"THOSE WERE THE DAYS…THAT TRIED MEN'S METTLE:" TOURISM, WESTERN MASCULINITY, AND THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD, 1865-1880

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The Great Western Frontier did not fade from American culture by the turn of the twentieth century — its spirit appeared very much alive; the significance and implications of the American West in modern society simply shifted. But why did the American West seem so important to men in the United States? How did the rise of industrialization affect how men perceived themselves and the American West? A number of studies on masculinity at the turn of the twenty-first century noted both American industrialization and the West. Gail Bederman argues that at the end of the nineteenth century, men wanted to "revitalize civilized manhood by reviving" lost "'primitive' masculine virtues," located in the American West.[1] Teddy Roosevelt, according to Bederman, became the political and cultural embodiment of these masculine values, by viewing "the perfect civilization…[as] the most manly, civilized, and powerful race in the world."[2] Similarly, Kristin Hoganson has claimed that these normative male values defined "political leaders' views about themselves, their political system, and the wider world" by the onset of the twentieth century.[3] Neither of these works, though, delves into any

[1] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 237.
[2] Ibid., 196.
[3] Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale

specific examples — like the railroads — of how this "civilization" changed men's attitudes at this time. Nor do they explain why men like Teddy Roosevelt became proponents of "heroic and manly Western" values.[4]

One of the best accounts of Eastern, middle-class male culture and the West, Brian Roberts' *American Alchemy,* refers to the dreams and fantasies of a gold-seekers utopia in the West, a common ideological pretense for men of the East.[5] Despite this, according to Roberts, the forty-niners viewed Western masculinity as an identity to overcome, a masculine bravado run amok. Adding to this narrative, Sarah Watts has argued that men fancied the popular Western dime novels, Wild West Shows, and leisure activities (like hunting) that imitated Western life at the end of the nineteenth century.[6] She attributes this new fascination with representations of the West to the "new standards of action and realism" in the entertainment businesses and, ultimately, the strict models of childrearing used by their parents' generation.[7] Thus, men manifested a morbid psychological and sexual identity, nurtured by the violent images of Western men. But these "punitive models" of child rearing that caused boys of this generation to "repress emotional needs…[and] develop a fear and hatred of the father" did not manifest in this era alone; parents had raised their children according to the same Victorian models for generations.[8] What, then, explains this disconnect? Why did Eastern men become increasingly fascinated with the American West, when they denounced it forty years earlier?

University, 1998), 14. Both Bederman and Hoganson's works rely significantly on E. Anthony Rotundo's, *American Manhood*, which states that as the century came to a close, the male world of business began to change, over-civilization threatened the American nation, the separate spheres began to erode, and men had to deal with self doubt.

[3] Due to this, bourgeois manhood embraced new virtues and obsessions in the late nineteenth century. E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

[4] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 176.

[5] Brian Roberts, *American Alchemy: The California Gold Rush and Middle Class Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[6] For more on this topic, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, "The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century," In James Grossman, ed., *The Frontier in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and especially, Robert Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

[7] Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House*, 142.

[8] Ibid., 40.

Missing from each of these historical narratives is the "great national work" of the period: the transcontinental railroad.[9] This new mode of transportation to the American West provided middle-class men with an opportunity to reach the Western Frontier without confronting the dangers that accompanied stagecoach or isthmus travel. This added to the psychological and cultural strain for American men during this time, since they rode on a more luxurious, bourgeois transport to the West—the very same lifestyle that provoked a crisis of gender for these men. Concurrently, though, men who went West by railroad ideologically distinguished their form of transportation from other forms of travel; ultimately, their purpose for travel differed from the pioneers of the past. From the 1840s to the 1890s, American men did experience a change in their identities. The forty-niner mentality of Western masculinity differed inherently from that of Buffalo Bill and Teddy Roosevelt's; the former predicated itself on actual participation in the daily, rugged activities of Western life and the latter relied on a construction of fantastic representation. Childrearing practices do not explain this; the railroad does. The transcontinental railroad soon became the in-between for men with a desire to participate in Western iconography, but without facing the risks and identity change associated with pioneer life. Travel literature acts as an ingression into this changing world for American men.

Whenever men and women read or wrote about travel on the transcontinental railroad, the words they used to describe this new technological achievement reflected an "aura of adventure"; the excitement and novelty revealed in these sources cannot be undermined.[10] Although the men who wrote about railroad travel to the West belonged mainly to a class of the intellectual elite, they represent the same type of men who identified with Western versions of manhood

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[9] Studies on the transcontinental railroad have primarily been "consensus" histories and rarely discuss the gendered and cultural effects of the railroad; they include: Stephen Ambrose, *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); David Howard Bain, *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999); John Hoyt Williams, *A Great and Shining Road: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Times Books, 1988); James McCague, *Moguls and Iron Men: The Story of the First Transcendental Railroad* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964). Amy Richter's *Home on the Rails: Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) provides an excellent discussion on women traveling on this railroad, but does not analyze the cultural effects for men.

[10] Quote taken from Bruce C. Cooper, ed., *Riding the Transcontinental Rails: Overland Travel on the Pacific Railroad, 1865-181* (Philadelphia: Polyglot Press, 2005), 1.

at the turn of the twentieth century. In other words, these men who wrote travel literature can reveal the cultural climate and ideological apprehensions that men like Teddy Roosevelt grew up in and were raised upon. Similarly, by observing the promotional techniques of Western travel, one can ascertain the construction of Western identification. In the highly charged and politicized language of advertisement, travel literature reveals the ways in which the intellectual elite viewed the "average" American experience, appealing to what they perceived as the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of society, in an attempt to sell their product. Finally, through observations of travel literature, one can ascertain the characteristics these men attributed to their identities as travelers in the modern world.

