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"Ain't the World Small, Though!": Constructing an International West

Melody Graulich

I am delighted to be invited to attend the first international conference on the American West at Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea. I have always wanted to visit Basqueland. I grew up in the central coastal range of California during the 1950s and '60s, where my grandparents ran a hamburger joint on Highway 68, right across the road from grass-covered foothills dotted with coast live oaks. This open land, part of a large military base, Fort Ord, was occasionally used for mock infantry battles, but in the spring war gave way to peace when the hillsides were covered with sheep herded by handsome and friendly young Basque men who frequently stopped by my grandparents' café for a beer or a burger. When I was eight, one brought me an hours-old black lamb, his tail unbobbed. I raised "Midnight," as I cleverly called him, by bottle until he grew up to be a ram, butted my grandmother, and chased her up a tree.

In retrospect, I realize that these Basque shepherds offered me my first encounter with a global world. While they were world travelers, I was a provincial rural child who only a few years earlier had asked my parents, as we headed by car toward San Francisco, if "they" spoke English there. I was told, or perhaps I just assumed, that my Basque friends were not immigrants but seasonal workers who intended to stay in California only for a few years before they took their earnings home to the country they loved, perhaps like the Mexican *braceros* who came north to do summer fieldwork but then returned to Mexico. As an adult I know how long and costly is the trip from California to Euskadi, and I have visited Basque communities throughout the West, leading me, as I began this essay, to think that whatever their original intentions, most of the young men I met likely became émigrés. But for a time, at least, as they maintained not only cultural but economic ties to Euskadi, working as laborers on others' rather than their own land, they engaged in the key theme I plan to explore: the processes of globalization at work in the American West.

Writing in one of the influential volumes of new western history, *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, Jay Gitlin argues, "We cannot be satisfied with narrating the story of a settler nation. Our histories must have an international and multinational awareness." The story of immigrant pioneers taking

up Midwestern and western land, creating a "melting pot" flavored with their own cultural inheritances as they become Americanized, is one of the cherished stories of the United States, but, as Gitlin implies, we need to look at such familiar stories from a twenty-first century perspective. He describes what he claims is a "new reading of frontier history," which focuses on how "frontier places, chronically short of labor and capital, were often dependent on imperial or national metropolises," on "economic development [which] usually began with the exploitation of extractive, nonindustrial resources in demand in distant marketplaces."¹ Gitlin concludes with a dismissive gesture toward literary history that is characteristic of new western history, asserting that his "new reading of frontier history has yet to penetrate the thick hide of western lore" (72). That is to say, all those writers of all those popular western stories over the years created an impenetrable romantic West, filled with cowboys and Indians, schoolmarms and desperados, struggling but heroic settlers and big bad ranchers, star-studded sheriffs and shifty Mexicans, all occupying a sublime spacious landscape, a West isolated in space and time from a rapidly modernizing world. I intend to show that popular western writers have for the past hundred years recognized that "our [stories] must have an international and multinational awareness," that the economic and cultural development of the West has always been connected to global travel and to the global marketplace.

If asked to choose a text most accountable for this romantic West, for laying down that "thick hide of western lore," many critics would turn to Owen Wister's immensely popular *The Virginian* (1902). In an essay called "Birth of an Art," Bernard De Voto holds Wister responsible for fathering the mythic western novel. "*The Virginian*," he says, "created Western fiction—created the cowboy story, the horse-opera novel, the conventions, the clichés, the values, and the sun god." Wister, he accuses, "enclosed himself in the Old West; he was one of the artificers who made it up" (9).

The Virginian did offer readers the first dramatic episode of a "lady being rescued from a runaway stage" and the first "gunfight on Main Street," scenes that would become staples of western films, but rapidly evolving technology and industrialization are at home on the range in the West Wister surveyed, and Wister's "cowboy" novel is all about the New West of global capitalism. Because of its reputation for establishing the formulas for fiction obsessed with the "Old West," *The Virginian* offers a perfect starting point for arguing that many popular and widely

¹ In recent years historians have elaborated on the effects of global capitalism on the West. In "Entering the Global Economy," for instance, Keith L. Bryant Jr. asserts: "Endless land, abundant natural resources, scarce labor and capital, a spirit of entrepreneurship, and social and political institutions favorable to economic growth combined to produce a western society undergoing changes that mirrored those occurring around the globe. The favorable movement of the prices of key staples and heavy infusions of capital from the East and abroad stimulated the economy, as did the growing presence of relatively well educated and technologically sophisticated middle class... Altered consumer demands in the East and in western Europe, the international mobility of both capital and labor, and the global flow of technological information combined to shape the economy of the West." (196). As I will demonstrate, this story of the West should be familiar to readers of western literature.

