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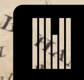
Framing the Nation, Claiming the Hemisphere

Transnational Imagination in Early American Travel Writing (1770–1830)

Markus Heide



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Transnational Imagination in Early American Travel Writing (1770–1830)

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I. Introduction: Frames and Claims

The journey motif is what enables Melville's Ishmael to assert his independence, just as it helps Huck Finn escape from the constrictions of Southern society, an unjust and restrictive social order. This legendary motif functions as a characteristic element in the literary construction of American experience – and of the United States as a distinct geographic and cultural space. Such symbolic rendering of travel reports in the U.S. canon's most praised fiction has been at the core of prolonged debate on American national character. Concepts, ideas, and myths that have been vital in debates on what constitutes American history – such as the frontier, manifest destiny, American exceptionalism, individualism, and freedom – have been analyzed as employing an imaginative language of travel, movement, and mobility.

However, it is not only American *fiction*, but also *non-fictional travel writing*, that has received critical attention in American studies: from the Myth and Symbol School to more recent transnational and postcolonial revisionist readings of American literary and cultural history. Non-fictional accounts of journeys of discovery, exploration, and leisure have been read both as first-hand accounts of mobility and as *imaginative* representations of landscape, narrative perspective, and cultural encounters. Many reports on North American travel were published before fiction garnered a mass audience in the United States. The texts' observations contributed to an understanding of contemporary patterns of *national* and *global* identification.

Historians and literary critics agree that travel reports have shaped perceptions of the so-called New World. These texts have,

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however, also shaped the emergence of early U.S. culture and its "geographical imagination" – what David Harvey defines as the ways that people compare themselves to larger social structures (1990, 418). At the same time, not much scholarly consideration has been given to the breadth of non-fictional travel writing in the revolutionary period, the early republic, and the first decades of the nineteenth century. In response to this, the present study reads North American travel writing of these periods within the historical and theoretical contexts of *nation-building*.

1.1. Travel Writing 1770 to 1830

Framing the Nation, Claiming the Hemisphere examines the national and transnational imagination in travel reports by American authors written between 1770 and 1830. The travel reports considered range from John and William Bartram's pre-revolutionary travelogues and Jonathan Carver's exploratory report on his journey through the Great Lakes region (1778), to early nineteenth-century reports, such as Anne Newport Royall's *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States* (1826) and William Duane's *A Visit to Colombia* (1826). Although earlier colonial writing about journeys in the Americas will be a point of reference throughout the study, this study's primary sources were written between the beginning of the struggle against British rule, following the end of the French and Indian War, and the beginning of Andrew Jackson's presidency. The decades between 1770 and 1830 were times of shifting colonial boundaries, nation-building, and emergent discourses of collective identification in North America. Travelogues of the time, as the following chapters aim to show, are affected by three central conditions: first, by realignments of the parameters of mixed-genre travel writing; second, by both established and emerging myths of the American experience; and, finally, by a discourse of nation-building that is characterized by anticolonial identification and the emergence of an expansionist national narrative.

The focus on inter-American and transatlantic relations affects questions of genre and narrative structure. What use do authors make of the non-fictional travel narrative within the emerging discourse of literary nationalism? The following chapters illustrate

strategies used by authors for employing the – indeterminate and hybrid – format of the travel report as means of giving expression to what are understood as distinctly American perspectives, experiences, and assessments of international relations. In view of the dominant role of European perspectives in travel writing, American texts of the period perform what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) and Walter Mignolo (2000) have described as "creolizing discourse": a "re-articulation of global designs from the perspective of local histories" (Mignolo 2000, 41). Such creolizing texts transform conventions of the genre by adding vernacular, national, or anticolonial elements.

Based on the work of scholars including Richard Slotkin (1973), Benedict Anderson (1983), Amy Kaplan (1993, 2005), and Walter Mignolo (2000, 2005), I understand the American *national imagination* as a dynamic negotiation of boundaries both real and imagined. Such boundaries can be based on regional, religious, racial, linguistic, or anticolonial considerations. These boundaries are controversial sites that ultimately bear on what distinguishes the nation from its outside. How are the national 'Self' and its 'Others' represented and imagined in travel writing of this era? How do the nation's constantly morphing geographical borders and its rapidly transforming union of republican states affect early American conceptions of self and international mobility?

In his study of early American travel writing, Pere Gifra-Adroher argues that if the United States, as a supposedly 'enlightened' republic, "was to disseminate its worldview then it had to necessarily produce its own representation of otherness" (2000, 88). Gifra-Adroher, therefore, directs attention to the discursive processes in the construction of national boundaries. Indeed, boundary controversies that *framed* the nation were among the issues negotiated by the 'new' discursive formations of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America, to which travel writing contributed. They include:

(1) the permeable boundaries between 'domestic' and 'abroad' in North America,
(2) the relation between the newly emerging, nationally anchored narrator and the implied 'domestic' reader,

(3) discourse of a North American 'interior' shaped by a dichotomy between wilderness and civilization, and
(4) the strong influence of generic and descriptive conventions from a colonialist tradition of European 'New World' writing, demonstrating the persistence of Eurocentric views.

The following chapters explore these boundary controversies as part of broader discursive negotiations of the relation between the nation and the world, the domestic and the foreign, home and abroad, as well as complex forms of collective identification.

In contrast to scholarship that engages a notion of Americanness based primarily on 'domestic' outlooks and experiences such as westward expansion ('the frontier') and the Biblical exegesis of New World experiences ('the puritan past'), here I am rather interested in the function of categories such as the *outside world*, *neighboring nations*, and *colonial empires* in the emergence of a U.S. national literary imagination. How does a shift in focus from a discursive 'domestication' of North American space to an interest in the *Othering* of what lies beyond national borders ultimately affect the understanding of the emergent national self? These are the kind of questions that begin by seeing *the transnational as a fundamental element of national emergence*. Such a transnational reading of national discourse[1] does not suggest a categorical rejection of the significance of frontier historiography and mythology in conceptualizing early American society, culture, and literature. Rather, it situates frontier discourse as one particular imagined contact scenario among others. We find a similar notion in Slotkin's seminal works, where, for example, the frontier stands as one of the founding myths of American identity, but is placed alongside mobility as a related integral feature of the national imaginary. The present study differs, however, from such established readings as it approaches early American

[1] On national and transnational approaches in literary analysis, see Benítez-Rojo (1996), 13, Rowe (2002), and Waller (2011), 1–3. On the interdependence of national and transnational perspectives, see Beck (2009), 82–90.

discourse of boundaries and borders, including that of the frontier, from a perspective informed by critical notions of nationalism, empire-building, and imperialist Othering.