In the essay that follows, the first section reveals that American travelers who rode on the transcontinental railroad, between 1865 and 1880, defined themselves as participants in a unique mode of transportation and leisure activity to the American West; it was a novel experience, adding a new meaning to "tourist" in the American lexicon. Second, this essay argues that men who wrote about their travels on the railroad, or read any of the highly popular accounts in newspapers, travel guides, or view books, actively negotiated their ideological relationship to the Western Frontier in terms of gender and psychology. They constructed a discourse that placed the American West into a past no longer attainable, rendering it to memory, and mythologizing its attributes. At the same time, a perceived notion of pristine, pioneer manliness was located in a past that the modern railroad traveler could not achieve.[11] In this rhetorical context of tourism and travel, men like Roosevelt soon became paragons of a Western style of masculinity, ideals constructed out of fantasy and leisure activity; and within this cultural mindset, a generation of men became fascinated with the

[11] This occurred as men repeatedly faced a crisis of gender due to the onset of a modernized, industrial culture. For more on this topic see Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization*, Watts' *Rough Rider in the White House*, Rotundo's *American Manhood*, and Roberts' *American Alchemy*. These arguments attest that the repeated crises of American manhood resulted from the industrialization of society and the onset of the modern era. They don't delve into the relationships men had with these new forms and methods of industrialization, though. In these attempts to relate a narrative of masculinity for the time, it is not enough to cite an ambiguous notion like industrialization as an explanation for shifts in culture; men maintained a complicated array of relationships with the emerging industrial society, and it is the shifts in a number of these specific relationships that affected their cultural identification.

American West, perpetuating its iconography at the turn of the twentieth century.[12]

Many authors have considered the rise of modern American travel and "mass tourism" an early twentieth century phenomenon, often citing Teddy Roosevelt and Ernest Hemingway as two of the foremost trailblazers in this leisure activity.[13] Analysis into travel at this time, according to Paul Theroux and Michael Kowalewski, reveals a developing difference between "traveler" and "mock-traveler" — traveler meaning one who experiences the discomforts of travel and mock-traveler meaning those who bring "their homes with them," that is, the tourist.[14] These studies, though, do not go back far enough.[15] This discursive dichotomy developed decades before the twentieth century, with the advent of the transcontinental railroad. Observations of transcontinental travel literature from 1865 to 1880 reveal a new situation that developed within American culture — one that embodied an exhilarating tourist experience that altered the ways in which traveling men viewed their emotional relationships to home, and supplemented travel with the most modern accommodations. Although these men who wrote about their travels on the railroad did not differentiate between the legitimate traveler versus the mock-traveler, this new tourist experience in the United States abetted in the construction of a polarized discourse that placed modern railroad tourism ideologically antithetical to pioneer travel.

Psychologically, railroad travel to the West seemed a novel, strange, and exhilarating experience; those who rode the transcontinental

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[12] For more on America's fascination with the West at the turn of the twentieth century, see Slotkin's *The Fatal Environment*, Watts' *Rough Rider in the White House*, Limerick's "The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century," and Joy F. Kasson's *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

[13] Kristi Siegel and Toni B. Wulff, "Travel as Spectacle: The Illusion of Knowledge and Sight" in Kristi Siegel, ed., *Issues in Travel Writing: Empire, Spectacle, and Displacement* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 113; also see Edward Whitley, "Race and Modernity in Theodore Roosevelt's and Ernest Hemingway's African Travel Writing" in the same book, 13-27.

[14] Siegel and Wulff, "Travel as Spectacle," 114.

[15] See, Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 199), 5. This book discusses the history of vacationing in the United States well before the turn of the twentieth century, but Aron claims that at this time, tourism solidified as a characteristic of the middle-class vacation. She does state, though, that prior to this, vacationing became increasingly popular amongst the middle-class as their economic, political, and social positions increasingly allowed for it throughout the nineteenth century.

rails did so with a "glow of anticipation."[16] This signified a change in the relationship between travelers of the past, compared to the tourist of the present. The experience seemed so new and exciting that many railroad tourists felt "sensations of flying, falling, climbing, dying…mingled [with] feelings of awe, admiration, and sublimity" as the trains flew at a startling twenty-five to thirty miles an hour.[17] The "novelty" of the railroad itself brought daily onlookers to the stations who commonly exclaimed, "isn't it gay" and "that beats the world!"[18] These proclamations indicated a change in the identities of Eastern travelers going west; rather than identifying travel to the American West with extrinsic depravity and perversity, as promulgated by isthmus travel, Americans soon associated the innovative and thrilling experiences provided by railroad travel with that of the Western Frontier.[19] This "electric…spirit" that Americans assigned to railroad travel, thus, stripped the West of "adventure, perilous or amusing" and replaced it with feelings of "blissful ignorance of the dangers" of overland travel.[20] By doing this, taking a trip via the transcontinental railroad provided Americans with a new relationship to the West; as the dangers and moral deprivation associated with the region slowly faded into memory, the transcontinental railroad opened a "new era" for travel to the West, "render[ing] travel a pleasure, instead of a fatigue."[21] The completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, thus, began an era that allowed the West to be toured instead of traversed.

Similarly, proponents of railroad tours to the West constructed a narrative in which Americans sped along a land of fancy as their train cars moved across the great Frontier. An 1885 tourist brochure epitomized this sentiment about railroad travel in its comparison between Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and the fantastical trip across "The

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[16] W. R. Steele, ed., "Cheyenne," *Trans-Continental,* May 28 1870, Vol. 1 No. 4, 2. Schuyler Colfax quoted in Samuel Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier: Our New West and Records of Travel Between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean.* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), x.

