,—but if he would do the translating for me I would try to get along without the compliment. (146)

Twain implies that he, like many American readers, is neither comfortable with reading foreign languages nor interested in becoming so. It is the job of the author to provide his reader with a translation so that no advanced knowledge of other languages is necessary and no further learning is encouraged.²⁴ Once again, this preference contrasts sharply with the practice of Cooper and his contemporaries, who recognized a cultural content to

²⁴ To prove his point, Twain undertakes his own translation of “The Lorelei” in order “to give the un-German young girl a jingle of words to hang the tune on until she can get hold of a good version” (146). Despite this disclaimer, Twain’s translation is, according to Scott, “smooth, poetic, and readily singable” (104).

foreign language that resisted translation, a remainder of meaning lost in the transfer between languages. Rather than viewing translation as a stopgap measure and a gateway to further study, ideally with some foreign words still included to convey culturally specific concepts (as Cooper argues of “township” and “ville” in *Gleanings in Europe*), Twain sees translation as an adequate substitute for the foreign, with no loss of any meaning that might be valuable to an American audience.

Another way to view Twain’s more extensive treatment of foreign language in *A Tramp Abroad* is through the parallel goals the narrator gives for his parody of a typical European tour. Within a few paragraphs, Twain describes his plans to “undertake a journey through Europe on foot,” “to study art,” and “to learn the German language” (1).²⁵ His seriousness in these undertakings is immediately undermined, however, by the failure of his pedestrian aspirations. In this first iteration of a joke repeated throughout the narrative, the travelers make “preparations for a long pedestrian trip . . . but at the last moment [change] the program, for private reasons, and [take] the express train” (17). Larzer Ziff calls this “running gag” an “apparent allusion” to Taylor’s *Views A-Foot* (*Return* 202).²⁶ Even Taylor’s pedestrian tour showed evidence of the increasingly touristic nature of American travel, but Twain takes Taylor’s lack of engagement with

²⁵ According to Everett Emerson, these “three themes” are the only constants that “provide some unity” to the otherwise disjointed narrative (115). While I am not so quick to criticize Twain’s work as a whole, Emerson’s verdict does suggest that the commentary on learning German in *A Tramp Abroad* is best understood in the context of Twain’s other goals.

²⁶ Scott (112) and Melton (81) both examine the personal connection between Twain and Taylor. Krumpelmann describes a letter in German that Twain wrote to Taylor, who, as described in the previous chapter, was well known as a scholar of German language and literature (2).

local culture even further. The new forms of transportation to which Twain switches at every opportunity are at least partially responsible for the tourist boom. Moreover, as James Buzard argues, the concept of “place” fostered by such rapid transportation distinguishes tourism from travel on an ideological level, encouraging tourists to “impose fixed limits on accustomed attractions and stops, and to imagine the areas between them as somehow ‘empty,’ as unworthy of attention” (34).²⁷ By jumping on a passenger car to get from point A to point B, Twain similarly compartmentalizes the attractions of Europe, focusing on a series of itinerary stops instead of on the real cultural life in-between.

Twain’s jesting with European art also highlights many of the key themes raised by foreign language, including issues of representation and the conventions of travel literature. Twain contributes several examples of his artistic “progress” to the illustrations of the book, including sketches of “a military tower, 115 feet high” with a disproportionate man sitting atop it, a “Etruscan tear-jug,” and an “Henri II. plate” (104, 185). In his book *Traveling in Mark Twain*, Richard Bridgman seems utterly unable to offer any explanation for Twain’s various drawings, stating that “none of them seems particularly amusing, and most are not only technically crude but also virtually meaningless” (92). What Bridgman seems to miss, however, is that these sketches play with the conventions of illustrated volumes of travel writing. Indeed, the sales of Twain’s travelogues were particularly driven by their illustrations because they were published as subscription books, and the advance sales of such books depended as much on the quality of their binding and the quantity of their illustrations as on their content (Messent,

²⁷ Buzard contrasts such tourists with genuine travelers who, particularly when “walking and climbing,” know that they “travel every step of the way” (34).

Cambridge 47). This is made patently clear on the first edition's title page, where billing for the book's many illustrations takes the place of a subtitle:

ILLUSTRATED BY W. FR. BROWN, TRUE WILLIAMS, B. DAY AND OTHER
ARTISTS—WITH ALSO THREE OR FOUR PICTURES MADE BY
THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK, WITHOUT OUTSIDE HELP;
IN ALL

THREE HUNDERED AND TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS. ([i])

Twain's own "artistic" contributions comprise only a part of the book's many illustrations, which were often copied from other sources (David 4, 7).²⁸ Such illustrations serve a primarily financial purpose, but they still cannot escape the playfulness of Twain's burlesque. They are part of his constant satirizing of the genre of travel literature itself.

On another level, the "awfulness" of Twain's artistic skill parallels his bad German. In describing one "study" of "Götz von Berlichingen's horse and cab," Twain includes among its "several blemishes" the flaws that "the wagon is not traveling as fast as the horse is" and that "there seems to be a wheel missing" (122). Further, the verisimilitude of the sketch is so poor that its creator must explain that one "thing flying out behind is not a flag, it is a curtain," and that he is not sure whether a particular scribble "is a haystack or a woman" (122-23). Part of the fun of this passage is Twain's usual self-deprecation, but his closing note—that "[t]his study was exhibited in the Paris

²⁸ Beverly R. David's analysis of the images "borrowed" from Whymper's *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* provides another example of Twain's playful approach to the illustrations of *A Tramp Abroad*: "The most peculiar of the Whymper engravings found in *A Tramp Abroad* involves a collaboration between Whymper and Twain. Mark Twain took the alleged Whymper original of THE MATTERHORN, FROM NEAR THE SUMMIT OF THEODULE PASS and superimposed his own crude cut-out of a donkey over the scene" (4).

Salon of 1879, but did not take any medal; they do not give medals for studies” (123)—shifts the target of satire from Twain’s own lack of artistic skill to the pretention of traveling artists who make equally uninspired, if somewhat more realistic, “studies.” Thus, Twain mocks the desire to see and experience the foreign through travel writing and its accompanying illustrations. Both text and illustrations leave the reader uninitiated into the world of the foreign and, ultimately, unmoved.

Beyond this satire of travel literature’s conventions—and Twain’s jab at readers who purchase books based on the number of their illustrations rather than the quality of either illustrations or writing—many of these jokes about perspective and verisimilitude suggest a playful approach to the idea of representation in general. For example, Twain provides a “life-size” image of a broken dueling sword by “tracing a line around it with [his] pen, to show the width of the weapon” (68). Bridgman remarks of this description, “That being approximately what it appears to be, and no more, the source of humor remains obscure” (94). From a semiotic perspective, however, the sword fragment, as an “index,” should be a closer representation of reality than the average drawing, a more “literal” transcription of its subject. But, as Bridgman apparently found, this attempted verisimilitude fails to make the practice of dueling any more vivid. In light of Twain’s preoccupation with the way travel writing substitutes words for actual experience, the “source of humor” here appears to be a parallel failure of artistic representation. Thus, by parodying the artistic representations found in conventional travel writing, Twain follows both Cooper and Melville in lampooning the mediated view of Europe such accounts provide, but his version lacks the earlier authors’ accompanying arguments to seek less

mediated access to the foreign and to go experience the world more directly. For Twain, travel is all fun, with no possibility of true erudition.

Continuing this play with language and representation, Twain most famously lampoons the process of learning a second language in one of the several appendices to *A Tramp Abroad*, “The Awful German Language.” While many praise the comedic quality of this sketch, and indeed it was so popular that Twain continued to deliver a version of the essay throughout his lecturing career, others take its critique of German more seriously.²⁹ For Josef Raab, “Twain complains of the complexity of German in a wonderfully exaggerated manner in order to underline for his non-German-speaking American readers the alien nature of this language and the mentality behind it” (387). It is precisely this emphasis on the alienness of the foreign that distinguishes tourists from earlier cosmopolitans. Even more astutely, Sewell argues that “[t]he tacit assumption of the essay is that there is, or ought to be, a language that expresses thought naturally, logically, and independently of troublesome categories of grammar” (75).³⁰ Apparently

²⁹ Ziff represents the typically positive assessments of the piece when he argues, “Strikingly, two of the six appendices that were added to make up the book’s required length are actually better reading than any section of comparable length within the narrative proper: ‘The Awful German Language’ is an amusing yet perspicacious account of the perplexities that language presents to the eager learner” (*Return* 206). Everett Emerson, who rather harshly criticizes *A Tramp Abroad* as a whole, writes that the sketch “proved that Mark Twain was still alive and conscious” (117).

³⁰ Nevertheless, Sewell suggests that much of Twain’s ire is aimed, not at the German language in particular, but at the ridiculousness of grammar in general, which can prove challenging for native and non-native speakers of any language. Supporting this more forgiving reading of Twain’s critique, Norbert Hedderich points to moments in the essay when Twain praises German, usually at the expense of English or language in general. He notes, “At the end of the essay we find ‘The Virtues of the Language’ It is a quite short, but important and often overlooked section. Despite all his criticism, some aspects

put on the defensive by his own difficulties with linguistic difference, Twain longs for a language that transcends the practicalities of grammar and syntax in order to express a natural or universal truth. This desire is much like the attitude of Columbus and other imperialists, as Gabrielle M. Patty finds when she connects Twain's sketch to the kind of ethnographic appeal that presents the reader with supposedly logical and empirical evidence to support its prejudiced opinions (435-36). Prejudice masquerading as common sense is always a dangerous formula, and this is exactly what "The Awful German Language" presents to the unwary and uncultured reader. As the following readings will demonstrate, Twain's attempts at translation in this sketch and elsewhere are like his "innocent" portrayal of Europe: while claiming to offer an unmediated, unpretentious, and no-nonsense perspective, they ignore any genuine value or interest the foreign might hold.

Twain begins the sketch complaining about his difficulties learning German. He explains, "Harris and I had been hard at work on our German during several weeks . . . , and although we had made good progress, it had been accomplished under great difficulty and annoyance, for three of our teachers had died in the meantime" (601). After bemoaning German's "slipshod and systemless" grammar, and its perplexing number of exceptions, Twain launches into a parody of a phrasebook example: "a certain bird" that is "waiting in the blacksmith shop on account of the rain" (601-602). Already the German language is made ridiculous by the distance between real speech and the sample sentences of a textbook, which "is always inquiring after things which are of no sort of no

of German clearly fascinated him. It is the one section of the essay that is without satire" (32).

consequence to anybody” (602). In this example, Twain’s particular complaint is about the complex rules for determining the gender and case of “the rain,” deciding if it is “simply in the quiescent state of being *mentioned*,” “lying around, in a kind of a general way on the ground,” or “doing something *actively*” (602). Unfortunately, all of this analysis is for naught, as Twain eventually learns that the rain must always be in a fourth case. For Twain, such complex rules and exceptions, which seem to add no real meaning to the sentence (which was absurd from the start), illustrate the needless frustration caused by German’s alien grammar.³¹ As Sewell notes, the sketch “gives occasional evidence of a hostility that is not simply exaggerated for comic effect” (77). It betrays not only a genuine frustration but also a more decisive antipathy toward the language and its foreign constructions.