This monograph therefore ultimately works to demonstrate how travel writing – with very few exceptions – supports and affirms the discursive processes of nation-building. From such a perspective, travel writing not only contributes to shaping the national imagination and its conceptions of superiority but is also complicit in territorial expansionism and its subjugation of conquered peoples and their respective cultural histories. The following chapters claim that travel writing of the early national period illustrates both the *connectedness* and the *entanglements* of a young United States. The primary texts analyzed in each thematic chapter negotiate categories such as *the outside*, *the home*, and *the world*, which I argue are foundational to the conception of national identity. The negotiation of these categories concentrates on cultural, 'racialized,' and colonial interrelations and dominant "global designs" (Mignolo 2000). Thus, the national narrative evolves from representations of *contact scenarios* in North America, in the transatlantic world, and around the globe. Without ignoring the roles of national mythology or the symbolism of American nature, my approach to travel writing ultimately concentrates on the continual co-existence of fluid notions of both 'home' and 'abroad.'

Reading Travel Writing

The vast range of writing that can be read as 'travel writing' makes it inevitable to necessarily limit primary sources – especially in the present case, with a considered timeframe of sixty years (1770–1830). Thus, this study concentrates on anglophone travel writing that was written by authors who defined themselves, at least during the relevant periods, as either colonial Americans or as citizens of the United States. A large majority of primary texts were authored by individuals who were not professional writers. Most of the texts examined in the following chapters were chosen due to having been either published in book format or written with that format in mind. This selection, for the most part, means

excluding unpublished journals and private letters. Despite this limitation of primary sources, the study otherwise follows a rather broad definition of both travel writing and travel.

While Paul Fussell, editor of the *Norton Book of Travel* (1987), defines traveling as "movement from one place to another [that] should manifest some impulse of non-utilitarian pleasure,"[2] many critics maintain a much more encompassing notion of travel. This is the case for Elizabeth Bohls (2005), for example, who emphasizes that Fussell's definition is based on the aestheticism of a "leisured élite" (xvi) and excludes the mobility of individuals inspired by motives other than the privileged attractions of Fussell's "non-utilitarian pleasure." To give an indication of other kinds of travelers, Bohls asks: "Do sailors, soldiers, servants, slaves, emigrants, exiles, transported convicts, military and diplomatic wives, count as travellers?" (xvi).

Along these revisionist lines reflecting on social privilege, the present study emphasizes the significance of accounts of "non-voluntary movement"[3] that embrace captivity narratives, slave narratives, sailor narratives, and reports by individuals who had access to neither publishing nor public culture. Accounts by such authors have often been published posthumously, promoted by printers, professional authors, or scholars. Although the focus of this study is on reports written for publication, it also includes slave narratives (Olaudah Equiano) and captain memoirs (Amasa Delano).

Methodologically, this study is influenced by scholarship in both American studies and postcolonial literary studies. While American studies traditionally involves the critical examination of paradigms of national symbolism and cultural mythology (in addition to their more recent transnational redefinitions), postcolonial approaches have strengthened this project's theorization of the function of literary texts as part of colonial expansion and rule – and as parts of the literary, cultural, and political discourse in the aftermath of said rule. In addition to analyzing the contradictions that complicate relations between discourse of nationalism

[2] See Fussell (1987), 21, see also Bohls (2005), xvi.

[3] On the issue of voluntary and involuntary travel, see James Clifford (1997) and Kristi Siegel (2002).

and of colonialism, the present study engages issues from both genre theory and the history of ideas. In this respect, the corpus is approached in the sense of what Sacvan Bercovitch has referred to as "cultural close reading" (1975, 15), a critical method that derives its account of the imbrication of text and context from attentive explication and critique of the literary work's own inscription of its cultural embeddedness. The aim is a balance between text and context, neither sanctifying the primary literary source nor privileging the cultural context.[4]

This study contextualizes travel writing within a broader perspective of American literary production of the period, including epic poetry, autobiography, slave narratives, and the beginnings of the American novel. The central focus of analysis, however, examines how American self-fashioning and self-positioning in the world appear in the travel writing of the period. I understand the *national imagination* as a symbolic construction both of the collective national 'Self' and of the outside world as the nation's 'Other.' Thus, for example, an examination of the imaginative elements in travel writing emphasizes the discursive entanglements that combine images of the new, post-revolutionary, and – as it fashions itself – anticolonial community *as a unified nation*. In the emergent "national narrative"[5] of the period, a regionally based American mythology – which had been forming since the first European settlements in the Americas – came to embed itself with new discourses of borders, national liberation, anticolonialism, and expansionism. Although this reading of the period's travel writing is strongly influenced by scholarship in American studies that focuses primarily on U.S. national mythology[6] and early U.S. fiction, it draws also on genre studies and the function of different forms of travel writing throughout the history of European colonial expansionism in the Americas.

Over the past decades, there has been a remarkable resurgence of critical interest in travel writing and its relation to constructions of Otherness. Such readings have examined forms of knowledge production within power asymmetries and processes

[4] On "cultural close reading," see Christopher Looby (1996), 8.
[5] See Jonathan Arac (2005) and Donald Pease (1994).
[6] See Slotkin (1973).

of global imperial expansion. A range of political events and social transformations, as well as various intellectual debates and movements, have contributed to such interest in forms of writing devoted to discovery, exploration, and tourism. Mary Campbell, commenting on theoretical approaches to travel writing, speaks of a "necessary reimagining of the world first occasioned by the post-World War II resistance movements and wars of liberation in the former European colonies, as well as by the waves of immigration that followed" (2002, 261). In addition to these socio-historical contexts, theoretical and methodological frameworks based on the work of Michel Foucault have been among the most far-reaching influences in the study of travel writing. Foucault's theory of the historical functions of discourse significantly influenced such publications as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Hayden White's *The Tropics of Discourse* (1985), both of which introduced to literary studies new models of thinking about non-fictional representation, including travel writing.[7] Subsequently, the theory of travel writing has been influenced by the self-critical analysis of ethnography (the 'writing culture' debate),[8] the analysis of the function of anthropology in the thinking of the post-Enlightenment world, and theories of the postcolonial global condition. Feminist literary scholars, most notably Sara Mills (1991, 2005), have made major contributions to the study of the gendered figuration of exploration, conquest, mobility, cultural exchange, home, and the nation.[9]

One of the most influential studies in the field, Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) combines the study of genre, ideology critique, and the history of ideas in her examination of eighteenth-century travel writing on Latin America. Stephen Greenblatt's analysis of early modern New World discourse in *Marvelous Possessions* (1991), meanwhile, has been widely perceived as directing the study of travel writing toward a new historicist cultural poetics that contextualizes

[7] See Chris Anderson (1989).