[17] Benjamin F. Taylor, "Between the Gates," in Cooper, *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 329.

[18] Albert D. Richardson, "Through the Pacific," in Cooper, *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 83.

[19] Roberts, *American Alchemy*, 129.

[20] Taylor, "Between the Gates," 327; Charles Nordhoff, "California: How to Go There, and What to See by the Way" in Cooper, *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 327. W. S., "Across the Continent: The George Mortimer Pullman Excursion," *New York Times*, June 28, 1869, in Cooper, *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 210.

[21] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 103.

Wonderland Route" that embodied the West.[22] These advertisements commonly described nearly every landmark the train passed by as "rich" and "delightful to the eye."[23] No longer were travelers required to participate, or witness, the degradation of the inhabitants of Western towns. As modern tourists, they embarked on a journey that coalesced into a "perpetual delight."[24] These passengers glorified the transcontinental railroad for making travel west accessible for all, while maintaining a sense of grandeur and spectacle. As tourists, equipped with the most up-to-date traveling manuals, like *The Pacific Tourist*, they had the option to visit the hovels of the "most despicable lot of men" that inhabited the West, if they so desired; but unlike the pioneers and forty-niners who traveled before them, necessity ceded to choice and pleasure![25] Observations of the peoples and towns of the West, thus, provided the modern railroad tourist with a new, spectator relationship to the regions they passed through; the spectacle of seeing the West from a passenger window, and being seen as temporary traveler in the area by the locals, provided tourists with a constant, point of fascination and curiosity on their trips.[26]

As people read about the construction of the railroad and anticipated its completion, they even described it as a "story from the Arabian Nights."[27] Once on the train, the experiences only became more surreal. Some travelers found it incredibly strange that the sun and moon occupied a number of positions in relation to the directions they moved aboard the train and at the matter of "one instant" would change its position.[28] Similarly, the physical appearance of the train moving at such novel speeds fascinated and mystified many travelers, who fancied "the shadow train underneath, all wrong side up…more real than the actual

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[22] Advertisement picture in Ezra Bowen, ed., *The Old West: The Railroaders*. (Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1973), 138.

[23] W. S., "Across the Continent," 207.

[24] Ibid., 204.

[25] John Charles Currier, *Personal Diary Account by Capt. John Charles Currier of the 21st U.S. Infantry at Promontory on May 10, 1869*, May 7 1869, http://www.nps.gov/archive/gosp/research/currier.html (accessed March 1, 2008).

[26] For more on the spectacle of seeing and being seen as a tourist, and what is referred to as the "tourist gaze," see John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, second edition (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 126.

[27] Richardson, "Through the Pacific,'"72. Taylor in Cooper also discusses railroad travel by saying, "Read over the old stories of the Arabian Nights, and believe every word of them," 388.

[28] Robert L. Harris, "The Pacific Railroad—Unopen," *Overland Monthly*, September 1869 in Cooper, *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 197.

one above."[29] It seemed equally absurd for men "who can't pronounce the names of the stations" to traverse through to the American West and not "know what state they are passing through!"[30] This provided a strange and new experience for men whose only access to the West, prior to the advent of the transcontinental railroad, was by the long, arduous journeys via stagecoach overland or by ship, through the Isthmus of Panama, and whose awareness of the landscape manifested the necessity of survival. This "spectacle" that came to define tourism on the transcontinental lines embodied something new, exciting, and yet fundamentally absurd; it represented sensations of grandeur and spectacle, while demarcating its uniqueness to all previous forms of travel to the West.[31] The railroad posited an old western mode of travel against the modern tourism of the West.

Adding to these new tourist experiences provided by the transcontinental railroad, the land traversed in the relatively short amounts of time affected the familial relationships maintained at home. Railroad travelers found it noteworthy that "New York [was] no longer an antipode [to San Francisco], but a neighbor."[32] Isolated from family and friends (especially women), by thousands of miles and dangerous modes of transportation, the male forty-niners and pioneers of the past suffered deep, psychological anguish caused by the loneliness of frontier life.[33] Accordingly, these men who rode on the transcontinental rails became increasingly aware of "a great change to the beleaguered officers and men" who traveled through and lived in the Western Frontier prior to the railroad; they now "hear[d] the cheerful whistle of the locomotive and [saw] civilization pass every day on the cars."[34] Instead of experiencing the "lonely far-away feeling" that men felt while traveling West by boat or stagecoach, one could "talk in a neighborly way" about touring throughout the West "as if it were just across a four-rod street."[35] As this burgeoning form of tourism to the American West became normalized and accessible, statements like "when you get back, come around and dine with me and we'll talk over the trip," seemed strange to many men (especially those who experienced stagecoach travel) as this "new

[29] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 60.
[30] Ibid., 66.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 90.
[33] Roberts, *American Alchemy*, 163.
[34] Currier, *Personal Diary*, May 6, 1869.
[35] Taylor, "Between the Gates," 338, 342.

situation" became common, pointing out that most Americans began to regard "San Francisco as a suburb of New York."[36]

