

**The People's Classroom:
American Modernism and the Struggle for Democratic Education, 1860-1940**

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(American Culture)
in the University of Michigan
2013

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Frontispiece

THE
NEW EDUCATION.

OBJECTIONS TO THE SYSTEM

AS TAUGHT IN THE

University of California,

TOGETHER WITH THE

MEMORIAL

OF THE

CALIFORNIA STATE GRANGE

AND

MECHANICS' DELIBERATIVE ASSEMBLY.

"The modern world is full of artillery; and we turn out our children to do battle in it, equipped with the shield and sword of an ancient gladiator. Posterity will cry shame on us if we do not remedy this deplorable state of things. Nay, if we live twenty years longer, our own consciences will cry shame on us. Modern civilization rests upon physical science."—HUXLEY.

OAKLAND.

Butler & Stilwell, Steam Book and Job Printers, 468 Ninth Street.

1874.

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For my mother.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not be possible without the generosity and support of my friends and colleagues at the University of Michigan and across the country. I am particularly grateful for the guidance, generosity, and critical feedback of my committee members: Phil Deloria, Jay Cook, Kristin Hass, John Carson, and Linda Nash.

My co-chairs, Phil and Jay, took me under their wings from my earliest days at Michigan and helped this project grow from a cultural history of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906 to a dissertation spanning eight decades. Phil served as my first-year advisor and helped me navigate the challenges of coursework, qualifying examinations, publication, and funding. In feedback on multiple drafts, Phil pushed me to think about the craft of writing and find ways of bringing my cast of characters to life. Jay, too, believed in me even when my own confidence wavered, urging me to discover and articulate the larger stakes of my research rather than settling for a more limited intervention. I began working with Jay only a few months before his own cherished mentor, Lawrence Levine, passed away, and I came to see that I was benefiting from a legacy of generosity that I hope to carry on through my own teaching and advising.

Kristin directed my qualifying exam in visual culture and provided invaluable guidance in linking my research to theoretical work in American Studies and cultural history. She was also incredibly generous with helping me secure funding. John taught a seminar in American Intellectual History that inspired the focus of my prospectus and introduced me to several critical texts. Linda served as one of my mentors in History at the University of Washington before I

transferred to the University of Michigan. I owe my ongoing fascination with the intersection of environmental and intellectual history to her.

This project benefited from the support of many others at the University of Michigan. I developed my project proposal partly through classes with Sara Blair, Rebecca Zurier, and Lucy Hartley. Julie Ellison read the entire manuscript and has introduced me to a network of public scholars across the country. My project was shaped in countless ways by conversations with faculty and students in American Culture, including my cohort members—Christina Abreu, Kiara Vigil, Stephen Wisniewski, Kiri Sailiata, Lani Teves, and Rachel Quinn—and many others, among them Amy Carroll, Matthew Countryman, Jonathan Freedman, Alex Stern, June Howard, Dan Ramirez, Maria Cotera, Larry La Fountain-Stokes, Greg Dowd, Anthony Mora, Margot Finn, Tayana Hardin, Jesse Carr, Frank Kelderman, Matt Blanton, Liz Harmon, Sarah Gothie, Yamil Avivi, Katie Lennard, Jenny Kwak, Garrett Felber, Lloyd Barba, Erik Morales, Tyler Cornelius, Matt Stiffler, Chris Finley, Matt Wittmann, Afia Ofori-Mensa, and Lee Ann Wang. Others outside American Culture include Katie Brokaw, Alex Beringer, Colleen Woods, Molly Hatcher, Laura Ferguson, Cookie Woolner, Sara Lampert, Angela Parker, Elizabeth Werbe, Katie Will, Danny Mintz, Sarah Allison, Leila Watkins, Stephen Norris, Steve Nelson, Nathan Vanderveen, Micki Fasteland, Dashini Jeyathurai, Bridget Gilman, Marin Sullivan, and Urmila Venkatesh. Over the past two years, my dissertation writing group—Sara Jackson, Sasha Bošković, and Helen Ho—has seen my project through endless drafts and happy hours. I also received helpful feedback on Chapter Five from the American History Workshop, including Rabia Belt, Joe Cialdella, Holly Rapp, and Aimee VonBokel. Like every other graduate student in American Culture, I owe my successful completion of requirements, uninterrupted funding, and sanity to the amazing support of Graduate Coordinator Marlene Moore.