“The Awful German Language” also exemplifies a common thread through many of Twain’s linguistic farces. Twain heightens the alienness of foreign language through a willful misunderstanding of translation. When transferring meaning between one language and another, even at the most basic level, it is not enough to mechanically translate each word as it appears in order. The syntax must also be translated into the rules of the target language. By performing what he calls “a perfectly literal translation,” ignoring the necessary changes of syntax and rendering each word in order, Twain produces a ridiculously strange English translation that is supposed to convey the “awfulness” of the German original (603). For example, he “translates” one sentence, “But when he, upon the street, the (in-satin-and-silk-covered-now-very-unconstrainedly-

³¹ Interestingly, Holger Kersten further connects language and tourism in his argument that, “In the same way other tourists collect bric-a-brac, Twain seems to have intently collected the curiosities of the German language” (202).

after-the-newest-fashioned-dressed) government counsellor's wife *met*" (603-604). Twain presents this series of parenthetical phrases and interminable compounds as empirical evidence of German's cumbersome construction. But the evidence is unfair. It replicates for the English-speaking reader the experience not of German as read by a fluent speaker, but of German frozen in a state of early language acquisition, when everything seems inherently foreign and strange. Twain creates a similarly jarring effect by translating the gender of German pronouns literally, referring to a "Fishwife" as "it," "One of the Fishes" as "he," and a "Scale" as "she" (608-609). In the resulting "Tale of the Fishwife and Its Sad Fate," Twain's unconventionally "literal" translation of German grammar is inherently confusing because English and German gender their antecedents differently (608-609). By presenting a mix of English vocabulary and German grammar that belongs to neither language, Twain uses the pretense of "literal translation" to ossify the strangeness of a new system of grammar, implying that the grammar of German is inherently "awful" when its rules are merely different. The effect of this distorted version of "literal" translation is similar to Twain's tracing of the dueling sword. Twain seems to present the most accurate version of German possible, but by too closely "tracing" the original, he replicates the shape but loses the true experience of German for a German speaker.

A similar treatment of translation can be found in another linguistic burlesque that Twain wrote during the period, "The 'Jumping Frog.' In English. Then in French. Then Clawed Back into a Civilized Language Once More by Patient, Unremunerated Toil" (1875). As the lengthy title suggests, the piece consists of three versions of Twain's famous story "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County": the original, a

translation into French, and Twain's own "translation" of that French version back into English. The target of Twain's satire is a review of his works in the French periodical *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which was accompanied by a French translation of "Jumping Frog," both composed by Marie-Thérèse Blanc under the penname "Th. Bentzon" (Wilson 538).³² In the brief explanation that introduces his collection of "Jumping Frog" versions, Twain bristles that, although "Jumping Frog is a funny story, [Bentzon] can't see why it should ever really convulse anyone with laughter" (29). Twain is indignant that the translated tale offered as proof of this lukewarm praise is "not translated . . . at all," but that Bentzon "has simply mixed it all up" (29). Following these complaints, Twain offers the reader a reprinting of the French version as "proof" of his grievance. He further explains, so "that even the unlettered may know my injury and give me their compassion, I have been at infinite pains and trouble to re-translate this French version back into English" (29). Although Twain admits that his spoken French is poor, and that the retranslation required great effort, he also claims he "can translate very well" and implicitly suggests that his back-translation will be a more accurate representation of the French version than the French version was of the original (29). While Twain's scathing reaction to Bentzon's translation may be attributed to his general dislike of the French (see Scott 115, 249), or to the inherent difficulty of translating either humor or dialect literature (see Halliday 84), several have also read it as a critique of translation more

³² In his response, Twain assumes Bentzon is male. Mark K. Wilson and Marc Shell ("Prized") both provide interesting analyses of Bentzon's review and her general views of international literature.

generally.³³ In any case, the piece offers little hope of worthwhile or effective cross-cultural communication.

Whatever his motive, Twain uses the same deliberate misunderstanding of what translation entails that is found in “The Awful German Language” to demonstrate to his “unlettered” readers that Bentzon’s French translation is a failure. As Sewell explains:

Twain’s retranslation is not “fair” because he does not limit himself to parodying the formal diction and grammar of Bentzon’s translation. Instead, he mocks the French language itself, . . . confusing tenses and pronoun genders and cognates . . . and perversely translating idioms word for word so as to make nonsense of them. (69-70)

Like any translator, Bentzon made a series of difficult choices in rendering Twain’s American idiom into French. But Twain’s critique is not limited to the shortcomings of such artistic choices. Instead, he retranslates French idioms, which sound natural and make perfect sense in French, in an overly literal way. In the first version of the tale, for example, Simon Wheeler begins: “well, there was a feller here once by the name of *Jim*

³³ Sewell suggests that “[t]he most important general implication of the sketch is that Simon Wheeler—and therefore Mark Twain—*cannot exist in French*, because direct discourse can never be preserved in translation” (69). Accordingly, the piece not only joins “The Awful German Language” in lampooning the oddities of foreign expression, but it also indicates a deeper distrust in the potential of translation to bridge the language gap, casting doubt on the possibility of any cross-cultural understanding. Similarly, Shell argues, “Twain hints that good translation—an accurate ‘exchange’—is an impossibility” (“Prized” 511). Sewell also argues that Twain’s play with the French translation and English “retranslation” continue and complicate the “problematic of framing, translation, and quotation that figures in” the original tale (68). Supporting such a view, James E. Caron reads the original story as a play with narration: “Simon Wheeler’s garrulity produces the marvelously humorous and exquisitely absurd spectacle of a man drifting serenely through his ‘queer yarn without ever smiling’” (255). In addition, Twain continues this play with various versions in “Private History of the ‘Jumping Frog’ Story” by comparing his own tale to an ancient Greek story eerily similar in all particulars. He explains the similarity by concluding, “I think it must be the case of history actually repeating itself, and not a case of a good story floating down the ages and surviving” (447-48).

Smiley, in the winter of '49—or may be it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly" (30). Bentzon's version begins: "—Il y avait une fois ici un individu connu sous le nom de Jim Smiley: c'était dans l'hiver de 49, peut-être bien au printemps de 50, je ne me rappelle pas exactement" (35). As in any translation, there are choices here worth discussing, such as "individu" for "feller," but Twain's retranslation does not focus on such disputable preferences. Instead, he back-translates the French in a ludicrously literal fashion: "It there was one time here an individual known under the name of Jim Smiley; it was in the winter of '49, possibly well at the spring of '50, I no me recollect not exactly" (39). Rather than making even the most basic grammatical changes in order to follow the rules of the target language, Twain translates the idiomatic construction "Il y avait," the preposition "sous," and the reflexive verb "me rappelle" word for word, rendering them awkward and nearly nonsensical in English. His "clawed back" translation is full of such examples.

When examined from the perspective of what translation actually entails, Twain's comic rendering of the French "Jumping Frog" is too exaggeratedly terrible to be taken as any kind of serious evidence of Bentzon's failure. Portraying Twain's ridiculous translation in the most complimentary light, Sewell argues that, "by making us stumble over the manifold awkwardnesses in an overliteral French-to-English translation, Twain forces us to ask whether authentic translation is ever possible" (70). Supporting this argument for Twain's critical intentions, several moments in *A Tramp Abroad* demonstrate deeper understanding of what real translation requires, Twain's fairly

successful translation of “The Lorelei” not least among them (146).³⁴ Such examples indicate that Twain’s strategic use of poor translation in “The Awful German Language” and “The Jumping Frog . . .” must be somewhat tongue in cheek. Still, the extent of Twain’s vitriol makes it too easy to laugh at Bentzon. The spurious empiricism of offering these parallel versions as “proof” of her failure—the same empiricism found in “The Awful German Language”—can trick the reader into believing that Twain’s translation accurately portrays the French version. Indeed, the case of Harriet Beecher Stowe demonstrates that growing numbers of Americans both at home and abroad were becoming more linguistically isolated and, as a consequence, less likely to think seriously about what translation actually entails. As Lawrence Venuti demonstrates, translators have a history of “invisibility” that has made both readers and scholars alike underappreciate and misunderstand the complex nature of translation and the difficult choices any translator must face (12-13). In light of this widespread ignorance, it seems likely that many of Twain’s readers would not have understood the violence his overly literal translation was doing to the French version, and hence may not have recognized the unfairness of his supposedly empirical evidence. Missing the potential nuances of

³⁴ Another notable translation of Twain’s is the German children’s book *Der Struwwelpeter*, which Twain translated as “Slovenly Peter.” As Everett Emerson describes, “In the fall [of 1891] the Clemenses settled in Berlin, where the writer devoted three days and nights to the translation of *Der Struwwelpeter*, which he called ‘the most celebrated child’s book in Europe,’” and which, despite the author’s apparent intentions, was not published until 1935 (188). While recognizing the various flaws and liberties of Twain’s translation, Susanna Ashton and Amy Jean Petersen call it “a work of energy and wit that may have better reflected the tenor of the original Hoffmann poems than did many of the more widely published translations” (36). Stahl’s article “Mark Twain’s ‘Slovenly Peter’ in the Context of Twain and German Culture” also provides an interesting reading of Twain’s translation, which, Stahl argues, “is more indebted to the American experiences of the frontier than to the German ‘*Kultur der Zurückhaltung*’ or ‘culture of restraint’” (211).

Twain's play with translation, it seems likely that many would have merely laughed at the absurdity of the French language.

Moreover, even when Twain is most critical of translation as an artificial mediation akin to pretentious travel accounts, he differs from his predecessors in offering no alternative model of cross-cultural understanding. For Twain, translation is imperfect not because some untranslated words convey meaning better—Cooper's cosmopolitan perspective—but because foreign sentiments often cannot be understood, or are not even worth understanding. Although Twain critiques the imperfect mediation of translation just as he critiques the superficiality of guides and guidebooks, he fails to offer any hope of real cross-cultural understanding. His only solution to mediation and miscommunication is a no-nonsense disregard for European culture. Twain's treatment of translation thus exemplifies the frequent disparity between the most critical reading of his satire and the more prejudiced or nationalist readings it often invites. As the following examination of the author's later career reveals, this gap widened over time. Despite the attitudes toward cultural difference presented in his works, Samuel Clemens continued in his desire to learn European language. As Cooper might have predicted, this continued study, as well as his extensive time abroad, broadened Clemens's personal views of the foreign, although it did not quite change his public persona.