Similarly, many men could "not help but speculate what kind of men we…shall be when all these now desolate plains are filled, when cities shall be found where now only the lonely depot or the infrequent cabin stands."[37] Instead of emotional, spatial, and temporal isolation from loved ones while traveling west, that pioneers and frontiersmen had to endure, the railroad brought "them home; more, it carrie[d] home to them."[38] On top of this, taking a trip on the transcontinental railroad no longer required men to separate themselves from any news at home, a mandatory endurance for the men of the frontier; onboard newspapers like the *Trans-Continental* gave travelers daily updated news reports, sports scores, and even the currency exchange rates, so they would not miss out on anything.[39] Train cars full of fellow tourists a passenger could "converse [with] as you would in your parlor at home" soon replaced the loneliness of frontier life.[40] Even the emotionalism involved with departures took on new qualities. The "great crowds on the wharf, and the sobs, and the broken-voiced, 'God-bless yous'" were soon replaced with a "careless hand-shaking and a cheerful 'good-bye.'"[41] Although this came across as a "moral and social refreshment and rehabilitation" of the frontier lifestyle for men who "did not feel at ease or at home in the Far West," it indicated a new psychological relationship that men developed with the American West by 1880 — one that appeared safe, novel, and ultimately unknown until the advent of the transcontinental railroad; a new tourist identity that developed as men traveled West.[42]

The final element of the psychological ramifications of transcontinental railroad travel was manifested in the luxurious journeys. The opulent mode of transportation, embodied in the railway cars, signaled a mark of progress for the American nation (and thus mankind), while it indicated a cultural shift in the way men viewed the West — a shift that posited the modern tourist in an adversarial relationship with the pioneers who traveled in the past. First, railroad travel symbolized

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[36] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 58.
[37] Nordhoff, "California," 256.
[38] Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 73.
[39] W. R. Steele, ed., *Trans-Continental,* May 24, 1870, Vol. I, No. 1, 2.
[40] Nordhoff, "California," 247.
[41] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 90.
[42] Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 72.

modern excellence, with its "comfort, luxury, and splendor."[43] The decades that followed the Civil War, albeit a time of economic and industrial stimulation in the United States, were plagued with feelings of uncertainty and concern for most Americans as the yeoman farmer faded away, cities arose throughout the country, and antagonisms between capital and labor polarized.[44] As a result, according to proponents of tourism on the railroad, the "tired businessman" of modern industry sought out leisure and luxury that the "most busy and overworked Americans know how to enjoy."[45] Playing into these anxieties that developed in modern American culture, railroad literature and advertisements transported men to a fantastic place through the rhetoric and language of "commercial exotica," a common tool for advertisements of that era.[46] Thus, those tourists who proclaimed that the "luxurious…room cars is a wonder and a delight, as contrasted with the old plains and mountain, or ocean and isthmus travel" viewed the transcontinental railroad as a means of psychological repose from their strained relationships at home and at work; concurrently, though, they also reinforced an ideological preference to a progressive modes of transportation, an inherent solution to the toilsome stagecoach and steamship travel to the West.[47]

Previously unheard of in American history, a man or woman could travel West in such "absolutely luxurious circumstances…a ride thus rendered not only tolerable but comfortable, and not only comfortable but a perpetual delight."[48] Compared to stagecoach or steamship travel, riding the transcontinental rails provided passengers with everything they would need on their expeditions to the West, leaving "nothing to be desired."[49] For this reason, men who traveled across the continent via the transcontinental railroad no longer had to participate in the identity-altering experiences that accompanied previous modes of transportation to the West; the transcontinental railroad itself became a solution to the

[43] W. S., "Across the Continent," 204.
[44] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 17.
[45] Nordhoff, "California," 246.
[46] Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 10.
[47] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 145.
[48] W. S., "Across the Continent," 204.
[49] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 74.

anxieties wrought by modern life.[50] According to many travelers, an air of "magic" filled the luxurious palace cars, with their tablecloths of "snowy linen," silverware made of "solid silver," and "Ethiopian waiters, flitting about in spotless white" to wait on a traveler's every whim.[51] Many of those on board these trains worried about sleeping and eating at such high speeds, but soon learned that the sleeping hotel and restaurant cars never sped along "rough enough to disturb in the least our sleepers" and that while eating, "our Champagne glasses filled to the brim spilled not a drop."[52] According to these advertisements, the railroad cars became a constructed fantasy world for those men going west. It became a world in which the anxieties of modern life remained at home, in the city, and men could play out their fantasies of a less constricted, business world without changing their identities or questioning the social norms of the modern era.

The passenger trains, assembled at "the level of a fine art," renegotiated the modern tourist's relationship to the West, transforming the region's purpose for the middle class Easterner.[53] As these vacationers and businessmen alike increasingly rode on the railroad, the Western Frontier slowly became a destination for tourists, rather than a way of life for the traveler. While on board, one could frequent "the barber shop…in the after end of the smoking car" or listen to "the special luxury of a house organ" played, in case travel became a bore; this notion began a psychological and emotional process that distanced the modern traveler from the pioneer and stagecoach traveler.[54] The "Barnum-type letters," "scroll work in gold," and paintings of "Bengal tiger[s] obviously stalking some unseen prey in a jungle as green as emerald" that characterized train cars at this time, deepened this sense of luxury and fantasy for those who rode the rails.[55] The construction of the transcontinental railroad itself became a watershed moment for luxuriant tourism. Although other railroads throughout the country produced their palace cars before 1869, the multi-day travel required by transcontinental

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[50] See chapter Four, "Numberless Highways to Fairway Grottos," in Roberts, *American Alchemy*, 93-117 for a discussion on the identity altering experiences that occurred aboard ships full of men traveling West.

[51] W. S., "Across the Continent," 208.

[52] Ibid., 218, 209.

[53] Ibid., 203.

[54] Steele, *Trans-Continental,* May 25 1870, Vol. I, No. 2, 2. Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 46.