I am thankful to have a community of scholars beyond Michigan as well. Several historians from my time at the University of Washington—including John Findlay, Susan Glenn, Sasha Harmon, Joe Creamer, and Trevor Griffey—remain valued colleagues. I also appreciate the ongoing support of my undergraduate mentor at Stanford University, Richard White, who introduced me to historical research and the messy complexity of the past. I received guidance and feedback from many scholars at conferences, especially Janet Davis, Jeff Pappas, David Scobey, George Sanchez, Kerwin Kline, Louis Warren, Margaret Connell-Szasz, Mark Simpson-Vos, and Niels Hooper. Lester Stephens kindly gave me access to his research files on Joseph LeConte and put me in touch with Carolyn McMillan, a LeConte descendent, about privately held papers. Many others helped along the way, including Shelley Lee, Richard Cándida-Smith, Claire Potter, Ben Johnson, Pat Cross, Adam Bush, Alex Agloro, Adele Holoch, Rebecca Onion, Eric Hall, Vanessa Schwartz, Anne Hignonnet, Ramzi Fawaz, James Brown, Michael Holloman, Marsha Rooney, Marsha Richmond, Willard Spiegelman, and the late David Weber.

The preliminary stage of my project was supported with a Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship in 2007 from the Social Science Research Council and Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. I received additional funding through the Gunther Barth Fellowship from the Bancroft Library in 2009 and the San Andreas Fellowship from the Huntington Library in 2010. Archivists at the Bancroft and Huntington—namely Susan Snyder, Theresa Salazar, David Kessler, Baiba Strads, Sue Hodson, and Peter Blodgett—helped me navigate the collections and brought unexpected sources to my attention. I found housing in California thanks to Astrid Lacitis and Peter Sherris, who generously welcomed me into their home as part of the family. I am also thankful for the generosity and insights of archivists during visits to Scripps Institution of Oceanography (Rebecca Smith), California Historical Society, Berkeley

Historical Society (Ed Herny), Yosemite National Park Archives (Brenna Lissoway, Gwen Barrow, and Laura Patten), Smithsonian Institution Archives (Pamela Henson), DeGolyer Library (Russell Martin), American Philosophical Society Library, and the special collections of UCLA, UC-Santa Barbara, Stanford University (Mattie Taormina), Johns Hopkins University, University of North Carolina, and University of Georgia.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the patience, confidence, and advice of my wife and partner, Nicolette. Through success and failure, Nicolette has supported me—she is my most reliable and valued critic, and I am deeply thankful for her unconditional love. I am also thankful for my family and friends, including Max, Sonja, Nathan, Igor, George, Mary Jo, Anita, the Davises, the Bruners, the Lentzes, Tripat, Jasmine, Ryan, Yun Yun, Wallace, Eve, Vinesh, Sri, Peter, Shih-Hung, Katy, and more. As I wrote, Doc, my dog, sat by my feet and reminded me of the true joys of life—walks, new smells, fresh salmon, and tennis balls.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation to my mother, Irene Olson, because the core insight of this dissertation is hers. She was born in Latvia during World War II and spent the first several years of her life in a displaced persons camp before immigrating to the United States. When my father, a print shop worker, died in 1993, my mother found work as a librarian and went back to school for an education administration degree. Eventually, she became the principal of Tiffany Park Elementary, a public school in Renton, Washington, with a highly diverse population of immigrants and families with incomes below the poverty line. Under her leadership, Tiffany Park placed among the top schools in Washington State in 2010 and 2011. A tireless advocate for educational access, my mother has shown me that public education is something worth fighting for, and this dissertation is dedicated to her.

“It is not the University of Berlin nor of New Haven which we are to copy; it is not the University of Oakland nor of San Francisco which we are to create; but it is the University of the State. It must be adapted to this people, to their public and private schools, to their peculiar geographical position, to the requirements of their new society and their undeveloped resources.”

-Daniel Coit Gilman, 1872

“The idea of a university as a center of regional culture is more revolutionary than any of its proponents realize. Always in the United States the university has seen itself as the lonely outpost of opposition to regionalism, holding the fort for culture as a unifying principle, a universal standard to be established, to be, if necessary, imposed upon all regions equally.”

-Mary Hunter Austin, 1928

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the struggle for democratic education in California among public intellectuals, labor groups, and education reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I argue that this struggle played out not merely within universities, but also through what I call “people’s classrooms”: alternative cultural and political formations, from Yosemite to Berkeley, that operated in and around institutions of higher learning. The clamor of populist activists for educational access represented a vernacular embrace of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which reserved federal lands to the states for use in establishing public colleges and universities offering education in “agriculture and the mechanic arts.” Eventually, the fierce populist positions of the 1870s were adapted and softened—but also made hegemonic—by middlebrow public intellectuals like Charles Keeler, Mary Austin, and William Ritter. Though this struggle between competing visions of public education brought the University of California to the brink of collapse in the 1870s, I argue that it produced a major current of American modernism that historians have largely ignored. This movement—which developed well outside the older centers of intellectual power, artistic training, and commercial publishing—pioneered alternative intellectual practices, approaches to citizenship, and ways of experiencing the natural world. Rather than inventing radically new aesthetic practices, these Californians were involved in a Gramscian “war of position” wherein the tools of power—namely institutions, mass media, environmental resources, and market capitalism—were challenged and redeployed to serve alternative publics and political agendas, particularly in the wake of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906.