The Growing Cosmopolitanism of Samuel Clemens

This project has illustrated a gradual change in American attitudes toward other parts of the world as reflected in American travel and travel writing. But just as countries change, so, of course, do individual people, if on a shorter timeline. Thus, the Mark Twain of 1867 epitomizes the rise of tourism, but the man at century's end, modified by

age and experience, does not so perfectly mirror the collective attitude of his nation. This natural, personal change is complicated, however, by the complex relationship between Mark Twain and Samuel Clemens. Both *Innocents Abroad* and *A Tramp Abroad* uphold a nationalistic ideal of linguistic and cultural superiority that is exemplified by the persona of Mark Twain, but this provincialism does not necessarily correspond to the attitudes of Samuel Clemens, who demonstrates a growing cosmopolitanism toward the end of his life. Thus, the divide between Twain's "innocent" persona and the increasingly international outlook of his creator widens throughout Twain's later career.

Clemens adopted the pseudonym "Mark Twain" in his early years as a newspaper reporter when, according to James E. Caron, he began using the name to signal pieces containing "comic disruptions of journalistic norms" (137). During his 1866 visit to Hawaii as a travel correspondent for the newspaper *Alta California*, Clemens signed Mark Twain to his published letters, adapting the persona to the genre of burlesque travel narrative, but he used his given name while traveling around the islands (Rogers 38-39; Frear 18). During the *Quaker City* cruise, however, things became less clear as, in an oft-cited example, Clemens began to occasionally sign letters (including one to his mother) "Mark" (Ganzel 69; Caron 389).³⁵ These facts have led to widespread disagreement over what to call the author of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*. While some critics advocate the one extreme of treating "Mark Twain" as a purely fictional character (see Robinson, "Mark" 16), others agree with Ziff in asserting, that for all intents and purposes, "by the close of the century the Sam Clemens who in 1863 had created Mark Twain had turned

³⁵ As Caron points out, "Signing a letter or an inscription to one's mother with a pseudonym obviously indicates a complex sense of identity" (389).

into him” (*Mark* 9).³⁶ As Caron argues, however, the relation between Mark Twain and Samuel Clemens is more complicated than this, and “‘Mark Twain’ therefore does not just indicate a pseudonym, but neither does it exactly signify a comic character wholly separate from its author” (12).³⁷ Mark Twain was a complex persona that Clemens could and did embody, but the figure of Mark Twain does not fully encompass or represent all of the thoughts and opinions that the man could have held. The disparity between the views of foreign language expressed in Twain’s published works and the real experiences of Samuel Clemens is only one of many areas that highlight this complex relationship.

Even though the distinction is never clear-cut, the divide between Twain and Clemens is quite useful in clarifying his changing views of American identity and nationalism. While Clemens’s cosmopolitanism grew, and a degree of his worldly experience inevitably bled through into the writings he signed Mark Twain, the views openly professed by his authorial persona more frequently belong to the common tourist

³⁶ Baetzhold, however, cautions against eliding the two figures: “Many studies run aground because they take at face value some of the views expressed in ostensibly autobiographical works like *The Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It*. . . . [I]t is important to separate the man Samuel Clemens from the many ‘poses’ of the writer Mark Twain” (xii). James M. Cox presents an opposing view: “For Samuel Clemens, Mark Twain became the means of realizing himself. The pseudonym neither concealed, obliterated, nor narrowed his identity, but exposed and freed it” (20).

³⁷ With further relevance to the issues of mass tourism, Ann M. Ryan reads the figure of “Mark Twain” as a model of modernity: “For if the celebrity persona of ‘Mark Twain’ represents one of the important byproducts of urbanity—he is in many ways an artificial person, an amalgam of imagination, industry, and technology—Samuel Clemens, the author of that mask, narrates the impoverished truths that frequently make this artifice such a powerful commodity. Twain anticipates American modernism: the intractability of race and nation, the tyrannies of industrialism and religion, and the promise, as well as the illusion, of a transnational, transhistorical, transcendent individuality. His narrative insights also resonate uncannily with the literary and political theories of a postmodern and postcolonial world” (2).

he once epitomized than to the international traveler he had become. Thus, Twain becomes useful for demonstrating one final change in American travel at the turn of the twentieth century. Previously, in an age in which only the comparatively wealthy and cultured could travel, Cooper could adequately represent the majority of Americans abroad. With the growing accessibility of international travel, however, the attitudes of American travelers in Europe began to correspond to the concurrent division of high-brow and low-brow literature. While Clemens, the traveling, and well-traveled, dignitary began to mirror the expatriate literati epitomized by Cooper—and later, but with important differences, by James—Clemens’s authorial persona, Mark Twain, continued to emulate the low-brow and classless “ugly American.”

Despite its overwhelmingly touristic leanings, *A Tramp Abroad* reveals the beginnings of Clemens’s increasingly cosmopolitan outlook. For example, while commenting on the broad appeal of “low-grade music” in comparison to music of the more elevated sort, “which requires a higher faculty, a faculty which must be assisted and developed by teaching” (102), Twain shifts to a parallel discussion of the inaccessibility of high-brow works of art. He then writes of painter Joseph. M. W. Turner:

A Boston newspaper reporter went and took a look at the Slave Ship floundering about in that fierce conflagration of reds and yellows, and said it reminded him of a tortoise-shell cat having a fit in a platter of tomatoes. In my then uneducated state, that went home to my non-cultivation, and I thought here is a man with an unobstructed eye. [sic] Mr. Ruskin would have said: This person is an ass. That is what I would say, now. (102)

The Boston reporter’s comic image exemplifies the irreverent humor of Mark Twain as it would have been presented without blush or retraction in *Innocents Abroad*. But here, Twain calls this no-nonsense view the opinion of an uncultured ass. It is a rare glimpse of how Twain’s provincialism becomes moderated by Clemens’s own growing

cosmopolitanism. Despite its offhand inclusion, this admission of an increased appreciation of fine art, a target of repeated derision in *Innocents Abroad*, suggests that Clemens *has* been influenced by the culture of Europe.

This same open-mindedness is evidenced by Clemens's ongoing study of the German language, despite the criticisms Twain expresses so strongly in print. The Clemens family prepared for their 1878 trip to Europe by studying foreign language, and Clemens continued his study of German for the rest of his life. Nevertheless, some critics show reserve in assessing Clemens's proficiency. According to Richard H. Cracroft, "Twain was, in fact, bedeviled by the German language, and his journals and notebooks reveal increasing frustration and complaints about the 'perplexing' tongue" (12).³⁸ Still, as Carl Dolmetsch chronicles in great detail in his study of Clemens's extended residence in Vienna, Samuel Clemens's respectable German allowed him to cut a far more cosmopolitan figure than Mark Twain would allow readers to believe possible.

The Samuel Clemens who traveled on the *Quaker City* was to a large extent, like Mark Twain, an American innocent, but as the author spent more and more time abroad,

³⁸ John B. Hoben argues that the humor of Twain's critiques of German was "all the richer because it flowed from one who, in spite of his self-depreciation, was fond of it and sufficiently skilled to lecture in it and translate it with audacity, if not proficiency" (164). Further, Scott describes how "Mark Twain's interest in the German language continued to show itself both in his notebooks and in his private correspondence," in which the author "lapsed into German[,] . . . copied lines of German poetry[,] and made lists of German words and expressions" (132). Raab also comments on Clemens's interest in German: "Mark Twain was very familiar with Germany; he spoke German fairly well, and he assessed Germany in a number of his writings" (381). In contrast, Ursula Thomas demonstrates how the "uncritical judgment of Mark Twain's prowess in learning languages" encouraged by his private notebooks "is offset by his daughter Clara's much later assessment" that her father could sometimes speak German, but "'other times he would make no attempt to speak anything but English, and if Viennese ladies and gentlemen who called were unable to speak anything but German, great misunderstandings took place as to what the topic of conversation really was'" (135-36).

it would have become impossible to maintain the same level of naive provincialism.³⁹

Everett Emerson describes how, in June 1891, Clemens began a decade of “obligatory mobility,” primarily for his wife’s health, but also because of the decreased expense of living abroad:

During these years Clemens visited America frequently on business; in 1893-94, one stay lasted nine months. But his residence was in Europe, in Aix-les-Bains, Marienbad, Berlin, Bad Nauheim, Florence, Munich, Paris, London, Lucerne, Vienna, and elsewhere, with a full year occupied with a round-the-world lecture tour. The retreat was symbolic of his state of mind. He was an American writer who had virtually lost his once inimitable voice and was groping now even for his identity. (185)

Messent calls Twain, “virtually an expatriate” during this period (*Cambridge* 7), and such expatriation had unavoidable consequences for his world outlook.⁴⁰ If an appreciation for foreign language is one important mark of cosmopolitanism, as the past chapters have demonstrated, then these worldly views would appear to be in direct contrast to the narrowly provincial attitudes expressed in “The Awful German Language” or “The ‘Jumping Frog’ . . . Clawed Back.” While the Mark Twain persona continued to support a position of linguistic nationalism, Samuel Clemens became increasingly cosmopolitan in his recognition of the validity, but also of the inherent incommensurability, of different

³⁹ Scott makes a similar argument: “From its inception *A Tramp Abroad* had no chance of approximating the bubbling spontaneity of its predecessor. Gone from Mark Twain’s nature was the untutored Americanism, half-amused but bristling, of 1867. Twelve years of associating almost exclusively with people of culture in the East and abroad had cost him much of the charming innocence which had animated his first travel book. The chasm between Mark Twain and the Old World was contracting. On this latest excursion, for example, he even brought home foreign furnishings and bric-a-brac worth well over five thousand dollars” (121).

⁴⁰ As Scott argues, “He had not become global in his fame without becoming global in his thinking as well” (vii). Carl Dolmetsch (6), Janice McIntire-Strasburg (232), Peter Messent (“Not” 202), and Ann M. Ryan (2) all support these arguments, calling Twain a cosmopolitan and a transnational figure.

languages and cultures—although he never matched Cooper or Melville in his ability to reach a golden mean of cross-cultural understanding between assimilation and incomprehensibility.