[8] See James Clifford and George Marcus (1986), Clifford (1988 and 1997) and Johannes Fabian (1983).

[9] On feminist contributions to the study of travel writing, see Elizabeth A. Bohls (1995 and 2005) and Lila Marz Harper (2001).

writing among literary, social, and political articulation. Studies by Mills (2005) and Amanda Gilroy (2000), both influenced by Pratt's focus on colonial power asymmetries and questions of cultural and literary exchange, also concentrate on the involvement of texts in broader political and social discourse and intertextual linkages. Mills's work, which is characteristic of the complex theorizing of discourses of colonialism, emphasizes the processes of Orientalism not as a unified discourse as implied by Said's groundbreaking study, but rather as an amalgam of diverse elements that both affirm and contest dominant discourses (55). Similarly, Srinivas Aravamudan defines the "tropicopolitan" as an inhabitant of the geo-cultural tropical regions and, at the same time, as a tropological construct. Aravamudan's theory is built on the assumption that, because of these related yet distinct agencies and discursive functions, the subaltern cannot be conceptualized simply as a "resisting native and radical other who is completely outside of discourses of domination" (1999, 6).[10] Such critical readings of travel writing help to examine and extrapolate the contradictions and complicities in the corpus of early U.S. travel writing.

Travel Writing as Hybrid Discourse

In accord with these theoretical and methodological perspectives, Amanda Gilroy defines travel writing as "a hybrid discourse that traversed the disciplinary boundaries of politics, letter-writing, education, medicine, aesthetics and economics" (2000, 1).[11] This notion of travel writing as "hybrid discourse" has informed more recent studies that highlight how in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a combination of autobiographical, historiographical, and ethnographical modes often proceeded along the lines of natural history. As a discourse, natural history structures and legitimizes much of the writing of the period.[12] This allowed

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[10] Similarly interested in conceptualizing colonial discursive positions, Peter Hulme (1986) emphasizes the simultaneous operation of a variety of discourses of colonialism.

[11] On intertextuality and travel writing, see Pfister (1993).

[12] See Christoph Irmscher (1999).

authors to generally underemphasize the colonial, ideological, and political dimensions of their writing while stressing their affiliation with cosmopolitan and Enlightenment discourse of scientific progress.[13] This overlapping of modes of writing is a major point of focus in Nigel Leask's *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770–1840* (2002), which analyzes the struggle in anglophone travel writing to integrate literary and scientific discourses (9). It also informs Susan Clair Imbarrato's *Traveling Women: Narrative Visions of Early America* (2006), which demonstrates how seemingly disinterested discourses, such as Carl von Linné's taxonomies, in fact, function within narratives and activities of empire-building.[14] These studies stress the intertextual and discursive entanglements of travel writing.

Postcolonial and postmodern notions of culture, ethnography, and mobility have been especially effective in redirecting approaches to early American travel writing. James Clifford and George Marcus's essay collection *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986), Clifford's *The Predicament of Culture* (1988) and *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997), and Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (2014 [1983]) and *Language and Colonial Power* (1991) have all profoundly influenced the conceptual study of travel and travel writing. These ethnographers have ultimately shifted the debate on the construction of cultures toward a theorization of the processes of Othering. Their interest in the discursive aspects of cultural representation draws attention to positionality: that is, to power relations and to speaking and writing positions of authors, narrators, and the observed in ethnographic texts. Hence, representations and conceptions of Self and Others become contested sites of authority.[15]

Apart from exploring power asymmetries in the representation of cultural difference, the writing culture debate opened up by Clifford and Marcus took a particular interest in concepts of movement, mobility, and displacement in the study of culture and cultural theory.[16] In this vein, Karen Kaplan's *Questions of*

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[13] On Natural History see chapter III of this study.
[14] See Imbarrato (2006), 17.
[15] See Clifford (1986), 10.
[16] See, for example, Clifford (1997).

Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement (1996) links histories and discourses of tourism and migration while problematizing metaphors of travel. Kaplan's account of travel goes beyond modernist linear conceptions of movement, while at the same time rejecting postmodern celebrations of nomadism and displacement. Influenced by Foucault's discourse analysis and Said's concept of Orientalism, studies of cultural mobility and travel by Kaplan and Greenblatt, seen as well in Peter Bishop's *The Myth of Shangri-La* (1989) and Eric Cheyfitz's *The Poetics of Imperialism* (1991), have deepened the understanding of Western tropes for imagining 'other' cultures and peoples. Such works have directed attention to the ideological aspects of travel writing and to the ambiguous message of cultural and racial superiority that is ingrained in many Western contributions to the genre. Reflecting these debates in ethnography, cultural studies, and literary studies, more recent work on travel writing shows European travelers and their writing as *complicit* in processes of empire-building. Noting the ideological attachments of European authors reporting their encounters on the colonial frontier, Pratt refers to this complicit writing as emerging from "the text of Euroimperialism" (1992, 5), patterns of thinking that continue to fundamentally shape contemporary European perceptions of the world.

Furthermore, most studies focusing on the convergence of travel writing and broader discourses of colonialism and empire-building examine texts written by British and other European authors. This Eurocentric view predominates in scholarship on travel writing of the early U.S. republic, which concentrates primarily on Europeans as explorers, so-called 'discoverers,' or other actors on the 'frontier' between 'civilization' and New World spaces and categories such as wilderness, nature, and cultural primitivism. Far less scholarly emphasis has been devoted to two other kinds of travel writing. The first is the study of colonial 'creole' travel writing. This is travel writing by authors of European or African descent born in the Americas, who self-consciously understand themselves as the offspring of New World geography and culture.[17]

[17] The term 'creole' was more commonly used in Latin American and Caribbean cultural and intellectual history than in anglophone continental North American writing. See Pratt (1996), 175, also Benedict Anderson (1983) and Goudie (2006), 8–10. Pratt approaches Hispano-phone creole and native

The second largely understudied form of travel writing emerges during fledgling nation-building processes across the Americas. Such writing documents times of general confusion, accelerated social transformation, and cultural re-orientation. The present study assumes that these two kinds of travel writing – by creole authors and by those engaged in processes of nation-building – are most valuable for understanding discourses of identity in settler colonies, and the particular functions of travel writing within such discourses. After all, such writing reflects on, and takes place during, moments of cultural encounter that establish new power relations marked by contradictory processes of 'giving voice' to emerging hegemonic groups and 'silencing' those perceived as inferior or as threat to the new status quo.