read western texts represent the region as part of a global economic network. By novel's end, the Virginian is no longer a prankplaying cowboy but the owner of a coal mine, conveniently serviced by a railroad line, and the West is maturing from the playground of young men Wister documented in his earlier novel, *Lin McLean*, and getting down to the serious business of resource extraction, labor management, irrigation projects, competition for markets, emerging monopolies, foreign investment, real estate speculation, corruption, and tourism, all explored in the text. Most Indian tribes have been herded onto reservations, where beef contracts provide another source of capital for enterprising entrepreneurs, who also market native artifacts to tourists traveling by train to America's national parks.

While those who read *The Virginian* as the progenitor of the "horse opera" focus on how Wister believes you can assess a man's character by his relationship with his horse (true enough), it is the Iron Horse that dominates the text. The plot line in *The Virginian* has less to do with cowpoking than with an increasingly industrialized and interconnected marketplace dependent upon the train. The transcontinental trains opened the West to economic development, Wister makes clear, and he explicitly links the flow of capital into the West, symbolized in large part by the trains, to a global economy. The narrator is skeptical that the Northern Pacific will be able to expand its operation because of "the millions owed to this road's German bondholders" (131). After questioning the Northern Pacific train's parentage in an extended insult, the Virginian's buddy Scipio claims that "the blamed thing was sired by a whole doggone Dutch syndicate" (134).

And if capital flows into the West from throughout the globe, so do workers. The Virginian feigns ignorance about national and racial differences to bluff his enemy Trampas by referring to a group of railroad workers as "some more I-talians," allowing Trampas to correct him: "they're Chinese." In any case, the Virginian concludes, "Without cheap foreigners they couldn't afford all this hyeh new gradin'" (150). (I will return to the Chinese workers later in this essay.) Foreigners, whether syndicates or immigrants, helped construct the nation by building the railroad. And the transcontinental railroad carried what the narrator describes as "a rainbow of men" into the West through its then eastern terminus, Omaha, where "in front of you passed . . . Chinese, Indian chiefs, Africans, General Miles, younger sons, Austrian nobility, wide females in pink" (124).

Representing technological innovation and achievement, the trains also promote the movement of goods over large distances. The narrator, a tourist, arrives in Medicine Bow on a train, which also carries "commercial travelers," or salesmen, representative of an encroaching consumer culture (42). Significantly, their train travel has both global and imperialist dimensions with oblique references to Wister's pal Teddy Roosevelt who became famous for his "charge" up San Juan Hill during the "Spanish"-American War: one is "selling cigars from Cuba" (20). Because he never forgets a face—"white men, that is . . . [he c]an't do nothing with niggers or Chinese"—the salesman presumes an acquaintance with the Virginian, who he declares he has previously met at Ikey's restaurant in Chicago, and he concludes, "Ain't the world small, though!" (20).

The trains allow the raw materials of the West to be manufactured into products to be consumed. (Recall Claude Levi Strauss's key distinction between the primitive and the civilized—raw to cooked.) The cattle shipped east to Omaha reappear in the West as "corned beef" in cheap restaurants (10). Through them Wister tells an implicit story about the development of factories and industrial cities (requiring immigrant labor), created markets, food processing, convenience. In the midst of vast ranchlands, covered, presumably—Wister never describes one—by cattle, the Virginian and the narrator eat "canned stuff, corned beef" (18) and sweeten their coffee with "condensed milk" (19). Indeed, "sardines were called for, and potted chicken, and devilled ham" (40). While arguments for building the transcontinental railroad were based on need, here the presence of the railroad has created the need: Instead of eating their own freshly slaughtered cattle or game, westerners eat processed meat, and they carry around cans of stewed tomatoes for liquid. Wister even begins to chronicle the ecological consequences: "the empty sardine box lies rusting over the face of the Western earth" while "thick heaps and fringes of tin cans, and shelving mounds of bottles" reflect Wyoming's sun around Medicine Bow (40, 45). This is hardly a view of "Nature's Wonderland," one of the nicknames of the country's first national park, Yellowstone.