Introduction

William James in Berkeley

On August 26, 1898, approximately one thousand professors, students, and Berkeley citizens packed Harmon Gymnasium on the campus of the University of California to hear a free public lecture, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” by the renowned philosopher William James.¹ This address became a landmark of American intellectual history for being the first time James employed the term “pragmatism” to describe his views. According to Louis Menand, “James’s lecture made pragmatism a subject of international discussion and debate for twenty years.”² Acknowledging his debt to Charles Sanders Peirce, James argued that the “ultimate test” of a truth is not “a system of logically concatenated adjectives,” but rather “the conduct it dictates or inspires.”³ If two different claims demanded the same conduct in practice, they were effectively identical. Likewise any philosophical system, no matter how elaborate, was meaningless if it was devoid of future consequences. With this simple test, James’s lecture upended the logic of philosophy as practiced since Plato; instead of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, education mattered only to the extent it made a difference in future action. Anything else was an exercise in obscurantism. Recognizing that the difficulty of his otherwise “prosaic” proposal stemmed from the thicket of philosophical obfuscations that it overturned, James devoted most of his lecture to “applying it to concrete cases.”⁴

One such case was the question of the nature and existence of God, a debate that had long since lost its centrality to philosophical discourse but retained great urgency for many Americans

outside the academy. To illustrate how pragmatism could change the terms of this debate, James described a hypothetical scenario about philosophy in a world on the cusp of annihilation where no plans could possibly be made for the future, and no future action could be carried out. In this context—which echoed the world of most abstract philosophical speculation—the clash between theistic and materialist conceptions would seem to be “perfectly idle and insignificant” because either side would be merely “summing up a world already past,” and that summation would be identical regardless of whether God or matter was the producer of all being. In the world of lived experience, on the other hand, the question had major consequences. Most people, James noted, would feel “a terrible coldness and deadness” without faith in some sort of animating spirit. Whereas materialism promised to send the world hurling into oblivion—a “final wreck and tragedy” that would drain human action of purpose—theism promised hope of a permanent preservation of an ideal order. But because God and matter amounted to the same thing in retrospect, many scientists saw the emotionalism of religion as foolish and saw the debate as settled in favor of materialism. The crux of the issue was that the debate’s importance derived entirely from its power to inspire future conduct, not the internal logic of either position. The conception of God was central to lay philosophy not because of “hair-splitting abstractions” but because it had enormous consequences for how many people, in practice, lived their lives. It was in this sense that James saw pragmatism as a fundamentally democratic philosophy.

Although his lecture did reverberate across the philosophical world, its significance in the history of ideas has tended to overshadow the particular context of that summer evening in Berkeley. Why did James choose this particular lecture for this particular setting? Was it merely happenstance? Or was his call for a more democratic approach to philosophy written with an eye toward California? In fact, James knew that he was speaking to a community that for decades

had debated the role of education in the public sphere.⁵ Since the 1860s, California had been among the leading sites of a “public turn” in higher education that shook the country far beyond any particular institution or discipline. Earlier reformers such as Horace Mann had advocated for common schools and teaching colleges, but the leading universities of the East Coast remained bastions of elite privilege. This model was challenged by public universities in the West and Midwest that promised to serve a much wider swath of citizens, largely as a way of coping with immigration, new forms of labor, and other aspects of modern industrial capitalism. As such, this public turn in higher education formed the structural bedrock of American modernism. And nowhere was this turn more deeply contested than in Berkeley.⁶

The University of California was founded in 1868 as part of a fierce battle over how to utilize California’s share of the Morrill Land Grant Act, which reserved federal lands to the states for use in establishing public colleges offering education in “agriculture and the mechanic arts.”⁷ The California State Legislature ultimately decided to use proceeds from the land sales to convert the private sectarian College of California in Oakland into a public state university located in Berkeley—a victory for Yale alumnus Henry Durant, who helped bring in another Yale man, Daniel Coit Gilman, to serve as president. This decision sparked outrage among labor groups who wanted the university to be established in San Francisco where it would be accessible to the children of urban industrial workers.⁸ Other disputes focused on what the Mechanics’ Deliberative Assembly of San Francisco and the California State Grange believed to be the meager and inauthentic engagement of the University of California with “agriculture and the mechanic arts” as promised in the Morrill Act.⁹ Beyond seeking class mobility for individual students, these groups sought a collective improvement in social and economic status for their crafts through high-quality practical education, as opposed to the original research and advanced

training envisioned by Gilman. As an outgrowth of this debate—which focused generally on the nature and control of knowledge production and specifically on whose interests the university would serve—the region witnessed a proliferation of discussion clubs and other cultural formations. These groups ranged from working class organizations like the Mechanics’ Institute in San Francisco to the elite-dominated Bohemian Club to a panoply of scientific, social, environmental, literary, religious, and political groups in Berkeley.