I suggest that early post-revolutionary identity formation and nation-building deserve deeper analysis, as these themes figure profoundly in Anglophone travel writing. The nation and nationalism, categories of Self and Other, and auto- and hetero-stereotyping of 'Americanness' were at this time in the very early stages of their development. Texts replete with imagery of travel and mobility, as well as with images of Self and Other, were produced during these times of radical change that came to fundamentally redefine social, political, and cultural spaces and categories in the Americas. Ultimately, travel writing of the early national period is produced within, and comments on, entangled discourses of anticolonialism, self-definition, and nation-building. In travel writing, what Chloe Chard (1999) describes as *national imagination* functions as a way of *ordering knowledge* in terms that both propose and invent specific national perspectives and patterns of description. Authors insert a national dimension, either in terms of information (e.g., travel routes) by making explicit who is addressed (the 'implied reader') or by forming "imaginative geographies" (Said 1978, 49).[18] The following analyses will explore such discursive

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texts as reacting, 'writing back,' to the colonizing project. In the emergence of British-American identity and conceptions of independence, the distinction of 'white' creole appears helpful for highlighting racialized power structures in North America, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

[18] On the function of alterity in travel writing, see Chard (1999), 6–10. Chard highlights hyperbole and emotional responsiveness as narrative strategies in travel writing.

entanglements and processes of knowledge production in various forms of travel reports.

1.2. Nation-building and Literary Nationalism

Several military and social conflicts contributed to the emergence of early U.S. patriotism. The French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, the 1787 Constitutional Convention, and the War of 1812 are among the most significant. Travel writing, on the one hand, *reflected* ideas of the nation as articulated by the general public, and, on the other hand, *shaped* ideas of the nation by offering descriptions, images, concepts,[19] and fantasies of the new nation to the reading public. Through reflecting and shaping ideas of the nation, writing about journeys worked toward promoting the nation-building process.

The slow but substantive shift from British and British American (Giles 2001)[20] identification toward a distinctly U.S.-American national identification – along with the correlated shift in symbolism in public life and literary discourse – illustrates the *imagined* character of the nation. Such constructivist notions of the nation have been theorized by Eric Hobsbawm (1990), Homi Bhabha (1990), and Benedict Anderson (1983), the latter of whom observes that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact" are imagined (6). Anderson specifies furthermore that nations as "imagined political communities"[21] are "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6).

[19] Slotkin, for example, discusses Indianization as a concept related to American national identity formation (241).

[20] On the category of British North America, see Giles (2001) and Greene (1993), 95–129.

[21] Anderson explains his notion of "imagining" by distinguishing it from Ernest Gellner's notion of "inventing" as brought forward in *Thought and Change* (1964). Gellner here argues that nationalism "invented nations where they do not exist" (169). Anderson, in contrast, emphasizes that such an understanding of nationalism implies that behind the masquerade "true communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations" (6). Concerning the significance of boundaries in nationalism, Anderson writes: "No nation imagines itself as coterminous with mankind" (7).

This emphasizes the significance of ideas of boundaries[22] and of self-determination for the discourse of nationalism. In his comparative analysis of nation-building processes around the globe, Anderson discusses the function of language, temporality, and memory in modeling any nationalism. His chief concern lies with the historical conditions and constellations that he regards as specific to nationalism, including the development of print capitalism and the related establishment of a monoglot mass reading public (43). The rise of both the newspaper and the novel was central to popularizing the representation of communities as nations. Such mass-audience publications contributed to the formation of "community in anonymity" (36), characterized by definitions of belonging and the idea of sovereign rule (25). Similarly to Anderson, Hobsbawm stresses the role of communication and subjectivity in the forming and maintaining of nationalism when he argues that "any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of 'a nation,' will be treated as such" (8).[23]

In the post-revolutionary period, print material became more widely distributed and commercialized in the circum-Atlantic world. In their analysis of such forms of public discourse, both Anderson and Habermas stress that modern history demonstrates a growing tendency of individuals asserting autonomy and citizenship by virtue of reading and publishing. This appears especially relevant at the outset of United States nationhood, as claimed by Cathy Davidson (1986) and Michael Warner (1990).[24] In their readings of the social and discursive functions of the early American novel, Davidson and Warner reveal how print culture constituted a decisive contribution to nation-building processes in the United States after 1776. Other scholars, meanwhile, have reassessed the

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[22] Benedict Anderson (1983), Eric Hobsbawm (1990) and Christopher Looby (1996) understand nationalism as a discursive product dependent on notions of otherness, limits and borders. Looby stresses the importance of symbols and figuration in the emerging nationalism of revolutionary America (2–4).

[23] Hobsbawm (1990) also highlights the function of "standard national languages" and printing in the rise of nationalism (10–11, 34–37, 46–57).

[24] Warner (1990) refers to a "republic of letters" (x).

roles of various cultural manifestations in the making of American nationalism, most notably public performance (Waldstreicher 1997). Although the debate on the "Republic of Letters" and public performance brought about a revaluation of the central function of print media, the general claim that print culture fundamentally contributed to the nation-building processes appears unchallenged. Scholars widely agree that diverse institutionalized printing and publishing of cultural work formed the basis for intellectual discourse that *established* the United States – literally and symbolically – and helped unite the population as citizens.

The signing and publication of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 marked a decisive moment in the synergy of nation-building and print culture. From this moment, American authors had somehow to navigate the shift from a British American (Spengemann 1977; Giles 2001) and white creole perspective (Anderson, Pratt, Mignolo) to a national-American and republican one. In the decades that followed, such processes of nation-building demonstrated distinct New World characteristics, which Anderson understands as key features of "new political entities" (46) in the Americas that underpinned the rise of the concept of nationalism around the globe. Anderson argues that these new American communities – "that sprang up in the Western hemisphere between 1776 and 1838, all of which self-consciously defined themselves as nations, and, with the exception of Brazil, as (non-dynastic) republics" (46) – preceded the rise of the nation state and nationalism in Europe.[25] However, these American republics and nations, in contrast to language-based nationalism in other parts of the world, emerged as creole states "formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought" (47). Thus, in the case of the United States, simply using the English language was quite clearly insufficient to mark a national and transatlantic difference. Additional thematic, stylistic, and symbolic means became necessary for imagining the nation in writing.