Twain's growing ambivalence toward foreign language and culture becomes evident in his last major piece of travel writing, *Following the Equator* (1897), in which he on one hand continues many of the linguistic jokes of *Innocents* and *A Tramp Abroad*, but on the other hand treats the issues of colonialism and imperialism with far greater seriousness. In 1895, Clemens, accompanied by his wife and one of his three daughters, began a lecture tour around the world in order to repay his extensive debts (R. Cooper 1).⁴¹ After lecturing east to west across the United States, Twain visited Australasia, India, and South Africa, making numerous other stops along the way. After returning to London, the family was to be joined by Clemens's two other daughters, but one died before they could be reunited (R. Cooper 314). As Scott describes, Clemens had difficulty "mask[ing] the despair in his soul" after this family tragedy (224), and it may have contributed to the increased seriousness and pessimism most critics find in *Following the Equator*.⁴² Because Twain was living in England at the time of its

⁴¹ Robert Cooper's *Around the World with Mark Twain* provides a fascinating look at this trip as well as an account of Cooper's own experiences recreating it one hundred years later.

⁴² Bridgman writes that "signs of unmitigated and even invented pessimism [permeate] the book" (128). Daniel J. Philippon argues, even more critically, "Taken as a whole, *Following the Equator* is not Twain at his best. He is often dull and uninspired; too frequently he relies on his notes, sometimes inserting them with little or no alteration into the text; and, when excessive, his quotation from the works of other writers can become tiresome" (6). Others connect the book's seriousness to Twain's critique of imperialism. For example, Robinson asserts, "Its humorous interludes notwithstanding, the book is

composition and publishing, it is not very surprising that many scholars have chosen the British edition of the work, entitled *More Tramps Abroad*, as the text better representative of the author's intention. Not only does it contain fewer deletions than the American version, but it was set from Twain's manuscript, and he read the proofs (E. Emerson 226; Shillingsburg xi). In the following reading, I will use the British edition of *More Tramps Abroad* and refer to it by that name.

The British title indicates continuity with Twain's previous foreign travelogues, and indeed, *More Tramps Abroad* does reiterate many of the linguistic jokes of its predecessors. For example, the section about India is full of criticism for the faulty English of Twain's servants and guides. Describing one, Twain writes, "Where he gets his English is his own secret. There is nothing like it elsewhere in the earth; or even in paradise perhaps, but the other place is probably full of it" (245). Criticizing the poor English of foreigners is, of course, a typical offense of the "ugly American." More interestingly, Twain intensifies his previous mockery of cross-cultural exchange to outright linguistic snobbery when he reverses an old joke. This time, when his servant begins to speak incomprehensibly, Twain says, "I can't understand Hindostani," only to get the reply, "Not Hindostani, master—English" (248). This time, it is not his own, but the foreigner's (or more properly, the local's) language that is deficient to the point of unrecognizability. Also continuing a previous running gag, Twain renames his Indian guides, not as "Ferguson" but, even more problematically, as "Satan." One reason, he explains, is that Indian names are so long. And once again, the traveling American cannot

first and foremost a troubled, often angry report on the misery wrought by Western imperialism along the equatorial black belt" ("Innocent" 43).

be bothered to learn the alien appellations of foreigners.⁴³ In *More Tramps Abroad*, as in his earlier works and the lectures about language he continued to deliver throughout the trip, linguistic difference is merely something to laugh at.⁴⁴

As the foregoing examples suggest, Twain is most critical of language in the section about India. He mocks both the unwieldy native languages and the Indians' use of English. When Twain describes a letter from a "Hindoo youth," he most clearly reveals his ideal of what foreign English should be like: "The handwriting was excellent, and the wording was English—English, and yet not exactly English. The style was easy and smooth and flowing, yet there was something subtly foreign about it—something tropically ornate and sentimental and rhetorical" (412). There are two salient aspects to this youth's use of English, and Twain seems enamored with both of them. On the one hand, both the neat penmanship and general clarity of the piece show a fastidious concern for preserving the integrity of the English language, and they minimize any difficulties that Twain may have in understanding the message. These virtues prevent two of Twain's most frequent criticisms: incomprehensibility and the massacre of English grammar. On the other hand, once any barriers to understanding are removed, Twain appreciates the

⁴³ He jokes of another man, for example, "We named him Barney for short; we couldn't use his real name, there wasn't time" (278). After yet another rant on the subject, Twain connects this criticism to his previous jabs at foreign language. He says of a name with "fifty eight letters in it": "This removes the long German words from competition; they are permanently out of the race" (351). Illustrating the break between such Twainian jokes and Clemens's personal views, however, it is interesting to note that the author's journals of the trip refer to one servant only as "Mousa" or "Mouza," never "Satan" (R. Cooper 200).

⁴⁴ Robert Cooper gives one example of Twain's continued delivery of "The Awful German Language" (52). Miriam Jones Shillingsburg also provides extensive descriptions of the content of Twain's lectures in Australia. Her index contains an extensive entry for the subheading "German Language" under "Stories" (239).

“tropically ornate” foreignness of the man’s English. His assessment reveals not only a latent preference for picturesque primitivism, but also the suggestion that it would not be fitting for an Indian man to speak or write English as if he were a white American or Englishman. Although Twain values the ease of communication made possible by the Indian’s clear English writing, he suggests that evidence of the writer’s foreignness is desirable or even necessary to mark him as manifestly “other.” Once again, linguistic difference is valued not for broadening provincial perspectives but for its ability to demarcate national boundaries.

Despite its treatment of cross-cultural communication in India, *More Tramps Abroad* does depart from the thorough provincialism of Twain’s previous works. In sharp contrast to earlier travel writings, even Twain’s narrative persona tours the world not as a callow tourist but as the famous author and lecturer. Indeed, the work begins by highlighting this new, cosmopolitan status. Twain writes, “The starting-point of this lecturing trip around the world was Paris, where we had been living a year or two” (1). The trip begins with a cross-country lecture tour in the United States, but the Clemens family must first “[sail] for America” (1). Although the details of Clemens’s expatriate status are not elaborated in the narrative, this opening reveals that he is no longer the typical American citizen and resident. He is no longer an American “innocent.”

The most significant sign of Twain’s worldlier outlook is his critique of imperialism. In the years after the publication of *More Tramps Abroad*, Twain would become active in the American Anti-imperialist league, declaring his membership in

1900 (Zwick 3).⁴⁵ While traveling in 1895, however, Twain already expresses great sympathy for native populations. As Ziff argues, the “pages dealing with the dignity of native peoples and the despicable mendacity of their colonial exploiters foreshadow the social critic who was to become increasingly vehement in his attacks on imperialism” (*Mark* 54). Nevertheless, while it is necessary to recognize Twain’s obvious distaste for the injustices of imperialism, one cannot do so without also acknowledging his more subtly racist attitudes.⁴⁶

Still, *More Tramps Abroad* contains many passages expressing Twain’s clear disapproval of colonial and imperial practices. For instance, he exposes the trickery and injustice of “French and English recruiting crews” who practically snatch Pacific natives from their homes to be transported to Australia (45). He concludes, “Thus exile to Queensland—with the opportunity to acquire civilization, an umbrella, and a pretty poor

⁴⁵ Both Jim Zwick and Amy Kaplan offer extensive analysis of Twain’s avowed anti-imperialism. Kaplan connects his views to the experience gained from a life of traveling: “In his anti-imperialist writing from his last dark decade, Twain brought lessons to bear from his earliest writing and worldwide travels. As a writer, the power—and limits—of his critique can be found less in a summary of his political ideas than in the way he wielded language as a weapon against injustice” (“Conquest” 69). Further, John Carlos Rowe argues, “The scholarly identification of Twain’s ideological limitations, at least by today’s standards, should in no way trivialize the great achievement of his critique of European and emerging U.S. imperialisms” (*Literary* 139).

⁴⁶ Yothers suggests that “Mark Twain uses exoticism both to condemn racism and reinforce certain strands of racialism” (“Facing” 115). Hellwig seems to highlight this ambivalence unintentionally: “This is a common theme in *Following the Equator*, that the civilized, European, and white ethnicities have become anti-Christian and barbaric in their dealings with the native populations of the countries that they rape and pillage. The white has become a savage, more savage than the traditional ‘savages’ of the world, supposedly uncivilized and uneducated, and justifiably ruled by the superior white savage” (129). While this reading makes Twain’s obvious criticism of colonial practices clear, it also reveals that he does little to think beyond the received dichotomy of civilization and savagery.

quality of profanity—is twelve times as deadly for [the Kanaka] as war. Common Christian charity, common humanity, does seem to require, not only that these people be returned to their homes, but that war, pestilence, and famine be introduced among them for their preservation” (50). With typically facetious humor, Twain decries the supposed “benefits” of civilization that such “recruits” would acquire, and the near inevitable death and misfortune to which this abduction will subject them. Twain expands upon this critique by ironically praising a mass-poisoning of Australian aborigines in contrast to the more common and less criticized injustices of other colonizers. He lists a series of less human offenses including (most relevantly for the United States): “In many countries we have taken the savage’s land from him, and made him our slave, and lashed him every day, and broken his pride, and made death his only friend, and overworked him till he dropped in his tracks; and this we do not care for, because custom has inured us to it, yet a quick death by poison is loving-kindness to it” (137). Compared to such lengthy torture, Twain suggests that genocide by poison may be a mercy. Despite Howard G. Baetzhold’s perceptive observation that Twain “almost invariably . . . directed his criticisms not at Britain but at human nature generally” (182), such examples show an increasing degree of sympathy toward foreign peoples.

Twain is somewhat more subtle when critiquing the “benefits” white civilization has conferred upon Hawaii. Even though his scheduled lecture there had to be canceled because of a cholera outbreak, Twain takes the occasion of sailing by the islands to reflect on his 1866 trip. In his early letters to the *Alta California*, as Amy Kaplan contends, Twain “satirized the missionaries’ effort to ‘civilize’ the natives, yet he also saw Hawaiians through the gaze of the colonizer as childlike, primitive, and inferior”

(“Conquest” 69).⁴⁷ In his final travelogue, however, Twain is more critical of the white occupation of Hawaii, as when he describes the precipitous drop in “native population” since the first white contact. He concludes: “All intelligent people praise Kamehameha I. and Liholiho for conferring upon their people the great boon of civilization. I would do it myself, but my intelligence is out of repair now from overwork” (23). While popular opinion insists that the occupation and annexation of Hawaii have benefited the once-savage society, Twain cannot reconcile such received wisdom with the near destruction of the native population.