James had been invited by one such group: the Philosophical Union of the University of California, a discussion club founded by the Philosophy professor George Howison as a way of remaining in conversation with graduates of the Department who had gone on to careers in law, medicine, teaching, and other fields.¹⁰ Some members had remained philosophers, including Marietta Kies, a professor at Mills College in Oakland who studied the socialist ethics of schools and other cooperative institutions. But most participants in the Union came from other fields. These included, among many others, Frederick Willis, a clerk for Southern Pacific Railroad, Maud Wilkinson of the Berkeley Institution for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind, and Franklin K. Lane, a correspondent for the *San Francisco Chronicle* who later became U.S. Secretary of the Interior under Woodrow Wilson.¹¹ According to one historical sketch, the Union was inspired by the Jamesian conviction “that philosophical studies had a supreme interest for human life in all its aspects,” and therefore should include contributions by people “who had no official tie with philosophy.”¹² Since philosophers like Howison and Kies were vastly outnumbered by professionals in other fields, the Union sought out themes that would be relevant to the lives of non-specialists—particularly during large public events. James was invited with this goal in mind. Recognizing that many prospective attendees had little formal training in philosophy,

Howison arranged public discussions of James's work, including "The Will to Believe" and other essays, in preparation for his visit.¹³

Several elements of James's lecture suggest that he had the Philosophical Union in mind while composing it. He noted the non-academic bent of the club in the opening sentence: "An occasion like the present would seem to call for an absolutely untechnical discourse." At the same time, James took seriously the group's efforts to grapple with philosophical concepts, to the point of acknowledging that its "studies" were susceptible to the same critiques as professional philosophers. He noted that "the verbal and empty character of your studies is surely a reproach with which you of the Philosophical Union are but too sadly familiar." Far from assenting to this view, however, James used the Union as a case in point for the sort of philosophical practice that he envisioned as pragmatism. For one, he emphasized that the educated lay listeners were not only worthy to be judges of philosophical claims, but often even better than specialists. If a philosophical debate made no difference to the everyday lives of non-specialists, it was most likely pointless. "There can be," declared James, "no difference which doesn't *make* a difference—in difference in abstract truth which does not express itself in a difference of concrete fact."¹⁴ Second, his extended example of the debate between theism and materialism was drawn directly from the proceedings of the Union—specifically an earlier visit by his Harvard colleague Josiah Royce in 1895 to participate in a roundtable on "The Conception of God."¹⁵

A published volume of the roundtable's proceedings included comments by Joseph LeConte, a beloved professor of natural history at Berkeley, and the Philosophical Union's founder, George Howison, who held the University of California's Mills Chair of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy and Civil Polity. In his lecture, James extolled the volume as "a very

masterpiece of popularization,” and indeed the Union received numerous requests for copies from both lay readers and specialists across the country.¹⁶ James criticized, however, the debate’s focus on the unity or plurality of God, a “typical metaphysical question” that rarely, in his view, moved beyond the “barren reiteration by the disputants of their pet adjectives of number.” He attributed such distractions to a mistaken emphasis on continental philosophy and specifically “Kantian catch-words and categories” in the United States at the expense of “the English spirit in philosophy,” which he identified as the origin of pragmatism. “Kant’s mind,” explained James, “is the rarest and most intricate of all possible antique bric-a-brac museums, and connoisseurs and dilettanti will always wish to visit it and see the wondrous and racy contents.” Likewise he referred to systematic theologians as “closet-naturalists of the Deity” who failed to recognize that “religion is a living practical affair.” It was the lived experience of religion (“conversations with the unseen, voices and visions, responses to prayer, changes of heart, deliverances from fear, inflowings of help, assurances of support”) that provided the raw material, or “originals,” out of which systematic theology, like philosophy, proceeded “to make capital in its own unreal and pedantic way.” For philosophy, theology, and many other fields, concluded James, “logic has stepped into the place of vision, professionalism into that of life.”¹⁷