[55] As quoted in Walter Licht, *Working for the Railroad: The Organization of Work in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 162.

travel gave rise to the sleeper, the hotel car, and the restaurant carriage; and ultimately, this culminated in the construction of the lavish Union and Pullman Palace cars, characterized as "the richest in decoration, furniture, and finish of any [other] car ever built in the world."[56] Instead of going west to escape the rising uncertainty of business and middle class life, like the forty-niners, tourists on the railroad participated within a mode travel that adhered to the fantasies of bourgeois opulence. Many travelers, in fact, went to California to frequent the "Fine Jewelry and Silverware Shops" and "General Merchandise" stores that had "Japanese and Chinese Goods," as consumers perpetuating a tourist culture and identity, rather than searching for land as a means of individual liberation.[57] The mysticism that defined the Western Frontier for generations of Americans soon became replaced with a fascination for luxurious accommodations, leaving some travelers to comment that according to "recent passengers…the only points of interest on the entire route are the meal-stations."[58]

For this reason, while aboard the train, men often bickered over first-class accommodations (refusing to ride on anything lower), leaving many to "wonder" if they could even cross "the Plains with ox teams," like so many traveling West before them.[59] Others passengers seemed perplexed as to why so many "able-bodied men" preferred railway travel, when "they would have found more solid enjoyment" in traveling and camping the way the pioneers used to do.[60] With this in mind, by traveling on the transcontinental railroad, and writing or reading about it, men delineated the qualities of railroad travel to the West; the ride, "without weariness and…without anxiety," placed it as a directly distinct form of transportation and mentality that the "men…who toiled through this realm of disaster, parched, famished, dying" in the days of the pioneers participated in.[61] By doing this, the advertising cult that revolved around the transcontinental journey to the West ultimately reinforced the bourgeois, industrial structures that provoked several gender crises that arose for men throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

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[56] Quote taken from Lucius Beebe, *Mr. Pullman's Elegant Palace Car: The Railway Carriage that Established a New Dimension of Luxury and Entered the National Lexicon as a Symbol of Splendor* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 253.
[57] "Business Cards" advertised in Steele, *Trans-Continental,* May 25 1870, Vol. 1 No. 2, 2.
[58] Harris, "The Pacific Railroad," 183.
[59] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 73.
[60] Harris, "The Pacific Railroad," 183.
[61] Taylor, "Between the Gates," 329.

As opposed to previous journeys to the West, the modern tourist no longer viewed the frontier as a region allotted for the denial of middle-class identity and respectability.[62] Ironically, travel via the transcontinental railroad guaranteed that men who journeyed west retained their bourgeois identity; it carried aspects of their Eastern lifestyles with them: the splendor of modern machinery, spatial and temporal connections to home and work, and the comfortable amenities provided by the bourgeois lifestyle in the city. This new tourist experience, thus, deconstructed the perceived individualistic, male relationship to the American West endured by the pioneers and forty-niners of the past. Men no longer experienced the requirements for a Frontier masculinity, they inherited a tourist identity instead. Symbiotically, though, as tourists, these men renegotiated their relationship to the Western Frontier and constructed a new masculine ideal; one relinquished to the past and in the West, but ultimately, one that could be inherited and propagated in the terms of a modern tourist.

Integral to this new tourist experience, American men who traveled on the transcontinental railroad and wrote about their travel — or read about such accounts —constructed narratives that remembered pioneer, wagon-train travel for its romantic, dangerous, and mythical elements. By mythologizing these aspects of American history into memory, railroad travelers idealized the past as a unique experience, compared to the present, and as the proprietor of the pioneer male identity — a constructed image that embodied a manlier and more virulent mode of transportation. This becomes evident in their discussions about travel danger, the landscape and environment they traversed through, women and children, and the importance that story-telling maintained for modern tourists. As tourists on the transcontinental railroad discussed each of these topics, they deepened male anxieties wrought by the modern era; but at the same time, they constructed a discourse that defined acceptable and romantic behavior in the Western male identity and provided men with avenues for vicarious participation in this identity.[63]

According to tourists on the transcontinental railroad, travel itself became safer —but only in certain terms. An ink-drawing of two opposing images published in the *New York Tribune* in 1869 reveals how

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[62] Roberts, *American Alchemy*, 263.

[63] See Rotundo, *American Manhood* about the anxieties brought forth by industrialization of modern America and male culture. For a more thorough discussion on acceptable male behavior at the turn of the twentieth century, in relation to the American West, see Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House*.

the comfort, leisure, and decadence of the railway cars replaced the chaotic, life-threatening characteristics of Western travel aboard a stagecoach.[64] The top image portrays the mad dash of horses, a perilous enclosure of rushing Indians, shots aimed from within the carriage, and a dead male body hanging from the side of the coach. The image divulges an orgiastic display of male violence throughout an otherwise perilous region, saturated with blood-hungry savages and muscular bravado. According to the bottom image (a mere two years later, nonetheless), the modern traveler no longer had to display these forms of virulence—he could even read a newspaper instead of shooting a rifle. The juxtaposition of these images depicts a Western form of travel characterized by excitement, danger, and brazen masculinity (no women appear in the top image) as opposed to a bourgeois, tranquil, and luxuriant atmosphere befitting both ladies and gentlemen; all due to the advent of the transcontinental railroad. More importantly, though, it delineates a West placed in a romantic past—one that the modern male tourist no longer had to emulate, but still maintained a sense of reverence and fascination for its masculine qualities.