Yet tourists flock by train to Yellowstone in *The Virginian*. While Wister doesn't explicitly describe any European tourists, his satiric treatment of the emerging tourist economy associated with the national parks anticipates current scholarship about the worldwide obsession with the American West. (In the southern Utah national parks, Zion and Bryce, in the spring and summer of the early twenty-first century, one is as likely to hear German or Japanese spoken as English.) Stranded by a washout, the Virginian and his men encounter a Pullman train offering luxurious travel for the wealthy in search of "the West," "real" westerners, and spectacle. As in today's New West, the tourists treat local inhabitants as performers of an "authentic" West. "They're cow-boys," one exclaims, upon seeing the Virginian and his men (155). The tourists also get to see "real" Indians. Wister leaves offstage the native peoples who roamed the plains in the "Old West," but he has some ideas about their role in the twentieth century: the local Indian agent "allows" some Crow "chiefs," dressed in their "show war bonnets and blankets" to leave the reservation to sell "painted bows and arrows" to tourists along the tracks (162, 152). Being in the audience for the Virginian's tall tale, a characteristic western genre, is an even more exciting "western" encounter than sightseeing, as one tourist exclaims: it "beats the geysers or anything we're likely to find in the Yellowstone" (161). The Virginian's performance, in which he dupes Trampas into seeking to invest in the frog farm of some fictional entrepreneurs who have established a monopoly, serves as a satiric parable about American business practices and the economic development of the West, and it is far more significant to the novel's themes than the oft-referenced "first ever" gunfight with Trampas later in the novel. In his "cowboy" novel, Wister presents the West as part of an emerging corporate order, enabled largely by the Octopus-like train, whose schedule demands required the nation to adopt a system of time management through establishing regional time zones.

I begin with a rereading of *The Virginian*² because I believe the novel has been badly served by critics who present it as a parable of the mythic West. But long before *The Virginian* was published, from its very beginnings, western American literature focused on trade—economic and cultural—with other countries, other continents, a theme intricately knotted with United States imperialism and capitalism. One foundational text, the journals of Lewis and Clark, received a good deal of attention in 2004 in the United States, the bicentennial of their journey of discovery. Their goal, as defined by Thomas Jefferson to justify the Louisiana Purchase: to find a water passage to Asia to facilitate trade. If we redefine "colonial American literature" from a western perspective, we can discover a long history of texts about the Spanish colonial period and about Mexican nationhood in what is now the United States Southwest. The many recently recovered texts from both sides of the border of the Mexican-American War, such as Jovita Gonzalez's *Caballero*, offer analyses of the complex intersections of national identity in the region. And such a perspective can even offer new ways to think about seminal works from far afield: Read in the context of a West whose culture and values are defined by its international connections, Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," a critique of the Mexican-American War, might enter the conversation.

Yet as the works of Mary Austin in the early twentieth century or Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko in the last decades of the twentieth century demonstrate, trading of course preceded the establishment of British or Spanish colonies in the United States. Austin makes this point explicitly in several works, most notably *The Trail Book* (1918), where she explores agricultural and economic interchanges beginning in prehistoric times between indigenous peoples (who themselves may have originated in Siberia), then between Spanish explorers and colonists and native peoples across the Atlantic ocean and across what would eventually become the U.S.-Mexican border. The trails explored in each story are essentially trading routes, though ideas and stories are traded as well as goods. A central metaphor Austin uses to connect a series of stories, the trails also connect peoples, in both collaborative enterprises and in combat.

In her most lyrical novel, *Ceremony* (1977), Silko is more elliptical. Two suggestive examples are the Navajo blanket woven of wool and the apricot tree that belong to Ts'eh, a character associated with traditional pueblo stories from the oral tradition about the mythical Yellow Woman. Through them Silko references the long history of intercultural exchanges in the Southwest because both churro sheep and apricots were first introduced by Spanish explorers, conquistadors, and priests. She is more explicit when she describes the global threat posed by the atomic weapons, made from the uranium rocks mined from the land around Laguna Pueblo: "There was no end to [the witchery]; it knew no boundaries; and [Tayo] had

² Some of the analysis of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* has appeared in more extended essays in *Reading the Virginian in the New West*, ed. Melody Graulich and Stephen Tatum (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) and in "Monopolizing *The Virginian*-or-Railroading Wister" (forthcoming in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 2006).

arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid. . . . [H]e recognized why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices . . . ; the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter" (246). When Tayo completes his ceremony, keeps "the story out of reach of the destroyers," sunrise overcomes this dark vision for Tayo's victory over witchery unites "all living things" in life rather than in death (247). Silko continues to explore global themes in later novels such as *The Almanac of the Dead*, a dark and ironic borderlands novel about the drug trade set in Mexico, Arizona, and California in which the Mayan Codices play a central part, and in *Gardens in the Dunes*, set in the U.S. Southwest, Europe, and South America, where she explores both positive instances of horticultural trade and the pirating and sale of indigenous species across national borders.