James’s criticism of Kant was an unmistakable reference to his host, Howison, a Kantian scholar who held firm to the “concatenated adjectives” that James criticized in his address.¹⁸ In this respect the lecture was a very direct commentary on the practice of philosophy at Berkeley. He praised Howison’s work with the Philosophical Union while simultaneously urging curricular reform that would include more emphasis on making a difference in the world. Even if many students preferred abstract courses on transcendentalism and other curiosities, James argued that California was auspiciously positioned for a revival of the English philosophical tradition of

David Hume and John Stuart Mill.¹⁹ Analogizing his work as a philosopher in that tradition to a romanticized version of settler colonialism, James cast himself as a “path-finder” who had traveled “across the continent to this wondrous Pacific Coast” only to find himself lost in a “forest of human experience” marked by “accidental” trails along which the “half-casual” character of philosophy’s signposts were all too evident. In this world—barely Californian and mostly fantasy—James imagined secrets inaccessible to a Harvard philosopher like himself: “Ferny dells, and mossy waterfalls, and secret magic nooks escape you, owned only by the wild things to whom the region is a home.” Each time he reached what appeared to be, in his view, “a final valley,”—the Yosemite of his philosophical efforts—“always there comes still another ridge,” and thus he could only offer the audience an approximation of a philosophical system, not an ideality.

In comparing philosophical investigation to the exploration of the natural world, James adverted to the environmental writings—from Clarence King to Theresa Yelverton to John Muir—for which California was most widely known at the time. But even more so, this passage underscored the adventures and possibilities of building a new public university without the inertia of institutional tradition. In so doing, James positioned the University of California as a work in progress that could more easily embrace a spirit of futurity than the older universities of New England.²⁰ Although philosophers and intellectual historians—among them Richard Rorty, James Livingston, James Kloppenberg, and Louis Menand—have done much to situate James in a broader history of ideas, this dissertation draws attention to the more “untechnical” resonance of pragmatism in the work of scientists, activists, and others in California who participated in the fierce struggle over the location, accessibility, and nature of the production of knowledge.²¹ Though this struggle for democratic education—for changing the world of working class lived

experience—involved almost no direct engagement with James’s work, and hence is virtually invisible in the historiography of pragmatism, these activists embraced the notion that ideas only matter to the extent they make a “prosaic and practical” difference on “somebody, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen.”²² That universities could be a vehicle for working class activism might seem surprising, given the widespread association of the “ivory tower” with elitism, but as Lawrence Levine has noted, higher education in the United States was “never far removed from the larger society.”²³

This dissertation argues that in order to understand how and why California’s struggle over democratic knowledge production resonated far beyond the Pacific Coast, we must look to these points of contact between universities and the larger society. Indeed, intellectual life in California was a glorious confusion that unfolded in an array of cultural and political formations, or what I call “people’s classrooms,” that proliferated in and around institutions of higher learning. As James recognized, academic philosophy was at best a partial way of knowing, and at worst a mode of inquiry wholly counterproductive to the social challenges of modernity. In coming to California to offer his announcement of pragmatism, James was speaking on behalf of outsider intellectuals who did not fit the categories of the modern research university but were nevertheless doing the work of philosophy broadly conceived—seeking new solutions to the practical problems of living in a modern democratic society. Rather than inventing radically new aesthetic practices, these Californians were involved in a Gramscian “war of position” wherein the tools of power—namely institutions, environmental resources, and market capitalism—were challenged and redeployed to serve alternative publics and political agendas.²⁴

Significantly, the “people” of my study were not monolithic, and their political projects were not always coherent or even compatible. Rather, the “people” was an elastic term that, like

the closely related category of “public,” changed over time and carried multiple class valences, moving, in the most general terms, from localized populist connotations in the nineteenth century to the larger and more diffuse audiences of mass culture in the twentieth century. In the context of this study, the most overt challenges to the legitimacy of the University of California came from the former: working class groups in the 1870s who exerted legislative power to demand improved vocational education and accessibility for the children of working class families. The University of California ultimately reached a sort of accommodation with these demands through the rise of branch campuses and junior colleges in the twentieth century that satisfied specific needs, among them agricultural and technical education.²⁵ However, this dissertation also includes other outsiders—among them middle class reformers and bohemians—who challenged the university from other, more oblique angles. Often carried out from within the university itself, their projects challenged the professionalization of academic power in more subtle ways that helped secure hegemonic status for the view that education was a democratic enterprise belonging, in the end, to the people.