Ironically, travel on the transcontinental railroad did provide some danger for the modern tourist, but it appeared less romantically and sensually. Between 1878 and 1880, 322 collisions and 545 derailments occurred on railway lines throughout the country, resulting in 68 deaths.[65] These types of dangers did nothing for the romantic nature of transcontinental travel, except "mutilate" the male body to a point that "what had been a man…now was a shapeless trunk."[66] Similarly, while on board, danger to passengers revolved around "telescoped" trains (head on collisions), "crazy" men pulling the brake signals, a "thing a sane person could hardly have done," and "pickpockets" robbing the passengers of their money and return tickets.[67] These dangers paled in comparison to those the pioneers faced, those who "made their graves" as they traveled west.[68] This led the modern tourist to proclaim that, "instead of the experience of the dangers, hardships, and discomforts" of stagecoach travel, their journeys on the transcontinental railroad

[64] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 115.
[65] Number taken from *Railroad Gazette*, quoted in Mark Aldrich, *Death Rode the Rails: American Railroad Accidents and Safety, 1828-1965* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 45.
[66] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 116.
[67] Ibid.; Steele, "The Trans-Continental," Vol. I No. 2, 1; Robert Louis Stevenson, "Across the Plains," in Bruce C. Cooper, ed., *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 356.
[68] Taylor, "Between the Gates," 329.

embodied a "charming jaunt."[69] At the same time, though, while traveling West on the transcontinental railroad, these men idealized the "real heroes" of the West as the pioneers and frontiersmen.[70] These men not only placed this form of masculinity into the past, they idealized its attributes and characterized it as preferable to the modern male tourist. The "brave, cool, and wary" pioneer and frontiersman, ready for anything, "patient under adversity, fertile in resources…[and] an invaluable aid at all times" was "fast passing away" in popular memory.[71] This "change wrought within the last five years," due to the advent of the transcontinental railroad, according to some travelers, "robbed the plains of its most attractive feature…the emigrant train."[72] This mentality caused many travelers to express that "there has never been a sturdier manhood, a ruggeder [*sic*] resolution…than marked the career of the pioneers to the West."[73] By discussing railroad travel in these terms, and recalling stage travel as a process of the past, men actively constructed a discourse in which the pioneer lifestyle and mode of transportation held the romantic qualities of excitement, adventure, and danger that modern travel could not provide the tourist.

On a similar note, the ways in which these men, who rode the transcontinental railroad, discussed the natural environment they crossed actively committed the rough, dangerous, and impeding landscape to the memory of the pioneers and frontiersman. As men took a trip on the transcontinental railroad, they often fretted that "we shall have no Far West, no border, no Civilization in line of battle, pressing back hostile savages, and conquering hostile nature."[74] This was a quintessential characteristic of the male identity; prior to the Civil War, men embraced criticism or praise in relation to their struggles, and thus conquests, with and against nature.[75] Thus, according to the culture and time, the more men struggled against nature, the more they exhibited the moral character and rugged temperament attributed to respectable, American males.[76] To the modern railroad tourist after the Civil War, though, nature bore "a

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[69] W. S., "Across the Pacific," 210-211.
[70] Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 36.
[71] George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt's Transcontinental Tourist's Guide: From the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, Fourth Volume* (New York: George A. Crofutt, 1872), 31.
[72] Ibid., 31.
[73] Taylor "Between the Gates," 329.
[74] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 121.
[75] Maurizio Valansia, "Our Original Barbarism: Man vs. Nature in Thomas Jefferson's Moral Experience" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Oct., 2004), 628.
[76] Ibid., 628.

memorable pain" for the stagecoach travelers, committing "the cold chills at night; the fine, impalpable, poisonous dust [that] chokes and chafes and chops you everywhere" to a past remembered; railroad travel no longer required men to battle against the elements.[77] These men traveled during an era of technological revolutions that spurred a mechanization of communication and transportation. This caused a psychological and cultural void between man and nature; it created a deep "alienation from the earth."[78] Thus, men's relationship to the environment in the West changed as they toured the region; nature became less hostile and less mystical, according to some travelers on the transcontinental railroad. Many felt that the great American West "has disappeared at the snort of the iron horse."[79] Travelers familiar with the Western landscape often wondered what had happened to "this then beautifully romantic" scenery; according to them, the railroad "choked the river[s]…[and] instead of the furiously curling, eddying, and dashing waters, one sees now but ordinary rapids."[80]

Travel literature further promulgated this ideological gulf that developed between manhood and the landscape of the American Frontier, with the onset of the transcontinental railroad. According to many of the men who toured via the railroad, "the great crowd of pleasure seekers know nothing of the remarkable natural scenery…when crossing…by the railroad," they "have no concept" of the majesty and natural spectacle that the pioneer or frontiersman witnessed.[81] The railroad itself created new physical barriers (train cars) and an ephemeral tour schematic in which men interacted with the landscape — each fundamentally unique compared to steam-ship and wagon travel. In order to compensate for this new tourist relationship, travel books and articles attempted to coordinate their readings and drawings with the surrounding landscape; the American landscape painting utilized by steamboat guidebooks soon faded to narrative-based schemata for transcontinental travel, intended to coincide with the unfolding landscape.[82] With this in mind, guidebooks often stated that the transcontinental "railroad…fails to exhibit the most striking and attractive features of the country…I must take him [the

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[77] Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 54.
[78] Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 61.
[79] Nordhoff, "California," 256.
[80] Harris, "The Pacific Railroad," 194, 197.
[81] Ibid., 183.
[82] Matt Johnston, "National Spectacle from the Boat and from the Train: Moulding Perceptions of History in American Scenic Guides of the Nineteenth Century," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 1023-1024.

reader] away" from the train cars and meal-stations in order to "show him" the landscape's "attractions."[83] Accordingly, many men, while riding on the railroad, claimed that, "one does not note even the grand whole" and that "no one will be impressed by the sublimity of this scenery, when whirled through it at twenty miles per hour."[84] This relationship with the landscape seemed new for the modern tourist.