As these examples suggest, although the setting sun of the "Old West" can be blinding, the history of global exchange upon which the West was built is evident in western American literature if we look for it. In fact, it is even foundational to those most prevalent romantic icons of the mythic essentialized West: the Indian on horseback, the cowboy and his favorite cowpony. Those who can overlook the implications of the transportation of something as large as a horse across the Atlantic ocean can overlook just about anything.³

In commenting on the unfortunate legacy of the "romanticized, stereotyped West," one of the most influential western writers, Wallace Stegner, has said that while parody and mockery are legitimate responses, they do not "offer the final solution to that particular problem because sooner or later some of the worth of the original tradition is going to have to be incorporated into some other tradition, and repudiation or parody seems to me to go too far" (*Conversations*, 191-92). As Stegner's comment suggests, digging beneath the surface of familiar western iconology allows us to recognize the many layers of the cultural history of the West, notably the influence of European capital—educational, economic, and cultural—on the development of a region usually defined largely by its exceptionalism and landscape.

In Stegner's Pulitzer-prize winning and most popular novel, *Angle of Repose* (1971), the narrator, a celebrated historian of the American West, uses the central

³ Also generally overlooked are the disastrous consequences of the importation of another European animal, the "ambulatory meat locker" of three hundred pigs Hernando de Soto brought to Florida in 1539, pigs that escaped and rapidly bred as his men wandered from Florida to Texas looking for gold (45). In "1491," Charles C. Mann summarizes research that suggests that these pigs spread a variety of deadly diseases to deer, turkeys, and humans, leading to a dramatic population drop, argued by some scholars to be up to 96% for some tribes.

tropes of mining and archeology I have just borrowed to establish his subject. While his son would like him to write about some "Technicolor personality of the Northern Mines," someone like Lola Montez, an Irish immigrant and celebrated dancehall girl from the equally colorful Gold Rush period, Lyman Ward comments, "Every fourth-rate antiquarian in the West has panned Lola's poor little gravel. My grandparents are a deep vein that has never been dug. They are people" (22). Instead of "panning" in a shallow pool of western history, often treated superficially for its high (melo)drama, Lyman exposes new veins in western culture, the role of well-trained professional mining engineers, geologists, scientists, surveyors, photographers, artists, and writers in the building of the West. The West in *Angle of Repose* is characterized by technological innovation and by cultural production. While Stegner, like Wister, comments on the flows of capital that contribute to the building of the West, he is more interested in what I will call "cultural capital." The "people" who populate Stegner's novel, most of them based on historical figures and often called by their "real" names, are well-educated, and they read widely, books and magazines that circulate knowledge throughout the world. In Stegner's view, they are the real builders of the West. Through focusing on a marriage of an engineer and an artist, both of whom help "construct" the West, he braids together two perceptual frameworks, and I will focus my discussion on these two characters, Oliver and Susan Ward.

Oliver is a geologist, trained at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, whose greatest professional opportunities lie in the West. Stegner reveals through the evolution of Oliver's career how fully this process was facilitated by a worldwide network of professional men (often trained at the same schools), laborers, resources, and knowledge production. When he and Susan marry, he is working as a mining engineer in California, a job for which he was recommended by his mentor and brother-in-law Conrad Prager (based on James Hague), one of the several professional men trained at the Sheffield School of Mining in Germany or at other great international universities who wander in and out of the novel, engaged in surveying, mapping, mining, and developing the natural resources of the West. Their work depends on and exploits the workers at the mines who occupy separate "camps" based on their countries of origin: there is a Cornishman camp, a Mexican camp, a Chinese camp. Each nationality brings its own skills and knowledge to their jobs. Later Prager engineers a job offer for Oliver at Potosí in Bolivia, then one of the largest mines in the world, financed by an international syndicate, and Prager's own syndicate later sends Oliver to Mexico to assess whether a mine's productiveness has been exaggerated. When Oliver supervises a mine in Leadville, Colorado, "there assembled [in the Wards' cabin] every evening an extraordinary collection of education, culture, talent, eloquence, reputation, political power, and intellectual force" (252), men educated in Europe like Samuel Emmons, who "had written a book [on geology] that Oliver looked upon as a bible" (251); Clarence King, Henry Janin, Hamilton Smith. Through reading their books, studying their surveys, working with them, Oliver keeps up with his field. Later when he envisions a massive irrigation project in Southern Idaho, he "at night buried himself

in the history of irrigation, and reports on systems in Persia, India, China, everywhere" (378). Funding is offered and then withdrawn by various syndicates, including one led by German-born railroad entrepreneur Henry Villard, who tried to "find a place for them in his empire-building schemes (395). Finally funding is provided by an English syndicate but when its representative, their "friend and supporter" who had traveled to Idaho to see the project, suddenly dies as he "walked one morning, reading his London *Times*, and stepped in front of a train," this "brutally unpredictable accident" halfway around the world damns their project (489). Despite the failure of Oliver's project, the West Stegner describes is built by internationally trained scientists and engineers and by capital from throughout the world.