Rather than describing a binary struggle for control of the university, this dissertation explains how and why a broad range of intellectuals—defined in Jamesian terms to include outsiders lacking a place in the academy—organized alternative institutions and communities around vernacular modes of knowledge production. From camping to bohemianism, these “people’s classrooms” facilitated a deeper and more expansive role for education in addressing the practical challenges facing California and serving the intellectual interests of its people. I use the term “classroom” to describe these spaces of knowledge production even though they lacked many of the usual hierarchies and trappings of ordinary classrooms. For instance, an impromptu lecture in Yosemite might include a professor and students—as was the case in Joseph LeConte’s

camping expeditions of the 1870s—but lacked grading, tests, and other technologies of academic power within the university. These expeditions also carved a place for figures like John Muir, who refused an academic appointment at Berkeley, and allowed for reversals of power, as when students showed LeConte new survival techniques. Some “people’s classrooms” lacked even the element of a teacher, and in these cases I preserve the term “classroom” even though they more closely resembled laboratories for collective knowledge production. Such was the case with the enclave at Carmel-by-the-Sea, where a circle of bohemians and professors sought new ways of experiencing the natural world, and the polite discussion clubs that proliferated in Berkeley in the 1880s and 1890s. Still other experiments discarded physical space altogether and recast the technologies of mass culture to reach an audience far larger than that of any particular university setting. In these cases, the “people’s classroom” refers to a mode of address rather than an actual place, although these experiments were heavily informed concrete practices and communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

By shifting attention to these “people” and their “classrooms,” this dissertation offers a new history of American modernism. Instead of casting modernism as an aesthetic movement centered primarily in New York and Paris until well into the twentieth century, I draw attention to the complicated—and conflicting—ways that seemingly prosaic debates over the nature and control of knowledge production in California helped generate and spread new democratic norms such as the pursuit of universal access to higher education.²⁶ To do so, this dissertation utilizes David Harvey’s distinction between the terms “modernism” and “modernity.” Modernism, as he defines it, was an aesthetic response to the conditions of modernity, namely industrial capitalism. My dissertation adopts Harvey’s usage but opens the category of modernism to include a broader range of responses—policy as well as philosophy, sociability as well as aesthetics—from people

who were not necessarily part of any self-conscious movement.²⁷ Indeed, these responses gained much of their potency from precisely their “outsider” status in the cultural geography of aesthetic modernism, and in this respect, the westerly location of California was critical to their work. These intellectuals were “outsiders” in multiple senses of the term. For one, the charismatic power of California’s natural environment exerted a strong influence on their work, drawing them quite literally “outside” to places like Yosemite and Carmel-by-the-Sea. These places and their personalities, particularly John Muir, resisted the clear-cut ontologies and epistemologies of academic knowledge production, fostering an unparalleled interest in the holistic connection of seemingly disparate phenomena and disciplines. Second, by virtue of distance, intellectuals in California were acutely aware of their sense of being “outside” the institutions of cultural power in New York, Boston, London, and Paris. The University of California was by no means immune to these pressures. Caught between the impulse to mimic universities of the East and respond to the unique needs and demographics of California, university authorities remained acutely aware of the limitations and possibilities of place in higher education, ultimately extending its practices outward—to places like Yosemite and La Jolla—in response to the “people’s classrooms” all around it.

For the most part, cultural histories of class relations in the San Francisco Bay Area—including those dealing with the University of California—have offered narratives of elite reaction to the unusual strength of working class consciousness in California in the nineteenth century.²⁸ Among social histories of the University of California that do address its democratic aspirations, none examine the oppositional cultural formations that informed the development of what John Aubrey Douglass calls the “California Idea.”²⁹ This dissertation offers a different story. Instead of emphasizing the binary of working class and elite power, I offer a history of the

struggle for democratic education that juxtaposes institutions with the practices of resistance that unfolded in the spaces and places around them. My approach builds on Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1996), which uses the concept of "cultural formations" to describe the New Deal Era artistic and literary practices of the popular front.³⁰ Although Denning contends that these formations were the crucible of American modernism, I push the story back to the nineteenth century to suggest that the public higher education movement in California played an integral if little-recognized role in structuring American responses to modernity. I also build on Charles Postel's *The Populist Vision* (2007), which explores how, among other things, the populist movement strategically employed mass media to compete with corporate capitalism. Far from resisting modernity, these activists, like the figures in my story, sought to utilize emergent cultural institutions, and particularly "the machinery of modern education," to serve new purpose.³¹