One of the most interesting points about Hawaii, and one which reoccurs in Twain’s writings, is the figure of the translator Ragsdale. In his 1866 letters, Twain describes Ragsdale with a combination of respect and anxiety. He first introduces him as “Bill Ragsdale, a ‘half white’ (half white and half Kanaka), who translated [an official document] and clattered it off in Kanaka with a volubility that was calculated to make a slow-spoken man like me distressingly nervous” (*Letters* 110). But it is not only the speed of the foreign language that makes Twain uneasy. Despite praising Ragsdale for his ability to translate in both directions, his “turning every Kanaka speech into English and every English speech into Kanaka, with a readiness and felicity of language that are remarkable,” Twain admits that there is “a spice of deviltry in the fellow’s nature” that will drive him to “drop in a little voluntary contribution occasionally in the way of a word or two that will make the gravest speech utterly ridiculous” (111). Twain obviously

⁴⁷ Christopher McBride even further connects Twain with America’s expansionist practices by explaining that, by “[a]rguing for commercial expansion into the Pacific, he discovered a colonial stance upon which most of his audience could agree” (*Colonizer* 65).

admires this “rascal” for doing just what Twain himself does when playing with the act of translation, twisting the transference of meaning to create humor. At the same time, Twain does not seem entirely comfortable with the power this man of mixed race gains from the position of translator.⁴⁸

Still, Ragsdale continued to be a powerful figure in the mind of Twain, who even planned to write a novel about him.⁴⁹ Following this continued fascination, Twain’s description of Ragsdale in *More Tramps Abroad* is less ambivalent in its praise. Twain calls him “a brilliant young fellow” who “[a]s an interpreter . . . would have been hard to match anywhere” (30). In contrast to his earlier emphasis on Ragsdale’s deceitful streak, Twain describes how, after discovering an early sign of leprosy that he easily could have concealed from his fiancée, Ragsdale “would not be treacherous to the girl that loved him” and “would not marry her to a doom like his” (30). The figure of Ragsdale adds yet another wrinkle to Twain’s complex relationship with translation. Although, in Twain’s youth, the “half-caste” man may have symbolized both the power of the translator and the danger of such cultural mixing, Twain’s continued interest in him reveals a deeper appreciation of translation than can be found in the majority of the author’s public works.

⁴⁸ Kaplan, too, connects Ragsdale’s translation to Twain’s own satire: “Twain is intrigued by Ragsdale’s facility at translation from Kanaka to English. Part of this fluency gives him the power of a trickster or parodist, like Twain himself” (“Imperial” 246; also see *Anarchy* 87). McBride takes a more critical position when he argues that Twain is “intent on disparaging this man who possesses more foreign language skill than he does” (*Colonizer* 75).

⁴⁹ Baetzhold speculates that the planned novel “would have presented a contrast between the old and new civilizations in the islands, with the proponents of the old superstitions resisting the efforts of the Christian missionaries” (98-99).

Ragsdale's positive portrayal in *More Tramps Abroad* marks Clemens's increasingly inclusive and cosmopolitan outlook.

Both the growth and the limits of Twain's cosmopolitanism are perhaps best illustrated by one of the larger sections of *More Tramps Abroad*, Twain's account of his visit to Australia. Twain departs from his previous narrow-minded nationalism in his frank regard for Australian culture. For example, Twain demonstrates a relish for Australian language. He admires some examples of slang, calling them "expressive ones," and describing his first time hearing "the immortal 'My word!'" as "positively thrilling" (147). Likewise, instead of disparaging "the curious names of Australasian towns" as he had done with German words and Indian names, Twain appears to get great enjoyment from their strangeness. As Miriam Jones Shillingsburg recounts, one running joke of Twain's Australian lectures was his attempt to put the names of both animals and towns into doggerel verse (45-46). The fruit of these labors as it appears in *More Tramps Abroad* is a forty-eight-line poem in rhymed quatrains that uses sixty-six of the eighty-one "curious names" Twain lists (226-27). Here is one stanza:

The Murriwillumbo complaineth in song
For the garlanded bowers of Woolloomooloo,
And the Ballarat Fly and the lone Wollongong
They dream of the gardens of Jamberoo; (227)

The poem is undeniably silly, but it also betrays an enjoyment of linguistic difference untainted by harsh mockery or satire. Yet, despite this clear broadening of horizons, Twain's affinity for Australia may derive from the country's resemblance to the United States. Shillingsburg describes the virtues Twain found that Australians and Americans had in common, including "fast lifts and tall buildings" as well as a nature that was "unself-conscious, frank, open, unreserved, independent, and not exclusive" (76). Twain

can thus admire Australia's particularities while still emphasizing the underlying beliefs and priorities of American culture. Moreover, the linguistic difference of Australia, like English in India, is of the most comforting kind for Twain: it is readily comprehensible, but not without markers of a distinct national community.

Despite Twain's undeniably expanded horizons, the ambivalent depiction of cultural difference in *More Tramps Abroad* also betrays a belief in the inevitable dominance of the English language. In a discussion of the various names of constellations, Twain concludes, "In a little while now—I cannot tell exactly how long it will be—the globe will belong to the English-speaking race, and, of course, the skies also. Then the constellations will be reorganized and polished up, and renamed" (43). Most obviously, this ominous pronouncement could be classed with Twain's other critiques of the British Empire. But if disapproving of Britain's growing influence, Twain does not suggest that anything could be done to stop it. Whether this dominance would be benevolent or not, Twain predicts (more or less accurately) that all the world's peoples will eventually need to speak English.⁵⁰ The nuances of Twain's prediction are further suggested in the entry from *Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar* that introduces the book's conclusion: "I have travelled more than anyone else, and I have noticed that even the angels speak English with an accent" (484). On one hand, this motto suggests that Twain's extensive travels have taught him that there is no "standard" or ideal form of a language, and linguistic difference is a fact of human existence, not a mark of

⁵⁰ John Carlos Rowe also finds that, "[d]espite frequently expressed sympathies with native peoples throughout his travels on his global lecturing tour, Twain also appears to acknowledge the inevitability of Euro-American hegemony over the modern world" (*Literary* 122).

blameworthy otherness. In this way, the motto contrasts with the typically provincial and linguistically isolated outlook that imagines one's own speech is accent-less, just as only "foreigners" may seem to have an "ethnicity."⁵¹ At the same time, the maxim suggests that the reach of Anglophone culture extends even as far as heaven. But in lieu of a homogeneous monolingual community of cosmopolitan brotherhood, national differences are still clearly marked by accents, just like the ideal foreign English of the "Hindoo youth." Indeed, Twain's presentation of Anglophone imperialism is much like the "vanishing Indian" trope of Cooper and other American writers. Twain is against the erosion of native language and culture on principle, but he appears at least partly relieved at the logistical problems such a disappearance will alleviate.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the American tourist, whether visiting Europe or more exotic locations, is rarely unable to find someone who speaks his or her language. Twain is able to "follow the equator" all of the way around the globe filling auditoriums with those eager to hear him speak in English, and even the Indian "god" who visits him has read *Huck Finn* (251). Thus, in contrast to the previous divide between "civilized" and "savage" language, Twain is able to equally mock German and Hindustani because neither can live up to his standard of American English, and it is equally unnecessary for a tourist to learn either. An extensive knowledge of foreign language is no longer a requirement or even a goal of cosmopolitanism. Instead, it is best confined to the impressive tricks of two ancillary figures who bracket the text: "the Maharaja of Mysore," who can memorize random sentences in a patchwork of languages

⁵¹ Werner Sollors examines the ideology of ethnicity in depth in his book *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*.

(9), and Helen Keller, whose passing of Harvard University's language examinations is a monument to overcoming adversity rather than a mark of usable skill (417). In light of such anecdotes, speaking a foreign language is about as impressive as juggling—and about as practical, too. In the end, the increased cosmopolitanism of the mature Samuel Clemens is offset in two ways: not only is the changing outlook of the man overshadowed by the provincialism of his persona, but the increased prevalence of the English language in all parts of the globe makes the linguistic proficiency of Clemens's predecessors less and less necessary, even for a traveling literary celebrity.

In the end, there can be no simple statement of Clemens/Twain's views of foreign language and culture, but at best a two-dimensional chart with the blurred distinction between author and persona on one axis and the timeline of his career on the other. Nevertheless, some things remain clear. Twain, like both Cooper and Melville before him, repeatedly addresses the value of linguistic difference, the permeability of the language barrier, and the nature of translation. In many ways, he continues the critiques of his predecessors, calling attention to the dangers of mediation and the folly of those who flaunt linguistic or cultural knowledge as an empty sign of pretention. Yet, in comparison to the travel writing of Cooper and Melville, Twain's works lack any viable alternative to the mediation of travel literature or the commodification of tourism. In many cases, he presents learning foreign language as an impossibility. Even when one accomplishes this difficult task, linguistic difference serves primarily as a marker of national belonging (or not belonging), and foreign terminology does little to convey any potentially enlightening cultural content. At times, Twain uses translation as a kind of

window into foreign speech, but by willfully misunderstanding the complicated transference of meaning that translation entails, his assumed linguistic innocence misconveys the experience, heightening the alienness of the foreign and ultimately suggesting that there is something inherently ridiculous in both foreign language and culture. Travel and translation are good jokes, but bad instructors. Near the end of his career, Twain becomes a strong advocate for anti-imperialism, but he never extends his critique to imperialist views of language. The health and safety of indigenous people should be preserved, but there seems to be little value in speaking to them, at least not in their native languages. But these views are not based in white supremacy. In contrast to the double standard for Western and non-Western culture at mid-century, Twain and his traveling American contemporaries apply the same cultural and linguistic nationalism to “civilized” Europeans and “primitive” savages alike.

CONCLUSION THE NEW IMPERIALISTIC COSMOPOLITE

The travel writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and their contemporaries demonstrate a strong connection between the representation of foreign language and the portrayal of cross-cultural exchange. Examining these writers in turn has also traced a trajectory of American travel that both responds to and defines America's relationships with Europe and with the "uncivilized" world. Although it was published before a number of Twain's own travel books, Henry James's novel *The American* (1877) represents the endpoint of this trajectory—the new figure of the expatriate American.¹ Reading the novel as part of the tradition of linguistic encounter elaborated in this project offers a final example of the theoretical relationships between linguistic, cultural, and economic exchange, demonstrating the value of foreign language as a lens for examining the way American authors position the United States in the world.