In one drawing, Susan Ward represents herself as "The Engineer's Mate," but she has her own successful career as an artist and writer. Stegner bases his portrayal of Susan on the life and works of Mary Hallock Foote, who herself wrote about a global West in many novels based on her knowledge of her husband's mining and engineering projects. She was so accurate in her depictions that she received fan letters from miners and engineers, and Stegner takes his title, with its metaphoric resonance, from a geological term she used in her writing. Although Foote's work is little known today, she was one of the most extensively read late nineteenth century western writers, publishing primarily in the widely circulated *Century Magazine*. Her work thus was influential to the cultural construction of the American West, a fact crucial to the meaning of *Angle of Repose* and to Stegner's representation of the effect of "cultural capital" on the West.

Like her husband, Susan was professionally trained at one of the best available schools, having attended the Cooper Union School of Design, where she studied illustration with an acclaimed English artist, Edward Linton (whose daughter Nelly, raised in Scotland, will many years later travel to remote Idaho to become Susan's governess). Susan carries west with her an excellent liberal arts education in classic texts, which influences her ways of perceiving and writing about the West. Stegner sometimes suggests that her "classical" models unduly influence her; for instance, when she goes down into a mine with Oliver and borrows metaphors from Dante's *Inferno*, Oliver dryly comments about her foreign phrasing that such terms are "about used up" and hopes she will find a fresher language to describe the West. Yet Lyman himself turns to an all-too-familiar cultural reference, also from Italy, to depict Susan, describing her as reminding him of "Massacio's Eve." Like Foote, Susan ultimately finds a language, as well as themes, in her everyday experience and in the scientific readings and conversations of her husband and his associates.

And yet her reading inevitably inflects her ways of seeing the West, a point Stegner repeatedly insists upon, for better as often as for worse. As I have argued more extensively elsewhere, *Angle of Repose* is largely about books and reading, filled with cultural references from all over the world.⁴ Susan is represented as a

⁴ For a fuller analysis, see Graulich, "Book Learning: *Angle of Repose* as Literary History."

spider in the center of a cultural network in the Far West. When they debate the relative merits of two contemporaneous writers, Oliver finds George Eliot, British, didactic but admires the Russian Eugene Turgenev. Books are portable, and they travel: Susan receives a copy of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* from friends back east as soon as it is translated. As significant, the monthly magazines she receives are filled with articles about European and Japanese art, Chinese immigration, her own travel essays on Mexico. As she writes her stories filled with virtuous young women, Susan looks up at the print of Titian's virgin that hangs above her fireplace built of Idaho's "lava rock" (393). As she sits beside the Snake River one night, she "hear[s] a fantastic recitation of the *Frithjof Saga* in the original by a young Swedish engineer on his way to build a Mexican railroad" (318)—and she draws some of her western heroes as "young Vikings."

"The West does not need to explore its myths much further," wrote Stegner. "It has already relied on them too long" ("Born a Square," 178). The western settings Susan and Oliver inhabit may be physically remote and isolated, but Stegner demonstrates clearly that the rapidly changing late nineteenth century West is not culturally, economically, technologically, or scientifically isolated from the rest of the world. Yet even western myths of American exceptionalism are not remote from the wider world and even when western writers reify those myths, they do so in a global context. I take for my example another popular writer who is also a critical success, Willa Cather, and turn to her novel, *The Professor's House* (1925).

The Professor's House tells two interconnected but contrasting stories of a teacher, Professor Geoffrey St. Peter, and pupil, Tom Outland. Born in Canada, raised in Kansas, St. Peter has taught in a provincial Midwestern city for his entire career, but Cather creates for him a rich connection of European associations, as suggested by his name, with its evocations of centuries old traditions and urban interior space. He received his advanced degrees in France, where he was "adopted" by a French family with whom he maintains contact, and he grafts those experiences onto his life in the United States, "succeed[ing] in making a French garden" in his hometown (14). He is "commonly said to look like a Spaniard," perhaps because he "had been in Spain a good deal" (12, 13) doing primary research for his multi-volume *Spanish Adventures in North America*, which explores the colonial period in a highly original way, focusing on the West rather than on New England. Although some of his colleagues won't dine with him because his love of wine (imported from France via Mexico) leads him to defy prohibition, the one dinner party Cather describes includes a scholar of Spanish history from England whose brother had encountered St. Peter's son-in-law, Marsellus, in China, where his brother was "engaged in the silk trade" (36). Cather could hardly insist more stridently that Professor St. Peter has lived a cosmopolitan life in the backwaters of the Midwest.