[25] On nationalism and Romanticism in British and French literature of the eighteenth century, see Marlon B. Ross (1995). See Arac (2005) on nationalism and imperialism.

Defining the New World in such a manner supports the argument that travel writing took part in discursive nation-building by way of exploring national myths and the geographies,[26] landscapes, and cultures – actual and imagined – of the new nation in relation to other nations, empires, and colonial territories within North America. This discursive entanglement prompts a number of questions. How is the shift from colony to independent republic represented and negotiated in early U.S. literary discourse? How does travel writing of the period construct the *outside* of the nation? How does travel writing mark a shift from colonial to post-revolutionary or national self-understanding?

Larzer Ziff's account of literary production in the early republic analyzes a general shift in representational practices following the publication of the Declaration of Independence. According to Ziff, the Declaration brought about a change from a "culture of immanence" (referring to former British presence in colonial America) to a "culture of representation," in a nation now "dedicated to the principles of representation" (1991, 124–5). This was no easy transition. Ziff stresses that until the publication of Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The American Scholar" (1837) the literary discourse of this new culture struggled to represent itself as distinct from the past. Emerson was eventually able to redirect the proclaimed political independence of 1776 into a rejection of dependence on British and Old World intellectual institutions, whereas until then the literary culture of the early republic "followed a predominantly conservative course" (Ziff 134). The theologian and author Timothy Dwight was one of the most influential promoters of, as Ziff has it, "an America of conserved values rather than an America of expanding democracy" (133).[27] However, his was not the only voice, and, with regard to the U.S. as a nation and democracy in general, Thomas Jefferson's political actions and thought ran counter to Dwight's conservatism and anti-expansionism.[28]

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[26] Harvey (1990) speaks of "geographical imagination" (418) and highlights how notions of time and space are employed for comparing social structures.

[27] Similar to Ziff, Edward Watts (1998) emphasizes the conservative tendency of early American literary culture.

[28] On Dwight's nationalism see Benjamin Spencer (1957, 40–41). Jefferson's position will be discussed in more detail in chapter IV.

After 1776, literary circles generally took sides with one of these opposing factions, and, whether endorsing Dwight's America of conserved values or Jefferson's expansionism, attempted to employ rhetoric of national independence. The search for themes and forms of expression considered specifically American began to shape literary production. After all, the written word constituted a fundamental part of the coordination of public opinion and debate leading up to the American Revolution. Benjamin Spencer highlights precisely this significance of rhetoric, print, and literature for the success of the revolution and the formation of a national consciousness. In his pioneering study of literary nationalism in the early United States, Spencer concludes that "in literature as in politics the achievement of independence is not unrelated to declarations of independence" (1957, 339).

Articulations of *literary nationalism* first emerged prior to revolutionary struggles, as notably manifest in the 'Rising Glory' poetry of the 1770s. After U.S. independence was achieved, writers, politicians, and intellectuals – Noah Webster, famously – were outspoken on the pressing need for a national literature and a standardized American language. A newly literate subjectivity thereby embraced the popular view that America was created as a "refuge from tyranny" with a common "heritage of freedom" (Green 1973, 70). Literary nationalism remained a central issue in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century, when even a writer of Herman Melville's stature struggled to distance himself from Britain's literary tradition and its dominant influence on American letters, a topic Melville addresses in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850). The literary historian Martin Green notes that authors of the early nineteenth century "all still hailed the coming of a great American literature, while admitting the poverty of what had so far been achieved" (1973, 75). Green highlights the importance of George Tucker's 1813 essay "On American Literature" for its discussion of the aesthetics and literary nationalism of the period.[29] But it was at least until the literary success of James Fenimore Cooper that England remained the focus of U.S. "literary adoration," even for cultural nationalists.[30] Although

[29] On Tucker's essay, see James Fieser (2005), xviii–xix.
[30] See Spencer, 36.

American debate on literary aesthetics had begun with contributions such as Tucker's essay and Fisher Ames's "The Mire of Democracy" (1805), such contributions ultimately remained less sophisticated than political debate of the same time (Green 75–77). Green comments on the pressure to go beyond the literary achievements of early America that included "the description, the sermon, and the political pamphlet," adding that in the early republic these could be seen "yielding to the novel, the short story, the play, the lyric, the epic, the essay, the satire" (80). "America was now an independent nation," Green concludes, "and it was time to write an independent national literature, to attempt to great literary forms" (80).

Despite public pressure to achieve complete national unity, such a process demanded more than a growing distinction between the newly independent republic and its former colonial motherland. Apart from shifts in transatlantic relations, the emergence of a unified nation would also need to take place within the nation's own borders in the form of domestic social and discursive production. In his influential *The History of the United States of America (1801–1817)*, Henry Adams observes that around 1800 such a development was yet to occur:

> In becoming politically independent of England, the old thirteen provinces developed little more commercial intercourse with each other in proportion to their wealth and population than they had maintained in colonial days. The material ties that united them grew in strength no more rapidly than the ties which bound them to Europe. Each group of states lived a life apart. (1889–91, 11)

Adams's study was to shape literary history well into the twentieth century. In accord with Adams's appraisal of economic and social life in the first decades of the nineteenth century, literary historians such as Martin Green, Everett Emerson (1977), and Emory Elliott (1994) have demonstrated that regional perspectives and traditions maintained more prevalence than their nationalist counterparts in the literary scenes of New England, the Middle Colonies, and the Southern Colonies. In New England, the so-called "Connecticut Wits" came to prominence and produced some of the most noted poetic works of the later revolutionary period, whereas Thomas Jefferson stood as the

most eminent intellectual spokesperson of the South. While Elliott identifies three major culturally distinct regions within the original United States,[31] Green, in his own regional approach to the literature and aesthetic exchange of the early United States, rather highlights the attachment of writers to the major urban centers of Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Hartford. However, regardless of whether one distinguishes specific cultural regions or emphasizes the intellectual milieux unique to urban centers, most studies of early republic literature nonetheless highlight internal variation. Everett Emerson, for instance, describes revolutionary America as "a collection of semiseparate colonies along the Atlantic coast emerging into unity and independence" (1977, 3). Therefore, both external and internal boundaries characterize the national literary discourse of the time. While external markers are used for defining the sovereignty of the nation, especially regarding transatlantic relations, internal or domestic markers are used to refer to regional, social, political, racialized, or religious distinctions within a society that finds itself in the process of uniting as a nation.