As a result, men felt ideologically separated from the landscape they traversed through, emphasizing a preference for a romanticized, pioneer past. Male tourists often felt that the railroad "has converted the wilderness into luxurious garden-ground"; a landscape no longer fit for the pioneers, but for the modern, bourgeois tourist.[85] Placing the struggle between the American male and the rugged wilderness of the West in the past, these men believed that "the Western frontiersman shone superior to all others who ventured to cross the 'vast desert,'" including those who rode on the railroad.[86] Even many women who toured on the railroad viewed it as "a pathetic sight" to watch the "rough men" aboard the train picking up a "blade of grass or a clover-blossom" whenever they stepped off of the cars.[87] This activity itself befitted that of a woman on the frontier; men and women of the frontier associated the forests with masculinity, while the garden-like characteristics of the Plains seemed a docile enough place for femininity.[88] Thus, a male tourist who picked Prairie flowers stood as an inferior form of masculinity, compared to the pioneer who allotted that type of activity to the sphere of women. Tourism, thus, replaced the struggles with a rugged wilderness on the Western frontier that defined the lives of the pioneers of the past with the docile tendency to read about it in one of the many popular forms of travel literature and committed it to a memory long gone.

The modern male tourist's new relationships to women and children, provided by their experiences on the transcontinental railroad, furthered this discursive mythologization of Frontier manliness and its placement into popular memory. Due to the railroad, men no longer needed to fend off the hostile elements (nature, Indians, and time) of the

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[83] Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 75.
[84] Harris, "The Pacific Railroad—Unopen," 197.
[85] T. Nelson and Sons, *The Union Pacific Railroad: A Trip Across the North American Continent from Omaha to Ogden* (New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1871), 46.
[86] Crofutt, *Transcontinental Tourist's Guide*, 31.
[87] Helen Hunt Jackson, "Bits of Travel at Home," in Cooper, *Riding the Transcontinental Rails*, 299.
[88] Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 7.

West, as required by the lifestyles of the pioneer and frontiersman; women and children could travel to the Frontier with men as "one great family, full of fun and frolic, and having a good time."[89] Travel advertisements reassured women and children aboard the trains, or thinking about taking a trip, that "none [will] molest or make you afraid."[90] While traveling, some men pointed out the differences between the modern, "lady" tourist who was "comfortably settled," could shade their faces, and read any "new novel" without noticing the "exquisite scenery" around them, and how she was a "striking contrast to the woe-be-gone looks of her sisters who crossed the plains years ago in the old way."[91] Some travelers felt that while going West by train, the "most to be pitied of all were the married men, whose nervous wives kept plucking them by the coattails" due to the sheer excitement of traveling to the West — the frontiersman surely did not have to deal with such blatant femininity.[92] Even children could cross the great Western frontier without harm. The once hostile savages who roamed the plains seemingly shrank to an "occasional Indian [who] delighted the children."[93] A popular image used to entice travelers to take a ride on the rails depicted an Indian on a train car, bundled in a blanket, surrounded by playful middle-class children and ladies, all unanimously enjoying the entertainment provided by their organ-playing conductor.[94]

Images in travel books and magazines continuously portrayed that the Western Frontier maintained a place for rugged men and not ladies. Another 1869 *Tribune* ink-drawing juxtaposes two deliberately different images of women present in the west. The first image reveals a family preparing to leave their log cabin hotel. The mountainous scenery, laborious tasks of stagecoach travel, and animals presented disclose a Western Frontier inhabited by pioneers and rugged Americans. Conversely, the second image emphasizes the luxurious accommodations of the modern tourist. A hotel eclipses the mountainous background, women and men appear fashionably dressed, and the hotel itself epitomizes the characteristics of modern prowess; all provided by the tracks of the transcontinental railroad. The woman of 1867 seemed to

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[89] Steele, *Trans-Continental,* May 25, 1870, Vol. 1 No. 2, 3.
[90] Taylor, "Between the Gates," 329.
[91] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 114.
[92] Jackson, "Bits of Travel at Home," 292.
[93] Nordhoff, California," 251.
[94] Image from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in Bowen, *The Old West*, 138.

embody the characteristics of a frontierswoman, who soiled her femininity by performing the tasks of washing clothes, sweeping their log houses, and generally getting her hands dirty. The opposing image replaces drawings of these women with images of respectable ladies, who no longer had to lower their status by partaking in laborious work. Considered uncivilized and unchartered before the railroad, the West did not seem to exhibit the refined qualities befitting the presence of ladies; the technology and sophistication provided by the railroad. According to these images, the violence and virility of the West appeared long gone, eventually becoming safe enough to admit a lady's presence into the Western frontier, thanks to the transcontinental railroad. These images, thus, expose an ideological construction in which a more virulent, violent, and rugged masculinity was placed into the romanticism of the past, a style of manhood that no longer maintained a role for the American tourist experience.

Although these images do not represent a reality in the history of the frontier lifestyle, they do present a common sentimentality that men constructed while traveling West via the transcontinental railroad. Women who traveled West, prior to the transcontinental railroad, attempted to replicate their assigned domestic roles back home in their new environments; despite this, women of the Frontier commonly participated in activities considered inappropriate back East, like driving wagon teams through the terrain and shooting small game for food.[95] Also, when a husband died in transit, a common occurrence on the Frontier, women often became the sole providers for the family, often taking charge of the remainder of the trip or the property they claimed.[96] Accordingly, women often participated in the rugged activities assigned to men when moving to the West. The modern female tourist, though, experienced the comfort and the domesticity of home while onboard the transcontinental railroad.[97] With this in mind, drawings and other forms of railroad advertisements played into male fantasies (not realities) about

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[95] Patricia Riley Dunlop, *Riding Astride: The Frontier in Women's History* (Colorado: Arden Press, 1995), 9-10.