Indeed, if this study of traveling Americans stopped short of the work of Henry James, it would be a strange omission. James's early education abroad gave him a particularly worldly perspective, fostering an interest in travel and tourism that would continue throughout his career. There have been countless studies of James's "international theme," although opinions of how James balanced his cosmopolitanism

¹ It is the consensus of critics that James's 1907 revision of *The American* constitutes a different book than the original version. Because I am less interested in the changing views of James across his career than in the state of American travel in the last decades of the nineteenth century, I will confine my discussion to the text as originally written and published in the 1870s.

with a sense of nationalism differ.² Like previous travel writing, James's international fiction also engages with issues of multilingualism. Daniel Katz even connects James's "international theme" to the idea of translation:

The scene of translation abounds in James; not, of course, in the most literal sense of the word, but certainly in a more extended one: James continually, even obsessively, presents the trauma of the encounter with the radically foreign, and the resulting need to *transpose* that foreign into the comprehensible terms of the domestic[,] . . . the attempts on the part of characters to hear differently the meanings of their actions within a different system of exchange. (15)

As this project has demonstrated, the need to translate foreign systems of meaning, culture, and value into one's own terms is a perpetual element of travel and travel writing. But in the case of *The American*, the "scene of translation" is not confined to the "extended" sense of the term as Katz describes it. Rather, Christopher Newman's moments of cultural and economic exchange frequently occur alongside moments of linguistic transposition.³

² Sara Blair highlights the various forms of exchange involved in James's "international theme" when she describes James as "one who engages in sometimes tense if fluent exchange with the shifting currency of nation and race, and who variously and contextually works to construct a cultural subject . . . liberated into a problematically, peculiarly 'internationalist' or 'cosmopolitan' state of reception and response" (9). Andrew Taylor calls James "a cosmopolitan figure in the tradition of Washington Irving and Margaret Fuller" (13). For Roslyn Jolly, "Henry James without travel is inconceivable" (343). Adeline R. Tintner finds in James's work "a kind of cosmopolitanism only possible to an American who has been reared and educated in Europe" (2). See Robert Emmet Long for a description of James's early education abroad (*Henry* 3-4). Annick Duperray (3) and John Carlos Rowe ("Politics" 69) both discuss James's relation to nationalism.

³ With a similar focus, Cheryl B. Torsney argues, "At the heart of *The American* is Newman's narrative of himself as a successful American translator with a birthright to raid the resources and markets of the Old World in his desire to extend his empire of self. . . . *The American* can be described as an imperial fiction with a fiction of translation at its core, as a novel of disappointed cultural imperialism resulting from a failure of translation" (41). Edwin Sill Fussell also describes James's engagement with the foreign

Previous studies have also noted strong connections between *The American* and Twain's *Innocents Abroad*. For example, Robert Emmet Long asserts that "*The Innocents Abroad* makes Newman plausible as he appears at the opening in the Louvre, preferring copies of the old masterpieces to their originals" (Henry 49). Cheryl L. Ware makes an extensive comparison between the two works, examining their approaches to the opposition of America and Europe and how "both authors explore the nature of the typical American and the quality of innocence they both saw as peculiarly American" (50-51).⁴ But in spite of these connections, the tradition of foreign language encounters in American travel literature reveals several key distinctions between Newman and Twain's traveling Americans.

In Twain's travel writing, foreign language is inscrutable and unimportant. The *Quaker City* pilgrims are content to be, as Margaret Fuller puts it in her description of the growing tourist culture, "ciceroned" from sight to sight without any engagement with the culture of Europe (131). At first glance, Newman seems to conform to this model. Mrs. Tristram accuses Newman of being "the great Western Barbarian," and he earns the title

in terms of language: "the Henry James who so obviously took pleasure in talking to himself in French is the same Henry James who shook the American dust from his feet in favor of the Old World and then shook the dust of England from his feet as often as possible in favor of the continent and its romanticism of many languages" (20-21).

⁴ There are countless other examples. Henry Seidel Canby's *Turn West, Turn East* examines the lives and careers of Twain and James in tandem. Jeffrey Steinbrink also compares Newman to "Twain's fellow Pilgrims," asserting that both "conscientiously humble themselves before masterpieces of painting, architecture, and sculpture throughout their vagabondizing" (281). Hilton Obenzinger connects both to economics, arguing that "[l]ike Christopher Newman in James's *The American* . . . Twain's acculturation is bound by the cash nexus" (168). In their discussions of Twain's travel writing, James M. Cox (17), Franklin R. Rogers (47), and Peter Messent (*Cambridge* 43) all reference Christopher Newman or *The American*, and Armin Paul Frank calls *The American* "James's most Twainian romance-novel" (30).

in the opening Louvre scene with such gauche lapses of taste as “often admir[ing] the copy much more than the original” and “the damning fault . . . of confounding the merit of the artist with that of his work” (42, 17, 19). Yet, as the following reading will reveal, Newman has more in common with his cosmopolitan creator than Twain’s gauche persona does. Indeed, far from the “conceited American” identified by Fuller and epitomized by Twain’s travelers (see Scott 66), Christopher Newman falls closer to Fuller’s golden mean, seeking value in Europe while not becoming entirely subservient to European culture. Newman certainly lacks the genteel polish of Cooper’s natural aristocrats, but his desire to acquire the best of Europe is a model of the new American cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, most readers of *The American* have taken James at his word when he explains that Newman “had certain practical instincts which served him excellently in his trade of a tourist” (65). Armin Paul Frank calls Newman “an American tourist by the book” (30). John Carlos Rowe similarly describes Newman “as a caricature of the American tourist, exhausted by his efforts to comprehend the artistic sublimity of the Louvre[, m]arking his Baedeker, buying bad copies of masterpieces, counting the churches he has visited” (“Politics” 70-71). Edwin Sill Fussell even characterizes the genre of *The American* as “Tourist Fiction” (10-11). Indeed, when we learn that, to Newman, “[t]he world . . . was a great bazaar, where one might stroll about and purchase handsome things” (66), it is not difficult to imagine him as the epitome of the acquisitive American tourist, checking itinerary boxes and chipping bits of rock off of priceless monuments. Because Newman is a thoroughly “commercial person,” his European travel illustrates the growing connection between mass tourism and the culture of

consumerism.⁵ William W. Stowe uses the terminology of Jean-Christophe Agnew to call this conjunction between travel and economics “acquisitive cognition, the accumulation of cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual capital” (168). As depicted in *Innocents Abroad*, the tourist takes what can be easily acquired and leaves the rest uncomprehended.

On a level of economic exchange, Newman indeed epitomizes the tourist age. He clearly aspires to one goal William Stowe attributes to late-nineteenth-century American travelers—to gain “a sense of cultural legitimacy, an opportunity to turn economic power into cultural power, to run dollars through the machinery of the tourist infrastructure and convert them into cultural capital” (162). But as this study has demonstrated, just as the limits of linguistic translation are both caused and predicted by the difficulties of cultural and economic exchange in the contact zone between cultures, converting between systems of culture and currency is never straightforward. James explores this incommensurability in the opening scene of his novel, when the invaluable high culture of the museum, and of Europe more broadly, is brought into the marketplace as Newman commences bargaining for Noémie’s copy. James further explores the relation between artworks and commodities when Newman discusses his purchase with Mr. Tristram:

“Bought a picture?” said Mr. Tristram, looking vaguely round at the walls. “Why, do they sell them?”

“I mean a copy.”

“Oh, I see. These,” said Mr. Tristram, nodding at the Titians and Vandykes, “these, I suppose, are originals?”

⁵ Several critics have noted the importance of economics in James. For example, Jessica Berman argues that “the notion of the cosmopolitan for James . . . is always bound up with the conflict between local and global affiliations as well as with the problem of commerce” (140). Miranda El-Rayess further describes James’s complex relationship with consumerism, asserting that “[h]is skilful [sic] appropriations of the structure and devices of the shop window reflect his understanding of, and susceptibility to, the pervasive influence of contemporary consumer culture” (136).

“I hope so,” cried Newman. “I don’t want a copy of a copy.” (27)

Thus, Newman adheres to some desire for “authenticity,” but only at a remove. Moreover, by asking his initial, naive question, Tristram raises the possibility that the previously *priceless* artworks may indeed be available for purchase, at least if the price is set correctly. Michael Cronin’s comparison of translation to forgery adds an interesting dimension to this scene. Cronin explains that translators are often encouraged conceal the act of translation so that “[t]he text [reads] like an original” or “a successful forgery,” and further, that “poor translations resemble nothing more than sloppy reproductions” (“History” 40). Noémie’s own “sloppy reproduction,” both of the paintings she copies and of the deportment of a true lady like Claire de Cintré (C. Porter 109), parallels the novel’s many examples of translation. Thus, the novel’s plot can be read as a series of attempted exchanges between language, culture, and currency, although such translations never achieve perfect equivalency.⁶

But closer examination reveals that Newman is not quite the typical tourist.

Despite his acquisitive nature, or perhaps because of it, Newman demonstrates a far stronger desire to make the most of his travels than the average American abroad. While

⁶ This play with various systems of value has been observed before. Focusing on the exchange of women, Carolyn Porter argues, “[Newman’s] desire is unfulfillable. For the transcendent value he seeks to possess is by definition untranslatable into money. In seeking to marry Claire de Cintré, Newman wishes to acquire the unacquirable. If he were to succeed, she would have become acquirable” (104). Further comparing the women in the novel to artworks, Porter continues, “In short, the painting’s transcendent value as an aesthetic object depends upon its being priceless, upon its being removed from circulation in the art market and placed beyond the reach of money. The difference between an original and a copy, then, . . . depends upon its distinction from an economic order of value. In short, the aesthetic value of an object is designated by the sign ‘not for sale’” (107). Mark Seltzer’s reading of *The American* also examines how “aesthetic and sexual matters are not outside of or opposed to the economic, but rather are bound up with it, through and through and from the start” (134).

Mr. Tristram admits to never having been to the Louvre in six years of Parisian residence, Newman insists that he “should have come here once a week” (29). Newman further claims he wants to “get the best out of [Europe he] can” and insists, “I want the biggest kind of entertainment a man can get. People, places, art, nature, everything! I want to see the tallest mountains, and the bluest lakes, and the finest pictures, and the handsomest churches, and the most celebrated men, and the most beautiful women” (35). Newman’s desire for the superlatives of Europe may be arrogant and acquisitive, but it also reveals a genuine interest in the *best* rather than the *most famous*, an interest that is far from the usual touristic attitude.

James also endows his American with a genuine desire for intellectual growth, suggesting that, at least in some ways, Newman’s travel antithesizes the lack of cultural engagement characteristic of the beaten track:

He had always hated to hurry to catch railroad trains, and yet he had always caught them; and just so an undue solicitude for “culture” seemed a sort of silly dawdling at the station, a proceeding properly confined to women, foreigners, and other unpractical persons. All this admitted, Newman enjoyed his journey, when once he had fairly entered the current, as profoundly as the most zealous *dilettante*. One’s theories, after all, matter little; it is one’s humor that is the great thing. Our friend was intelligent, and he could not help that. He lounged through Belgium and Holland and the Rhineland, through Switzerland and Northern Italy, planning about nothing, but seeing everything. (67)

In *Views A-Foot*, Bayard Taylor described “English tourists” who were so engrossed in their guidebooks that “they sat and read about the very towns and towers they were passing, scarcely lifting their eyes to the real scenes” (54). This is far from Newman’s approach. James’s American has an outward disdain for a traveler’s “undue solicitude for ‘culture,’” for the fixation on what one is *supposed* to appreciate that replaces real experience with the words of guidebooks. What Newman dislikes is not the *culture* itself

but the act of “dawdling” about during its supposed acquisition. Rather than dwelling on the process of sight-seeing, Newman wants everything to *have been seen*. Yet he does not, like the typical tourist, wish only to have the cultural capital of having been there. Instead, Newman wants to acquire the best of everywhere with the least effort. Achieving this aim, he manages to acquire the cultural content of Europe without dwelling on the acts of touring and traveling. Newman is both the consummate tourist and its antithesis. His uncanny intelligence and capacity for observation allow him to see everything without becoming mired in the touristic apparatus that, in attempting to facilitate the seeing of Europe, risks replacing genuine experience with an empty pantomime of travel.