In short, this dissertation uses the term "democratic education" to describe both formal and informal structures of teaching and learning available to a more expansive—though not uniformly expansive—range of publics. Whether operating in a closed communities (such as escapist bohemian enclaves, or what Michael Warner has called "counterpublics") or highly ambitious mass cultural projects, democratic education promised a broad range of people the tools for seizing control of, or gaining access to, the production of knowledge.³² On the one hand, this term refers to the vision that many activists held for the University of California in pushing it to live up to the spirit of the Morrill Act of 1862. Public institutions of higher education, they argued, belonged to the people and promised to usher in a better collective future through a curriculum responsive to vocational needs and regional culture, not simply the preservation of polite culture and research for the sake of research. At the same time, "people's

classroom” also refers to the vernacular spaces and practices, as well as mass cultural strategies, that operated outside—and often in lieu of—universities. I hope to demonstrate how educational discourses unfolded on multiple registers and through diverse institutions and practices, all seeking to build a better future. Indeed, beyond the vocabularies and norms of academic disciplines, this multiplicity of educational practice was linked through a series of competing visions of the future of California. It is no accident that James used the hypothetical of a world without a future to exemplify the absurdity of Kantian metaphysics. Even the antimodern impulse described by T.J. Jackson Lears in *No Place of Grace* (1983) was fundamentally therapeutic, promising a future more deeply connected to the past.³³ As the scientists-turned-artist Charles Keeler put it, “More and more people are asking themselves how to adjust their lives to the demands and strains of the age.”³⁴ With moderns and antimoderns alike sharing a sense of hurling through history toward a contested future, education constituted a hotly contested collective project for shaping that future.

At its core, then, the struggle for democratic education was a struggle for access to cultural capital as a way of coping with the conditions of modernity—including cities, crowds, immigration, technology, and above all the changing labor conditions of industrial capitalism. This struggle did not play out exclusively within universities, but also unfolded in alternative “classrooms” outside the academy that embraced modes of knowledge production not easily recognized within the emerging disciplinary structure of the academy. Even when such practices and cultural formations remained “outside” the centers of academic power, they helped create a vocabulary of educational access that eventually worked its way into the marrow of public universities in the United States. Indeed, long before James spoke in Berkeley, the University of California had attracted reformers (such as Daniel Coit Gilman) who had thought extensively

about the future of higher education, and were surprised to find working class groups equally adamant about making the curriculum serve their purposes. Through public lectures, legislative petitions, discussion clubs, camping trips, and more, this tension between competing visions of public education brought the University of California to the brink of collapse in the 1870s but ultimately produced a major American modernist movement that pioneered new intellectual practices, new approaches to citizenship, and new ways of experiencing the natural world.

This movement's legacies included not simply the idea that public higher education should be available free of charge—a hallmark of the University of California system that helped keep tuition affordable across the United States until the late twentieth century—but also models of practice developed through experiments with informal community groups, writings on the relationship of education and environment, and attempts by public intellectuals to use the culture industries of publishing, journalism, and radio as tools of democratic education.³⁵ The term “culture industry” was coined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in 1944 to refer to mass culture as a means of controlling a large passive audience.³⁶ Yet an array of scholars—including Denning, Janice Radway, Lawrence Levine, Mariam Hanson, and James Cook—have built a more complicated picture of audiences “talking back” to the screen and using mass culture as a vehicle of empowerment.³⁷ The history of mass education is ripe for a similar revision. From Thorstein Veblen to more recent writers such as Christopher Newfield, Eric Gould, and Roderick Ferguson, critics and historians have examined the role of corporate capitalism in the modern research university.³⁸ At the same time, critics and community groups—including Veblen himself, who spent a few tumultuous years as a dissident economist at Stanford University in 1906-1909—argued that the university belonged to the people and should make a difference in

the world. This struggle was never wholly resolved one way or the other, instead leaving behind an array of compromises, false promises, partial victories, and roads not taken.

Beyond its contributions to U.S. cultural and intellectual history, this dissertation will be of value to readers interested in the future of higher education. Whether through the radical democratic language associated with rise of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), or through the proliferation of civic engagement initiatives in colleges and universities across the United States, a growing community of students, teachers, artists, and activists are challenging the status quo of higher education, particularly the unprecedented spike in tuition that is leaving students with over one trillion dollars in collective debt. Less recognized is the fact that this struggle for democratic education has roots in a much older tradition with several lineages.³⁹ One was the settlement house movement pioneered by Jane Addams's Hull House in Chicago, which hired college-educated women to teach courses for immigrant and working class women in urban areas.⁴⁰ Another was the involvement of celebrity intellectuals like Ralph Waldo Emerson in the antebellum Lyceum circuit.⁴¹ Whereas community-based cultural formations focused on local networks, public intellectuals utilized mass culture to reach national—and even international—audiences. Yet another strand involved eugenics, a public scholarship movement that, as Alexandra Stern has argued, “shaped modern California—its geography, inhabitants, and institutions.”⁴² Several figures in this dissertation were involved in eugenic reform projects, including intelligence testing, designed to sanitize the polyglot, multicultural publics of early-twentieth-century urban California. Likewise California's populist organizations were not only instrumental in the struggle for democratic education, but also among the driving forces behind discriminatory immigration policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.⁴³ Taken together, the stories that follow suggest that far from constituting a novel development, today's

struggle for educational reform is part of a much longer discourse regarding the civic and political role of higher education in public life.⁴⁴