1.3. Fluid Boundaries: The Categories of Domestic and Abroad

Travel in North America during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has been associated less with journeys amid coastal regions settled by Europeans than it has been with life in the so-called 'interior' – that is, in territory west and south of the original United States.[32] Notions of such travel in regions seen as uninhabited, or as inhabited by indigenous groups rendered 'uncivilized,' generally treat the major part of North America as set outside the contemporaneous European colonial map. However, the United States was primarily bordered by neither uninhabited nor undefined 'interior' space, but rather by territory that was administered by Spain, France, and Russia. Especially considering that the region was still home to indigenous nations, it is highly

[31] In a similar way, Slotkin defines three culturally distinct regions in colonial America: "[…] Puritan, middle-colony or southern" (242).

[32] See Harold Smith (1999).

significant that travel writing of the time is generally regarded as an expression of encounters with frontier topoi and experience of the boundary between civilization and wilderness. Despite the prevalence of this assumption, when critically reading the travel accounts of the period it becomes clear that authors focus not only on encounters with 'nature' and 'uncivilized wilderness,' but comment furthermore on interactions with forms of European colonial administration and settlement. Accordingly, many of the leading politicians of the time – most prominently Jefferson and Hamilton – were intensely involved in, and intellectually preoccupied with, foreign policy on the American continent.

Such dimensions of diplomatic history and international relations have concerned historians of the Hispanic borderlands, such as Herbert Eugene Bolton,[33] as well as scholars interested in the history of French and Spanish colonialism. Nevertheless, until recently most studies of travel writing of this period demonstrated a tendency to represent the territories west, south, and north of the United States as wilderness. This perspective produced a nationalized image of the interior: the idea of the wilderness as given domestic U.S. territory. Not only does such criticism work to erase Native American nations from national discourse, but it also deemphasizes the political, cultural, and discursive significance of European settler colonies in North America and overlooks the importance of conflicting colonial *claims*. Ultimately, such critical understanding of the interior as wilderness ignores the expansionist politics that lay at the center of a new republic fundamentally informed by geopolitical considerations that legitimized notions of empire-building among the political elite.

Although soon after independence Jefferson and other leaders envisioned an American empire reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, vast parts of what would become the U.S. in fact remained to be populated by Native American nations and

[33] In his controversial essay "The Epic of Greater America," delivered as his presidential address before the American Historical Association in 1932, Bolton contradicts "purely nationalistic presentations" (68) of the history of the Western hemisphere and examines the Hispanic history of the southwest from a comparative perspective. For a more recent transnational approach to the history of the Western hemisphere see Fernández-Armesto (2003).

remained under European and Mexican rule up until the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Given this geopolitical situation for early American travel, it would be misleading to describe anglophone travel writing of the time primarily in terms of exploration of the frontier and 'Western wilderness.' Such an approach reduces the complexity of relations among continental neighbors as well as the ongoing geostrategic work of their political representatives, while also downplaying the multitude of perspectives held by settlers and travelers writing about North America. Reginald Horsman, a scholarly critic of U.S. imperialism, writes about this misconception of American expansionism during the early years of the independent republic:

> The history of westward advance is sometimes written as though it involved a domestic expansion of pioneers across an empty American continent. In reality, of course, most of the continent had still to be obtained from foreign powers [...], and the American continent was inhabited by a variety of Indian tribes. (1970, xii)

Given the North American traveler's need for negotiations with foreign powers, it is especially striking that their travel writing – and, even more remarkably, the majority of scholarship on such writing – generally lacks explicit notions of both the 'domestic' and the continental 'abroad.' This confusion can be traced to a long history of symbolically *claiming* New World land without recognition of existing settlements. This began with Columbus's taking possession of clearly populated islands in what he believed to be India.[34] Such initial symbolic actions of colonial acquisition – like conquering and domesticating through raising flags and naming places – generated a New World discourse that represented the territory as empty space free for the taking. Moreover, much extant scholarship on American travel writing contains persistent reference to movement across what is imagined to be, or to have been, free land.

Fiction of the early national period by Lydia Maria Child, Charles Brockden Brown, and, most notably, James Fenimore Cooper secured the frontier experience a central position in the

[34] See Greenblatt (1991), Jane (1988), and Morison (1983).

American cultural imaginary.[35] Until the 1980s, in historical and literary studies the frontier was predominantly understood, in Frederick Jackson Turner's sense, as the dividing line between civilization and wilderness, rather than between separate sovereign nations or colonial empires.[36] At the end of the nineteenth century, Turner argued in his influential thesis that the frontier was a "meeting point between savagery and civilization" (1893, 3). This opposition aptly characterizes the logics through which settlers, explorers, and other travelers frequently understood and framed their confrontations with parts of North America that were, to them, unknown. At the same time, however, this opposition reduces the complexity of the cultural encounters that appear in writings about frontier life. Bolton is among the historians of the Hispanic Southwest to have addressed this issue. Later revisionist historians like Reginald Horsman (1970, 1981), Richard Slotkin (1973), Patricia Nelson Limerick (1987), and Annette Kolodny (1975) worked to produce much more complex understandings of frontier history. The present study approaches American cultural and literary history guided by such revisionist historiography. It focuses upon territorial expansion (in which 'the frontier' has been a central force) in the context of U.S. global relations and politics, with a critical eye especially on the ideologies of manifest destiny[37] and American exceptionalism.

In late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reports on North America, like other parts of the world, the notion of 'abroad'

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[35] Spengemann (1977) and Slotkin (1973) discuss mutual influences between early non-fictional frontier narratives and the early American novel. Quite a number of non-fictional frontier narratives have been collected in the volumes of *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (1966).

[36] Horsman (1970 and 1981) highlights attitudes to race in the history and mythology of the American frontier.