Newman’s unusual ability to engage in real “travel” while following the beaten track of tourism is mirrored in his relation to the French language. Just as Newman desires to see the best that Europe has to offer, he also wants to learn French. Before M. Nioche offers to give Newman lessons, the thought that he could learn the language had not crossed the American’s mind. “But isn’t it awfully difficult,” Newman asks, and he admits, “Hang me if I should ever have thought of it! I took for granted it was impossible” (24-25). And yet, once Newman believes it would be possible to learn a foreign language, the idea instantly appeals to him. He remarks, “I suppose that the more a man knows the better,” and “I suppose it would help me a great deal, knocking about Paris, to know the language” (24). Just like Cooper and other earlier travelers, Newman regards language acquisition as an aid to worthwhile travel and an intellectual improvement. Nevertheless, it appears that Newman’s lofty aims will be foiled by his own naiveté and by the duplicity of the Nioches. Noémie’s father has never taught French before, and “[i]t never occurred to Newman to ask him for a guarantee of his skill in

imparting instruction” (24). The reader is thus led to believe that, due to the American’s innocence in such worldly matters, the quality of Newman’s French instruction will be no better than that of the odious copy he has just purchased.

Despite this flaw in Newman’s instruction, he appears peculiarly successful in his plan to learn French.⁷ Even before the lessons begin, Newman is able to ask a local woman a question because “[h]e had begun to learn French” (51). Later, Noémie’s praise of Newman’s progress may not be entirely trustworthy, but the American responds to her banter with an apropos French phrase, “proving that he had learned more French than he admitted” (62). Indeed, M. Nioche’s instruction must be better than either man could have hoped, for by the end of the novel, Newman is able to “translate poor M. de Bellegarde’s French” for Mrs. Bread, who has lived in France for decades (268). Later, when Newman meets Urbain’s wife outside of the convent, they appear to have a complex and detailed conversation in French. At the end of a long paragraph of Madame de Bellegarde’s speech, James adds, “‘You know’—this was said in English—‘we have a plan for a little amusement’” (279). If, as this interjection seems to indicate, the rest of the conversation was in French, Newman has attained a degree of fluency to rival that of James himself. Thus, while Newman’s commercialism and his provincial behavior in the Louvre seem to mark him as the crass epitome of the ugly American tourist, this initial characterization is undermined as the novel progresses by his apparent facility with linguistic and cultural acquisition, demonstrating how the tourism revolution can result in a new kind of cosmopolitanism.

⁷ Fussell even suggests, “If *The American* had a subtitle it might be *Learning French*” (49). He also argues that Newman’s gradual acquisition of French is central to his “progressive characterization” (44).

Nevertheless, James's treatment of French, though radically different from Twain's views of foreign language, is also a significant departure from earlier models of linguistic cosmopolitanism. While Cooper called attention to the inherent differences of language, often leaving foreign language untranslated for that reason, James presents the translation between English and French as effortless and transparent. When Newman and Noémie first meet, they have an entire conversation without a common language. "*Combien*," which James labels as "the single word which constituted the strength of [Newman's] French vocabulary," may be sufficient to indicate that the American wishes to purchase Noémie's execrable copy, but their exchange is saturated with further interpretive leaps (19). When Noémie remarks, "It's a very beautiful subject," Newman is able to reply, "The Madonna, yes" (19-20). When Noémie justifies her exorbitant price by saying, "But my copy has remarkable qualities; it is worth nothing less," James explains Newman's uncanny comprehension only so far as to remark that the American "apprehended, by a natural instinct, the meaning of the young woman's phrase" (20). In the exchange that follows, James ingeniously ends each statement with an English-French cognate—*finish*, *delicate*, *address*, *constant*, *capricious*—implying that each interlocutor has caught this final word and used its likely translation to guess the entire statement's meaning. For example, when Newman insists, "I am very faithful, I am very constant. *Comprenez?*" Noémie is able to reply, "Monsieur is constant. I understand perfectly" (21). Despite the obvious help of shared vocabulary, such partial understanding can be just as faulty as total incomprehension, as Cooper's treatment of imperfect cross-cultural communication has demonstrated. But Newman and Noémie are remarkable for their

ability to bypass any difficulties of grammar or variations in pronunciation. James makes some effort to explain this half-magical understanding as a combination of intuition and being a person “upon whom nothing is lost” (cf. James’s “House of Fiction”), but the ease, accuracy, and frequency with which Newman makes such guesses combine to create the impression that the “language barrier” between the Americans and the French is so permeable as to be hardly a barrier at all.

Indeed, Christopher Newman’s encounter with the Old World has as much in common with Cooper’s presentation of Columbus as with the earlier author’s European travels. When Columbus encountered the natives of the Caribbean, he marveled at the utter alienness of their language and culture, but at the same time laid claim to an almost supernatural perception of their meaning, at least when such meaning suited his purposes. At the time of Cooper’s career, the Americans involved in the United States’ own exploration and expansion shared Columbus’s Orientalist approach to cultural difference and his expectation of transparent translation. In contrast, Americans traveling to Europe in the same period tended to value both the languages and the cultures they encountered in the Old World. In *The American*, however, James presents an encounter with French that mirrors Columbus’s reaction to the native Caribbean languages rather than Cooper’s travel to Europe.

Following the exchange of cognates just cited, Newman and Noémie discuss his namesake:

“Droll?” said Mr. Newman, laughing too. “Did you ever hear of Christopher Columbus?”

“*Bien sûr!* He invented America; a very great man. And he is your patron?”

“My patron?”

“Your patron-saint, in the calendar.”

“Oh, exactly, my parents named me for him.”
“Monsieur is American?”
“Don’t you see it?” monsieur inquired.
“And you mean to carry my little picture away over there?” and she explained her phrase with a gesture. (21).

Newman echoes Columbus by crossing the Atlantic to find “a new world” (35). But he also shares the admiral’s claimed ability to understand the various signs and gestures of the people he meets in that foreign land with little doubt or difficulty. Newman and Noémie’s mutual understanding may be believable, but only barely. When describing Newman’s touristic acumen later in the novel, James summarizes his faculty of seamless interpretation: “he emerged from dialogues in foreign tongues, of which he had, formally, not understood a word, in full possession of the particular fact he had desired to ascertain” (66). Like Columbus searching for signs of land, gold, or the Great Kahn, Newman always seems able to comprehend the information he seeks, possessing it as fully as Columbus claimed to possess the New World for Spain. At the same time, Newman also mirrors Columbus in his condescending bemusement with the differences of the country he visits. When Valentin warns Newman that his family are “a very strange people,” the American responds, “Very good . . . that’s the sort of thing I came to Europe for. You come into my programme” (109). This paradoxical combination of incomprehensible exoticism and easy translatability mirrors perfectly the attitudes not only of Columbus but of most Americans and Europeans in colonial or imperial encounters. As Sara Blair has argued at length, James’s work shares numerous affinities with the genre of ethnography, although Blair argues that it is the “American ‘national

type” that is “comparatively ‘savage’” (15).⁸ In contrast, the several parallels between Newman and Columbus suggest, as Rowe observes, that Newman is as much imperialist as “barbarian” (“Henry” 231; “Nationalism” 253). In *The American*, the ethnographer’s view of foreignness has been translated from savage others to the previously admired culture of Europe.

Moreover, as in *Mercedes of Castile*, in which Cooper juxtaposes issues of linguistic translation with the similar incommensurability of economic exchange between cultures, Newman’s lessons in French, though framed as gentlemanly conversation, are perpetually imbricated in the marketplace of economic exchange. From the beginning, not only does Noémie suggest the lessons as yet another way to open the American’s pocketbook, but her father admits that he has learned English from “a great *commerçant*” who got the young Nioche a position at “a counting-house in England” (25). This influence on Nioche’s English partially explains why one benefit of the lessons for Newman is “an interest in French thriftiness” and “a lively admiration for Parisian economics” (56). Moreover, the lessons commence as part of the bargain for several additional copies that Newman will purchase to help pay Noémie’s dowry—her own price, although not the one she ends up accepting. Newman’s French is thus one more commodity in a marketplace including culture, knowledge, and women (see note 6). A later description of the lessons further heightens this connection between language and economics. James writes, “The shrunken little capitalist repeated his visit more than once. He seemed oppressed by a humiliating sense of having been overpaid, and wished

⁸ Similarly, in her study of the novel of manners, Nancy Bentley compares James and several other writers to ethnographers (4).

apparently to redeem his debt by offer of grammatical and statistical information in small installments” (128-29). Although the initial bargain was made with the promise of real Parisian conversation and without setting a price, Nioche’s visits are purely economic endeavors. For him, language is a commodity that he can use to offset Newman’s previous generosity. He balances the need for a kind of ethical solvency with the desire for monetary gain. Thus, James follows both Cooper and Melville in portraying the transference of translation as one of the many exchanges of goods and meaning across different cultures.

When Newman is rejected by the Bellegardes for such interest in commerce, however, he again takes the position of Columbus, devaluing as trifles the currency of a system of exchange he cannot understand. Some time after the blow of losing Claire, Newman observes the “stream of carriages” in Hyde Park:

Newman, as usual, marveled at the strange dingy figures which he saw taking the air in some of the stateliest vehicles. They reminded him of what he had read of eastern and southern countries, in which grotesque idols and fetiches were sometimes taken out of their temples and carried abroad in golden chariots to be displayed to the multitude. (295-96)

Not only does Newman reject the value of the ancient and noble heritage that has made such figures so “dingy,” but, like any American imperialist, he labels as “fetish” and “grotesque” what he cannot understand. Although her focus is on James’s later work, Nancy Bentley has closely examined the affinity between “[t]he fetishizing descriptions of furniture and art that we see in the pages of James or Veblen” and the genre of ethnography (126). She explains that, while “[t]he fetish was a sign for the unreal or irrational value, . . . the sign itself had acquired a new reality from the museum and from the shared public discourse through which a solid world of commodities was named”

(127). In *The American*, too, James questions the value of the nobility he seems to fetishize, but this labeling of the foreign as incomprehensible can indicate a rejection of difference as well as the enlightened critique of commodity culture Bentley suggests.⁹ In the end, this correspondence with imperialist depictions of cross-cultural exchange confirms Rowe's suggestion that "*The American* may well be a subtle warning to James's readers, as well as to James's own literary ambitions, that the international destiny of the self-reliant American may have more in common with the imperial claimants of [Europe] than we in our democratic enthusiasm are willing to admit" ("Politics" 93). Reading the economic exchanges in the novel alongside the history of linguistic encounters in American travel writing reveals the growing similarity between America's relations to its imperial possessions and its attitudes toward the rest of the "civilized" world.