[96] For a more thorough discussion on this topic, see Dean L. May, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American West, 1850-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[97] For more on women and the transcontinental railroad, see Amy G. Richter, *Home on the Rails: Women, the Railroad, and the Rise of Public Domesticity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

femininity in the West. These *Tribune* drawings reveal a West of the past inhabited and constructed almost entirely by males.

The final element of this story concerns the male tourist's relationship to storytelling; while he traveled on the transcontinental railroad, the modern male tourist, no longer required to go "lumbering through the wilderness," reveled in the "spectacle" provided by their elder traveling companions who "served to recall…many a reminiscence of 'Crossing the Plains.'"[98] Modern railroad travelers, thus, relied on their newly defined tourist identification as a means of vicariously participating in the lives of the pioneers. Travelers "never tired" of relating stories about their trials and tribulations they encountered through "the sea passage, the heart of the isthmus, etc. to other passengers aboard the trains."[99] According to some travelers, during meals "conversation flows like a river" as they related their previous experiences going West; they recalled "the days when [they] used to go down to the sea in ships," some lived their adventures in Mexico "over and over again," while others "invoke[d] the ghosts of the Army of the Potomac."[100] Fellow passengers continuously exaggerated "some fresh story, always droller and more extravagant then the last."[101] Similarly, "some find a delight in stimulating the fears of the former [pleasure travelers] by tales of peril, and of possible obstructions from the musket of tomahawk of wild Indians."[102]

Even the men who wrote many of the highly popular traveling and tour guides for transcontinental railroad travel could not help but to relate their own tales of adventure traveling west, years prior. Journalists and writers of travel literature for the railroad filled their discussions with "bit[s] of personal experience" and "attempted to recall some notes of an experience…when it [the West] was as yet 'unopen.'"[103] As these guidebooks continuously, and consciously, related their encounters in the past, they actively placed the experiences of pioneer travel into memory; in doing this, though, they romanticized its qualities and encouraged men to vicariously participate in the world of the pioneers through a textual, fantasy relationship—as a guidebook-toting tourist. Travel literature attempted "to picture to him [the modern male tourist]" the true

[98] W. S., "Across the Pacific," 216.
[99] Ibid., 212.
[100] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 112.
[101] Ibid.
[102] T. Nelson and Sons, *The Union Pacific Railroad*, 18.
[103] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 99; Harris, "The Pacific Railroad," 183.

American West; one located "away from the main line of the continental railway" and in a textually constructed world of fantasy.[104] Those authors who "sought to picture a fleeting phase of our national life" replaced physical experience with textual construction, but also emphasized their "admiration for the adventurous pioneers."[105] Similarly, men who wrote for travel guides of the railroad felt obligated to provide "some record of the difficulties overcome" by the pioneers of the past, since the "railroad traveler of to-day, lounging upon the cushions of a palace-car, has no conception, and if he had, but little opportunity to demonstrate by observation" of the realities of pioneer life.[106] This left the modern male tourist in a contradictory relationship to the American West: he knew that pioneer masculinity was the ideal, but he could never achieve such an identity in the modern world.

Travel on the transcontinental railroad from 1860 to 1880, thus, provoked a situation in which American men participated in the lost wildness of the West from a new, vicarious stand-point: as an outsider, as a removed observer—as a tourist. The West did not cease to exist in popular culture in turn of the century America; men renegotiated their relationship to it. By touring the West on the transcontinental railroad and writing about their travels, these men committed the old West to memory, mythologizing its characteristics, and claiming that, "those were the days that…tried men's mettle."[107] At the same time, though, these male tourists increased the anxieties that plagued their lives, and thus their identities, as they discussed pioneer manliness as an ideal. According to historian, Cindy Aron, tourism itself provoked ideological problems in turn of the century America as work and leisure seemed to contradict one another.[108] The "two thousand miles of wilderness…as broad as the face of the moon" that defined the American West before the advent of the transcontinental railroad, was discussed romantically and the "men…who toiled on through this realm of disaster" were transformed and idealized in popular memory. This, combined with the dream-like rhetoric and descriptions of the West by those traveling on the railroad, allowed men to participate in the Old West through vicarious activities and fantasies. The "magic" of railway travel, accommodated by the "elegant drawing-room[s]…[and] luxurious bedroom[s]," became a

[104] Bowles, *The Western Frontier*, 75.
[105] Richardson, "Through the Pacific," 121.
[106] Harris, "The Pacific Railroad," 183.
[107] Crofutt, *Crofutt's Transcontinental Tourist's Guide*, 31.
[108] Aron, *Working at Play*, 3.

constructed world in which men sensationalized their experiences without "running the gauntlet" of what was perceived as the Old West.[109] It appeared safe, middle-class, and exotic, but attempted to preserve the West in terms of constructed fantasies.

Due to this new relationship to the West and Western versions of manhood, American men constructed national narratives that individuals like Teddy Roosevelt were raised upon. Men, during this time, already vicariously participated in Western mythologies before the Wild West Shows of Buffalo Bill and more importantly, these men already held expectations of the images of virile masculinity. The transcontinental railroad provided men with an opportunity to negotiate their relationship to the Western Frontier as their modern lifestyles seemingly shrank the world they lived in. With a tourist relationship to the American West, Eastern men constructed vicarious forms of normative masculine behavior, a masculinity placed in the West and in the past, idealized through pioneer travel. And although this new tourist relationship to the West invigorated the anxieties wrought by modern, industrial life, it also allowed for a masculine identity that could be replicated through chimera. This historical context provided men at the turn of the twentieth century with avenues for a reassertion of a virulent, cowboy bravado, characterized and embodied in the figures of Teddy Roosevelt and Buffalo Bill.

[109] W. S., "Across the Continent," 208. Samuel Bowles, *The Far Western Frontier*, 46.