Yet as many critics have noted, the novel reflects Cather's disillusionment with the modern world, particularly with consumer culture. The women in St. Peter's family could be illustrations for the "conspicuous consumption" Thorstein Veblen described in 1899 as endemic to the culture of the United States. Mrs. St. Peter is very

fond of Marcellus because she "frankly liked having a son-in-law who could tot up acquaintances with Sir Edgar from the Soudan to Alaska" (37); valuable because of his world travels, Marcellus is another of her acquisitions. While St. Peter goes to Europe to study, his wife and daughter go to Paris to shop, and they buy antique Spanish furniture, on sale in Chicago, as part of an interior design scheme. Europe offers St. Peters "cultural capital"; it offers his family a way to display their sophisticated taste and wealth, and they plunder it. Their letters home describe their purchases, including the "gorgeous dressing-gown" they found for him in "a Chinese Shop" at "Aix-les-Bains," but after a time he leaves them unread and descends into despair, moving out of the fancy new house that provides the novel with its title and back into the shabby attic room in the old house where he wrote his histories. (269).

The Professor's House is much concerned with how St. Peters, in spiritual crisis, turns to his memories of his beloved student, Tom Outland, now dead, and begins to edit Tom's diary of the years he spent excavating ancient pottery in a ruin of an unidentified "prehistoric" people, a multinational encounter across time. Cather interpolates into her novel of modernist meaninglessness "Tom Outland's Story," which the professor, apparently, recounts in Tom's voice, in first-person narration. While St. Peters went to France for his education and writes about the Spanish "conquest" of the New World, Tom finds the history of another nation and its conquest in "ruins" in the United States. Offered in counterpoint to St. Peters's life story, Tom's story resembles the novel's epigram: "A turquoise set in silver, wasn't it?" It is a set piece, a static rendition of the mythic West frozen in the past, entirely invoked by his last name, Outland, strongly contrasted with the associations evoked by the patronym of St. Peters.

In creating "Outland," Cather hits all the marks of the performance of the mythic West. Tom is, of course, an orphan, uneducated but natively bright. He works as a cowboy. He loves, of course, the spacious skies, purple plains, majestic mountains, of the West. He is so attractive that others befriend him and help him along. His story concerns his inevitable encounter with "the native," which, of course, transforms him. He has an intuitive aesthetic appreciation of the pots he finds, the people who made them, and the culture they reflect, so purer, healthier, cleaner, more honest and spiritually whole than that of the modern world. He cannot conceive of them as "property"; they are spiritual, a "miracle"; "there never was any question of money" (244). In his innocence, in this classic American plot, he must confront hypocrisy, in this case in the guise of various Smithsonian Museum officials who are not interested in his "relics," though in an effort to impress him with his connections to the "Old World," one makes him "listen to a long story about how well he was treated by the Archduke when he went to Vienna" (230-31). Ultimately "Tom Outland's Story" ends with the triumph of capitalism and corruption when his partner sells the "curios" (while Tom is in Washington) to a "German, Fechtig . . . [who's] been buying up a lot of Indian things" (237) and takes them "straight through Old Mexico" on a "French boat" because while you can have "trouble getting curiosities out of the United States ports," it's possible to "take anything out of the City of Mexico" (239).

Tom's "story" ends there, but his life does not: it becomes involved with both the good and the bad of St. Peters's cosmopolitan and consumerist modern world. Mentored by St. Peters, he retains his curiosity, much of his innocence, and his life is enhanced by formal education. But separated from the romantically aestheticized ruins of the past, with their spiritual resonances, he enters the modern age, which Cather presents as a tragedy. In Henry Adams's terms, he turns from the Virgin to the Dynamo. He invents "the principle of the Outland vacuum, worked out the construction of the Outland engine that is revolutionizing aviation" (40). Although he develops no plans to "commercialize" it, he does think of his discovery in economic terms and takes out a patent before he "bolts to the [WWI] front" (41). Dispossessed of one American fantasy, he steps into another, the story of the self-made man, but the mechanized modern world, a hybrid creation of the United States and Europe, destroys him. His technological discovery will be transported, as he is, to Europe, to better wage war; ultimately it will become the vehicle that enables the rapid global travel that defines the postmodern world. Significantly he is killed in a war associated with age-old European animosities and alliances and with the despair of modernism. His fiancé, St. Peter's daughter, becomes rich enough on his patent to buy her Spanish antiques and pay for her trips to Paris. The brightest young man St. Peters ever taught, the quintessential man of the West, only "turn[s] out chemicals and dollars and cents" (132). On many levels, Tom is a casualty of global capitalism, his innocent young manhood on Blue Mesa, that "turquoise set in silver," an artifact permanently encased in Cather's recreation of western mythology. Yet while Tom invents a "vacuum," Cather recognizes that the modern westerner cannot permanently live in one.

In Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* (1989), "The Father from China," Ed, goes to a movie in New York about another Tom whose inventions made possible rapid global travel and intercommunication: he sees "*Young Tom Edison* with Mickey Rooney," and he later "explain[s] to his wife that this cunning, resourceful, successful inventor, Edison, was who he had named himself after" (68-69). This is just one example of many of Kingston's Chinese forefathers transforming themselves into Americans. *China Men*, like *The Woman Warrior*, is in many ways a classic immigrant story, but both books are made far more complicated by Kingston's use of magical realism, by the levels of confusion she creates about how people, stories, and information travel between continents, becoming hybridized. Ed, "the Father from China," may or may not be the same man as "The American Father," may or may not be the "legal Father," suggesting the mutability of national identification and citizenship. Kingston's *China Men* are global travelers, defined less by roots than by routes, to borrow from James Clifford. That her forbears initially consider themselves "sojourners," setting out for "Gold Mountain" to make money to bring back to China, traveling back and forth, shaped by experiences in radically different nations, underscores cultural and economic crossings.

Of the works I've discussed, *China Men* offers the most obvious example of the construction of an international West. Kingston's ancestors, literal and symbolic, "built the railroad" (126), which connects the United States via the West

Coast to Asia, creating global economic networks. Sections of the book focus on U.S. territories—Hawaii and Alaska—“halfway houses” of sorts between Asia and the mainland U.S., as Kingston circles the Pacific Rim. Continuing the exploration of U.S. imperialism into the twentieth century, the story of “The Brother in Vietnam” exposes the “American” brother’s conflicts about fighting other Asians, as well as the way Caucasian Americans and Asian Americans conflate members of distinctly different Asian nations, as enemies and as brothers. Because *China Men* so obviously describes a hybridized, globalized West, I will focus on how Kingston centers her text on one of the most contested questions in western American history: access to civil rights and citizenship for those “illegal aliens” who help construct the West, physically, culturally, and economically. She explores this theme throughout the book, recreating, for instance, her grandfather’s presence at the Golden Spike ceremony, where men “gave speeches. ‘The Greatest Feat of the Nineteenth Century,’ they said. ‘The Greatest Feat in the History of Mankind,’ they said. ‘Only Americans could have done it,’ they said, which is true. Even if Ah Goong had not spent half his gold on Citizenship papers, he was an American for having built the railroad” (145). Ah Goong, like “Ed,” is already proud of his country’s technological innovations and his contributions to them, but “his country” will soon try to “drive him out”—through acts of vigilantism and through laws. Kingston’s most extended analysis of the legal constructions of identity having to do with nationhood and citizenship comes in the section she places dead center in *China Men*, “The Laws,” which I will focus on here.

Opening with debates over “the Nationality Act of 1870,” with a linguistic focus on words derived from “citizen” and “nation,” “The Laws” cross examines the contradictory meanings of these concepts from the point of view of a multinational Pacific Rim. In sharp contrast to the style of the rest of *China Men*, the section proceeds methodically and chronologically, like a legal brief, as Kingston opens paragraphs with dates of key events, laws passed, and legal decisions affecting people of Chinese descent already living in the United States, as well as Chinese immigration. While Kingston occasionally uses irony, her tone is dispassionate; the facts speak for themselves. “The Laws” begins with a quote from a document defining commerce between two nations, the Burlingame Treaty between the United States and China, executed in 1868-69.