Indeed, the suggestion of fetishism in Newman's relation to the culture of Paris illustrates an important difference between Cooper's cosmopolitan view of European cultural difference and the new cosmopolitanism of the late nineteenth century. Looking at James's work more broadly, Katz describes how the "cosmopolite," James's archetype of the worldly expatriate, has a "tendency to reify others into nothing but sheer embodiments of a totalized cultural practice," and that this "reification can move not only in the direction of prejudice, but also in what might seem the opposite: that of mystified adoration" (34). Whether the new American abroad scorns European difference or

⁹ James Buzard offers yet another perspective on James's presentation of European culture: "the urge to 'take part' in a foreign culture is chiefly demonstrable by '*taking a part*' of the culture—that is by actual or imaginary acts of what James called 'appropriation.' The question he repeatedly confronted, though, was whether an attempt to show that one has successfully appropriated a culture does not ultimately place one in complicity with the 'touristic' forces that are charged with bastardizing and commodifying the culture" (216).

fetishizes it, the blurred distinctions between the national and the foreign emphasized by Cooper solidify into an “us vs. them” mentality, supporting the most rigid sense of national boundaries. So even when the new cosmopolite becomes American expatriate, the barrier of cultural and linguistic difference remains just as solid as the division between civilization and savagery.

As the preceding reading might suggest, it is extremely difficult to present a unified interpretation of Newman’s position in relation to both French language and culture. On the one hand, he seems to be the perfect model of Twain’s provincial American abroad, but on the other, his dedication to learning French, and to making the most out of his travels intellectually—instead of merely following the outer forms of tourism in order to acquire superficial cultural capital—suggest an affinity with an earlier model of cosmopolitanism. At the same time, and despite James’s own multilingualism, the difficulties of language difference and translation are not given the careful attention in *The American* that they receive in the European travel writing of Cooper and his contemporaries. Rather than feeling an admiration of foreign culture, James’s American approaches Europe with the assumption of easy translatability and cultural superiority that was once the purview of imperialist endeavors. It is not surprising, however, that James’s novel should contain such contradictions, because there is a radical disjuncture within the genre and plot of the novel itself. As the work shifts from novel of manners to revenge plot, the subtle play with the themes of culture, exchange, and tourism that characterizes the opening chapters is replaced by what several critics have identified as melodrama (Brooks 55; Tuttleton 104).

As the novel approaches its conclusion, Newman discovers that the Bellegardes' old English housekeeper Mrs. Bread possesses a mysterious deathbed letter from the late Marquis that might implicate his widow in some horrible crime. Mrs. Bread claims not to have read the letter she kept for so many years because it was written in French, but several critics have doubted the plausibility of this story. Frank, for example, questions Mrs. Bread's claim "that she does not know enough French ever to have read the note," particularly "after a lifetime spent in a French household," and further points out that if she in fact did not know what the note said, she would have shown more eagerness for Newman to translate it for her (56).¹⁰

However plausible it might be that Mrs. Bread cannot read French after so long a residence in the country—it is difficult to comprehend, but it seems equally difficult for a fully literate person to imagine being able to read but not to write—her lack of curiosity about the letter can be explained by her belief that she already knows what it contains.¹¹

She tells Newman:

"I believe it was this way. He had a fit of his great pain, and he asked her for his medicine. Instead of giving it to him she went and poured it away, before his eyes. Then he saw what she meant, and, weak and helpless as he was, he was frightened, he was terrified. 'You want to kill me,' he said. 'Yes, M. le Marquis, I want to kill you,' says my lady, and sits down and fixes her eyes upon him. You know my lady's eyes, I think, sir; it was with them she killed him; it was with the terrible strong will she put into them." (267)

¹⁰ John A. Clair further suggests that James "deliberately draws Mrs. Bread as a scheming woman intent upon blackmailing the Bellegardes through Newman—or Newman himself, if necessary—to effect a financially secure existence for life" (615).

¹¹ Fussell explains: "She *speaks* both English and French; she can *read* English only; she can *write* neither tongue" (53).

This scenario is undeniably melodramatic, and it is entirely understandable that Mrs. Bread's certainty about what occurred should cast doubt on her story, suggesting that she might have played a larger role in the drama than she is inclined to admit. Yet, when compared to Newman's experience of linguistic encounter, Mrs. Bread's extrapolation of Madame de Bellegarde's involvement from what little she claims to know is no less credible than the other moments of near-telepathic translation that occur throughout the novel.

In fact, Mrs. Bread's uncanny interpretation of the letter she supposedly cannot read is remarkably similar to the leaps of interpretation Newman and Noémie take in the opening scene. In all such examples, language difference is a non-issue. Meaning is available for easy appropriation in the same way that, for the ideal tourist at least, European culture is to be had for the taking. For the enterprising American, the once contrasting "civilized" culture of Europe and "savage" culture of the rest of the world are equally accessible and, more tellingly, equally obtainable. The real disjunction of the novel is not the drastic shift to melodrama, but the way the new American cosmopolitanism slips into a kind of cultural and linguistic imperialism. Taken as a whole, the plot seems to suggest that European difference is ultimately untranslatable—Newman can never truly fathom why the Bellegardes are unable to accept a "commercial person." But Newman's inability to translate the Bellegardes' objections into values his American mind can understand is offset by the apparent ease with which he acquired the French language and his uncanny knack for understanding complex French conversation after only a few months of causal study.

In the end, despite Newman's regret to not have frightened the Bellegardes as much as he had hoped, the novel concludes with apparent admiration for what Mrs. Tristram calls his "remarkable good nature," a defining characteristic of this representative American (309). Perhaps, then, James means the reader to think that Newman is better off not understanding the obscure values of the old aristocracy. In contrast to Twain's linguistic difficulties, for James, most of European language and culture is easily acquired, and what remains—including the antique notions of honor that cause both Newman's rejection and Valentin's death—are not worth understanding. This conclusion is likely influenced by James's own experiences in Paris while composing the novel. As Long describes:

In one respect, James's stay in Paris had something in common with Christopher Newman's experience of it in the novel. After crossing the Atlantic, he proclaimed to his family: "I take possession of the old world—I inhale it—I appropriate it!" Yet in his letters of that year, he complains of his limited access to Parisian life, his failure to penetrate very far beyond the city's small, enclosed American colony; and his columns to the *Tribune* continually suggest a spectator-outsider. (*Henry* 46)¹²

Peter Brooks further suggests that "it may have been James's very cosmopolitanism that doomed him to outsider status" because his works did not fit into the cannon of the particularly *French* writers of Paris (48-49). Despite his usually cosmopolitan image, James's early experiences in Paris reveal an impermeable barrier between American and

¹² Peter Brooks comments on similar feelings, explaining how, despite the fact that James "had the requisite command both of the French language and of French culture, and he had been admitted to the most exclusive literary circle in France[,] . . . he felt excluded and lonely" (48). Likewise Martha Banta describes how "[t]he twelve months that had launched the story of Christopher Newman's confrontation with the 'walls' of Parisian society marked a difficult period during which James himself had had to come to terms with those elements—internal as well as external—that seemed to prevent him from becoming the cosmopolitan man he urgently desired to be" (7).

European society. Mirroring his author's failure, Newman's plans to join the Bellegarde family are also frustrated by the incommensurability of French culture, despite the frequent ease of linguistic translation. Yet the cultural values that Newman finds so incomprehensible are ultimately deemed worthless both by the rejected American and by his equally rejected and defensive author. *The American*, then, depicts a world of rigid national boundaries that cannot fully be crossed, even by those who might wish to do so. Newman may be more cosmopolite than tourist, but the new cosmopolitanism of both the character and his author proves far more narrowly nationalistic than the cosmopolitanism of earlier periods. Like the imperialism of Columbus, it combines an underestimation of translation's difficulties with a strict dichotomy between one's own culture and the unknowable Other.

James's novel is a fitting conclusion for this study because it presents a new dialectic of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. On one hand, James and the many American expatriates who followed him might seem to contrast sharply with the provinciality of Twain's nationalistic attitudes and with the popular views of the American tourists Twain depicts. When viewed through the lens of translation and imperialist discourse, however, James's new approach to foreign language and culture presents a different kind of cosmopolitanism than that found in Cooper. Cooper's desire to negotiate the value of both European history and American innovation was based in a respect for the nuances of cultural difference. While James shares Cooper's root desire to take what is valuable from Europe without denying American principles, he limits what he considers valuable to that which is easily translatable—both easily understood and

unproblematically converted to dollars and cents (or, indeed, that which easily translates into both dollars and sense). Anything that will not translate is not worth understanding on its own terms, but should be rejected outright. Despite James's own extensive acquisition of European language and culture, then, his work affirms what can be seen throughout Twain's travel writings—the new rigidity of national boundaries and the failure of the Enlightenment's cosmopolitan ideal.

As the United States moved more firmly into the position of world power in the final decades of the nineteenth century, it began to view the cultural and linguistic differences of Europe with the prejudice previously reserved for non-Western lands. The changing nature of American travel to Europe is but one aspect of this shift to American prominence. However, as attention to the representation of foreign language reveals, the “ugly American” tourist depicted by both Twain and James is the product not only of the mass culture of tourism, but also of the expansionist and imperialist policies of the United States on a global scale. Newman's fetishization of European culture thus represents a new kind of Orientalism that could be called, unmelodiously, Old World-ism. Whether admired or scorned, European differences are reified, even by the new breed of cosmopolitan expatriates that James describes.

Accordingly, while the acceptance of Western and non-Western difference found in Cooper and Melville represents the continuation of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in the first half of the nineteenth century, Twain and James depict two new attitudes toward cultural difference arising from the United States' increased prominence on the international stage. The “ugly American” tourists Twain describes are the precursors to the countless ignorant and xenophobic travelers who continued to depart America's

shores well into the twentieth century. Yet the high-brow bastions of culture are not immune to the same nationalistic trend, as the example of James demonstrates. At the turn of the twentieth century, even the cosmopolitan expatriate approached national boundaries with the imperialistic attitudes of assimilation and disavowal, not with the Enlightenment's true, open-minded internationalism.

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