[37] On manifest destiny in the mid-nineteenth century, Horsman (1981) writes:

> Agrarian and commercial desires and the search for national and personal wealth and security were at the heart of mid-nineteenth century expansion, but the racial ideology that accompanied and permeated these drives helped determine the nature of America's specific relationships with the peoples encountered in the surge to world power. By the 1850s it is generally believed in the United States that a superior American race was destined to shape the destiny of much of the world. (6)

is evoked, imagined, and negotiated geopolitically and symbolically. While depicting experiences and assessing regions outside the nation's geographical borders, the writing also evokes what is located and imagined to be outside the nation in other, literary ways: for example, by referring to implied readers in Europe, or raising intertextual references to European writers. In such cases, the category of 'abroad' structures the report without necessarily depicting a journey abroad. For example, we find references to an addressee in the Old World, as a reader, commissioner, or contractee.[38] Although I highlight controversial aspects of the theory and the history of the categories of 'domestic,' 'abroad,' and 'frontier,' I will retain to some extent the use of these terms because they reflect the rhetorical strategies of *claiming the continent* throughout United States history. Thus, although a key reason for my use of these terms is historical, it is also methodological – to explicate the very instabilities of these categories.

1.4. Cosmopolitanism and Imperialism

Cosmopolitanism and *imperialism* are not terms found in American travel writing and political thought of the late eighteenth century. These terms are first seen later, in the nineteenth century,[39] and are therefore employed somewhat anachronistically in my analysis of the travel writing of the early national period. Nevertheless, these two ideologies and forms of political practice help determine the relation of a writer to an imagined community, be it the nation, an empire, or humanity itself.

Ulrich Beck (2009) emphasizes that notions of nationalism always contain or imply *transnational* dimensions[40], as any articulation of a nation must necessarily define its own outside and thereby requires a boundary between *us* and *them*. An added consideration is that the nature of tensions between national and transnational identifications varies significantly, depending on geographic location as well as historical period. In the places and times relevant for this study, it is most significant that the

[38] As seen, for example, in Bartram's *Travels*, Jefferson's *Notes*, Crèvecoeur's *Letters*, reports I will discuss in the following chapters.

[39] See Arac and Rituo (1995).

[40] See Beck (2009), 82–90.

post-revolutionary American understanding of the intellectual leading class was strongly influenced not only by forms of Protestantism, but also by philosophical and political aspects of transatlantic Enlightenment thinking.[41] The Declaration of Independence denotes the most obvious and popular expression of such intellectual and political influence. Although notions of cosmopolitanism appear already in the pre-revolutionary writing of Benjamin Franklin, universalist perspectives become more clearly evident in revolutionary authors like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, who emphasize the idea of a world citizenship of learned men.[42] However, the anticolonial and separatist rhetoric of the Declaration ran conceptually counter to notions of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism – in the sense of world citizenship and universalism – as articulated by Voltaire, Hume, and Franklin.[43]

After independence, U.S. nationalism quickly acquired a *transnational* dimension in several senses of the term. Not only were international relations acknowledged, but, furthermore, it was nationalism that took on a universal dimension by imagining a specific mission of the young republic as seen in Jefferson's famous phrasing: the "Empire of Liberty."[44] At that time, a program of territorial expansion was endorsed and framed by an ideology of empire. Thus, early American cosmopolitanism and imperialism were articulated within both national and transnational discursive parameters.

The history of cosmopolitanism reveals for some critics its complicity with the ideology of colonial and imperial expansion. Eduardo Mendieta describes even Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitanism as imperial since it is "both blind and dismissive of its own material conditions of possibility" (2009, 241). Mendieta's early twenty-first-century perspective notes an "imperialist" lack of self-reflexivity in early American cosmopolitanism in its failure to be properly "dialogic" (245). But in the U.S. context,

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[41] See Kelleter (2002).

[42] Universalism also characterizes the work of poets of the early national period, among them Philip Freneau and Joel Barlow.

[43] On Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, see Schlereth (1977).

[44] See Tucker and Hendrickson (1990), 159.

post-revolutionary cosmopolitanism appears imperial not simply because it lacks the self-reflexivity that dialogue fosters, but moreover because republican and territorial expansionism is composed of distinctly imperialist qualities. These qualities threatened to burden the new nation and its global politics with the exact traditional, 'Old World' practices of empire that the first independent republic of the New World, according to its public rhetoric, had sought to renounce and replace.

The transnationalism of Jefferson's time can therefore be described as one of the original contradictions of the early republic. On the one hand, the United States was an anticolonial nation that embraced a cosmopolitan celebration of universal rights and a global mission of liberation and freedom. On the other hand, the new nation justified expansionist and imperial politics that depend fundamentally upon the subjugation of other people. In this way, U.S. national discourse differs from that of other former settler colonies, as its inaugural anti-colonialism was coupled with an insistence on the global spread of a democratic mission that is deeply ingrained in the country's institutions, culture, and society. This contradiction is summed up by historian Peter Hulme, who describes the U.S.'s position in the history of colonialism as being "postcolonial and colonizing at the same time" (1995, 122). I argue that these founding contradictions in understanding nationhood gave rise to the expression of three forms of transnationalism in the travel writing of the period, which may, I suggest, be referred to as revolutionary cosmopolitanism, enforced cosmopolitanism,[45] and expansionist (or imperial) cosmopolitanism.[46]

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[45] Bruce Robbins (1998) speaks of "actually existing cosmopolitanism" (e.g. slave narratives such as Olaudah Equiano's *Narrative*, first published in 1789), see also Pheng Cheah (1998) in the same volume (21). On Equiano's *Narrative*, see chapter 5.2. of this study.

[46] After the American revolution, Jefferson was not the only American to begin speaking of an American empire. Although many historians have used the term imperialism only in reference to late nineteenth-century USA, recent scholarship questions the implied assumption that the USA only became an imperialist power at the time of the Spanish-American War. John Carlos Rowe's *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism* (2000) addresses these issues referring to U.S. capitalism as expansionist and cosmopolitanism as a way to legitimize this expansionism (6, 15).

In addition to travel writers, poets provided further expression to these (pre-)national, transnational, and essentially creole ideas and ideals. American poets of the revolutionary period began to develop the shared theme of the "rising glory of America" that envisioned America as a place where men could begin the world anew, where humanity could realize age-old dreams. The first "rising glory" poems were written in the years leading up to the publication of the Declaration of Independence, with authors continuing to contribute to this poetic format throughout the revolutionary period. Among the best known examples are John Trumbull's Yale University commencement poem in 1770, "Prospect of the Future Glory of America"; Joel Barlow's "Poem, Spoken at the Public Commencement" (1781); David Humphrey's "The Glory of America" (1783); Timothy Dwight's "America: or, A Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies" (1780); and, most notably, Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Philip Freneau's "Poem on the Rising Glory of America" (1771).[47] Elliott writes: "The 'rising glory' poems and the biblical-nationalistic epics of the 1770s and 1780s allowed the poets to demonstrate their patriotic fervor, social usefulness, and commitment to the future glory of American industry, religion, and arts" (1982, 22). This prospective poetry, argues Elliott, can be understood as an articulation of the republic's earliest self-image. As Elliott further notes, the nationalist ambitions of this genre were often far-reaching and offered "a prospect in which various forms of republicanism, peace, and empire spread from the U.S. across the western hemisphere, and often over the globe" (160).