The United States of America and the Emperor of China cordially recognize the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of free migration and emigration of their citizens . . . for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents. (152)

Governments use laws and treaties to control international exchange—in this case the bodies of human beings. The treaty acknowledges that “migration” between nations is “trade”—and the reference to “curiosity” suggests that cultural exchange is as important as economic trade. Kingston follows the quote from the treaty, establishing the “inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance,” with “1868: the year of the Burlingame Treaty, was the year 40,000 miners

of Chinese ancestry were Driven Out,” establishing that the treaty only formalized what was already going on, Chinese immigration, in excess of 40,000. “The Laws” demonstrates the efforts by the western states, primarily, to deny and resist what was already evident, that their population was racially and ethnically diverse, demonstrates that the presence of the Chinese in the U.S. and the porous borders between the two nations, despite the distance between the U.S. and China, seemed to various U.S. governmental bodies to require discipline and surveillance. The extensive list of laws chronicles efforts to deny the “inalienable” right to the Chinese by legally defining them as racially and culturally “alien,” despite their prominent presence in the U.S. and in western history. “1889: In *Yue Ting v. The United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Congress had the right to expel members of a race who ‘continue to be aliens, having taken no steps toward becoming citizens, and incapable of becoming such under the naturalization laws’” (155).

Kingston devotes attention to the well-known 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which not only prohibited any further immigration but denied Chinese residents of the U.S. the right to naturalization, defining them as perpetually “alien.” This act, regularly renewed, would seem to consign the Chinese in the U.S. to remain “pilgrims and sojourners,” language used by Supreme Court Justice Fuller in his dissent to the Wong Kim Ark decision in 1898, and the 1882 Exclusion Act has certainly received far more attention than the Wong Kim Ark case.⁵ Kingston balances those scales of justice. Born in the U.S., Wong Kim Ark was traveling, “en route,” when the Scott Act was passed by Congress in 1888, which declared that “Certificates of Return were void,” trapping twenty thousand Chinese outside the U.S. (154-5). His challenge led the Supreme Court to state “that a person born in the United States to Chinese parents is an American” (155-56). This landmark decision, which “has never been reversed or changed, and . . . is the law on which most Americans of Chinese ancestry base their citizenship today,” laid the legal groundwork for citizenship rights for other disenfranchised groups (156). By ensuring citizenship and civil rights for the children of immigrants who enter the nation illegally, by ensuring that they are “inalien,” the Ark decision ensured that the society and culture of the nation would continue to evolve and benefit from the global trade of peoples and cultures. By refusing to accept racial descent as fundamental to citizenship, the justices affirmed that the nation’s culture was and would continue to be shaped by diaspora and hybridity rather than by a “melting pot” assimilationism, by encounters between peoples of diverse subjectivities and cultures.

The lessons of the Ark decision have not always been followed, of course. Executive Order 9066 allowed the government to imprison the U.S. born Nisei along with their immigrant parents during WWII, their identities defined not their citizenship but by race. In 2006, a bill was proposed to the Utah legislature that would deny in-state tuition benefits to the children of undocumented workers; it

⁵ Quoted in Brook, Thomas, “*China Men*, United States v. Wong Kim Ark, and the Question of Citizenship,” 71. See Thomas’s essay for a much fuller elaboration of the implications of the Wong Kim Ark decision.

was defeated. By exploring "the laws" that seek to legislate the flow of people into the U.S. and their entrance into the body politic, Kingston writes her own version of "international law."

As I began this essay, I suggested that Basque shepherds in the American West provided my first encounters with global travelers; as I finish it, I realize that Euskadi is a particularly apt place for me to discuss globalization, capitalism, and trade in the American West for Basques have always been world travelers, and, as Mark Kurlansky demonstrates, "[a]t the dawn of capitalism they were among the first capitalists, experimenting with tariff-free international trade and the use of competitive pricing to break monopolies" (4). With a ready supply of skilled shipbuilders and sailors, ambitious and enterprising, a corporation of San Sebastián investors founded the Real Compañía Guipúzcoana de Caracas in 1728 to compete against the Dutch and the British who had established trade and commerce in the Americas. Initially eager to break the Dutch monopoly on cocoa in South America, they "expanded to leather, coffee, and tobacco," as well as red beans and turkeys (123). But the company did not only import goods from the colonies; it also exported Basque goods such as "iron products, weapons, chemical products, sardines, and construction wood." "A fundamental concept was that the ships should be full in both directions" (123). Around 1751, the company became a "multinational," "caring little about arbitrary [national] borders" as it encouraged economic and intellectual commerce throughout the world (124).

1751. At this time, of course, the territories that would eventually become the United States were still colonies. While the Basques were traveling back and forth between the "old" and the "new" worlds, carrying freight and ideas in both directions, the emerging U.S. nation moved west into territory inhabited by many nations: diverse aboriginal nations, French, Spanish, Mexican, and Russian colonists. Through purchases, annexations, mergers, and take-overs, the *corporation* of eastern states acquired the multinational trans-Mississippi West. I offer here a new origin story for the American West—a valuable piece of real estate always already part of the global marketplace.

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