Writers and poets of the time also aspired to demarcate the New World from the Old World. Joel Barlow's epic poem *The Vision of Columbus* (1787) – and his later *The Columbiad* (1807) – provided contemporary readers with a description of America's history, a poetic topography, and a vision of the future that were hemispheric in their historic and imaginary scope while also emphasizing divergences between the Old and the New World.[48]

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[47] See Emerson (1977), 15.

[48] In his *The Americas: A Hemispheric History* (2003), the historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto uses the phrase "Pan-American patriotism" when referring to Barlow and Jefferson's notion of the Western hemisphere (120).

Rising Glory poetry, however, was not the only literary form to employ a national imagination alongside transnational references and imagery. Such elements also played central roles in the poetry of writers as different as Timothy Dwight and Phillis Wheatley, and furthermore in the first American novels, including the work of Susanna Rowson and Charles Brockden Brown. Therefore, together with statesmen and political commentators, the poets of the new nation understood America in relation to the globe while also probing its unique significance for world history and humankind. Indeed, in very broad terms, the discourse of the nation drew on cosmopolitan and imperialist ideas and politics that attributed a transnational significance to the United States that transcended any strict sense of regional borders.

Scholarship on early republic cosmopolitanism and imperialism generally centers on Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine. In their respective political writing, these figures each contributed to framing an Enlightenment view of cosmopolitanism.[49] At the same time, especially in relation to Jefferson and Hamilton, scholars have remarked on the use of the term 'empire' as distinct from cosmopolitanism. This distinction is particularly relevant in connection with the concept of the nation and with modes of global identification. The political historian Karl-Friedrich Walling, for example, comments on Hamilton's notion of "American empire":

> As revealed in the first paragraph of *The Federalist*, Hamilton regarded the American "empire" as one of the "most interesting" in the world because Americans were attempting to establish it in an entirely new way, through popular "reflection and choice" rather than through the traditional modes of sheer "accident" and military "force" (Federalist 1:3). (1999, 95)

Walling notes that Hamilton's sense of empire did not mean imperialistic "in the modern sense of ruling by force alone" (97).[50]

For a comparative view of the efforts to establish "cultural independence" in Hispanic America and in the U.S. (101–158).

[49] See Mendieta (2009), 242.

[50] Gerald Stourzh, in *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (1970), takes the opposite view to Walling.

Such correlation between cosmopolitanism and expansionism has similarly been read as controversial in Jefferson's political thinking and practice. Sean Goudie (2006), for instance, juxtaposes Hamilton's "empire for commerce" to Jefferson's "empire for liberty" as a means of indicating the discursive overlap of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and national-imperial desire.

The following chapters will present travel writing as a tool in the nation-building process of the United States: a tool that *reflects* the mindset of the time, a tool that *imagines* a national community, and a tool that *shapes* the mindset of a people. The study maintains that travel writing, as a literary format, *negotiates* the triangular relationship between American post-revolutionary nation-building, continued European colonial expansion in the Americas, and the ongoing existence of indigenous nations. This historical moment, therefore, is characterized by discourses of anticolonialism alongside new, internal colonization of native peoples and territories. The historical moment is further characterized by emerging expansionist and imperialist practices of the young republic that Goudie has described as "paracolonialism" (2006, 4). Underlying each of my readings is a common thesis that travel writing defines and negotiates borders, limits, and territorial expansion, and that it does so within the parameters of the identity-generating discourse of nation-building. My readings therefore argue that nation-building must be understood as product of complex, entangled, and contradictory practices and ideas.

Chapter two, "Early American Travel Writing," begins by outlining the theoretical and methodological parameters of this study. In section 2.2, I move to provide an overview of the history of travel writing in colonial British North America, the period immediately preceding this study's historical focus. In 2.3, I introduce generic characteristics and historical aspects of travel writing during the early national period, when a distinct national imagination emerged in the writing of authors who understood themselves as Americans. Finally, in 2.4 I discuss critical approaches to early American travel writing.

Chapter three, "Creolizing America," examines the contribution of authors based in North America to the Enlightenment

project of knowledge production. Here I suggest that writing by these colonial American authors incorporated structures and tropes drawn from European natural history. More specifically, I argue that these travelogues appropriate natural history in ways that mark a transatlantic difference (as a form of creole sensibility) that foreshadows the development of a more explicitly national imagination in American travel writing to come. This chapter provides readings of travel reports by Jonathan Carver, John Bartram, and William Bartram. These three reports on journeys of exploration illustrate the complexities of national identification and authorship in relation to colonial influence during the revolutionary period.

Chapter four, “Framing the Expanding Nation,” moves to trace the national discourse of expansion in topographical descriptions (Thomas Jefferson and Gilbert Imlay), narratives and descriptions of the interior (John Filson), and reports of domestic travels in early nineteenth-century urban American society (Anne Newport Royall). Chapters five and six examine how the new nation is represented in writing about journeys abroad. These two chapters concentrate on Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, regions that became highly relevant in discourse of national emergence, as well as in the articulation of imperialist ideas that favored further expansion.

Most of the primary texts examined in this study reflect on the new nation’s significance for humanity and world history. The writing, therefore, does not only show the U.S. as a new nation among other nations, but furthermore presents the nation as a complex, and at times contradictory, set of ideas: as exceptional, as a promise to mankind, as the leading power of the Western hemisphere. This study’s conclusion shifts to link these readings to the later nineteenth century, a time when the initial challenges of nation-building had been overcome, when the United States had established itself as a powerful player in Western hemisphere affairs, and when, on the global scene, the country was becoming respected as an emerging world power. I conclude by noting how patterns of national self-definition and worldview identified in travel writing of the first fifty years after independence indeed reverberate in a period when U.S. global

engagement grew significantly more controversial. To do so, I examine how publications by Richard Henry Dana Jr., Herman Melville, María Ruiz de Burton, and José Martí continue the complex tradition of exploring the multi-faceted nexus that is nationalism, expansionism, and imperialism in the Americas.