This dissertation also engages the scholarly literature of bohemian modernism, including Christine Stansell's *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (2000), which explores modernism not simply as a movement based on literary and visual texts, but as a cultural affect and communitarian politics.⁴⁵ Although I follow Stansell in examining artists and activists who emphasized the experiential dimensions of knowledge production and ran up against the limitations of such practices in opposing militarism, commercialism, and other conditions of modernity, I also situate bohemianism—particularly the literary colony at Carmel-by-the-Sea—as an alternative mode of intellectual sociability that helped focus opposition to the professionalization of higher education. At the same time, California witnessed a uniquely aggressive attempt by elites to co-opt bohemianism's oppositional valences through the powerful and secretive Bohemian Club, a gentlemen's club that imitated what it believed to be the bohemian life and attracted populist writers such as Jack London despite its conservative politics. Tellingly, the Bohemian Club's activities focused not on actual bohemian haunts in the city, but rather on its secluded Bohemian Grove in Sonoma County and the aesthetics of a retreat to nature.⁴⁶ Despite (but also because of) its compromised class status, bohemianism was a critical force in the debates over democratic education in California. In its emphasis on experience of the natural world, bohemianism contested the supremacy of academic knowledge production as a way of understanding California's landscape. The informal historian of this generation was Charles Keeler, who in the 1930s wrote an unpublished manuscript, "Friends Bearing Torches," about his experiences in *fin-de-siècle* Berkeley as a young man. The title was a reference to a group of intellectuals—among them geologist Joseph LeConte and poet George Sterling—who,

in Keeler's romanticized view, "dared to love and to live under the spell of beauty" despite the rise of modern professionalism. Treating ideas as the product of social interactions, Keeler argued that these "teacher friends" had inspired him to escape the ivory tower and make a difference in the world.⁴⁷ But although Keeler was a vocal critic of the corporate soullessness of the University of California in the early twentieth century, he was also active in the Bohemian Club and sought out opportunities to socialize with the rich and famous, keenly sensitive about his own Midwestern working class background.

Given his networks of privilege, Keeler would seem an unlikely advocate for democratic education. Indeed, such incongruities have obscured the underlying radicalism of California's experiment in public higher education. The Philosophical Union was a case in point for how the fierce populist positions of the 1870s were adopted and softened—but also made hegemonic—by polite discussion clubs in Berkeley in the 1880s and 1890s. These clubs brought professors together with lawyers, high school teachers, clergy, and business owners. Although varied in their topical focus, the membership of these clubs involved a striking degree of overlap. The artist William Keith, for example, attended meetings of the Berkeley Club, Philosophical Union, Evolution Club, and Sierra Club. Keeler likewise attended all of these clubs as well as the Zoological Society and was instrumental in founding Berkeley's Hillside Club, an Arts and Crafts group focused on protecting the hills above Berkeley and Oakland. The records of these clubs, most notably the Berkeley Club and Hillside Club, suggest that members saw them as opportunities for checking the excesses of professionalism.

In 1898, for example, the Berkeley Club held its twenty-five year anniversary meeting. The event featured a speech by Joseph LeConte, a professor of natural history whose interests

ranged from geology to poetry to comparative theology.⁴⁸ According to a report on the meeting in the *Oakland Enquirer*:

[LeConte] classified clubs in many ways, as social and intellectual, and general and special, and said that the Berkeley Club had lived twenty-five years because it was a combination of the best types. Had it been purely intellectual or purely social it would have died long since. The professor spoke interestingly, at considerable length, in explaining the great advantage of the club which is general in its character. He said that specialization in all branches of knowledge is going to such lengths that it is in danger of defeating its own object[.] [...] Ten years ago he might have kept up with one department of paleontology, for example, vertebrate paleontology, but now, if he would keep in the fore front, he must subdivide even that subdivision. The remedy for all this specialization, the speaker thought, was to bring together men representing all the different departments of knowledge, as they have tried to do in the Berkeley Club.⁴⁹

Given LeConte's roots in antebellum natural history, one might easily read this as a call for turning back the clock to an age of gentlemen-scholars. Not only did the Berkeley Club exclude women, but the Club's detailed minutes reveals an environment that fostered jokes about wives and daughters and laments about co-education at Berkeley. Nevertheless, LeConte's speech offers a glimpse into a model of intellectual life that emphasized sociability and was profoundly important to the rise of public scholarship on the Pacific Coast, albeit a mode of engagement that sustained patriarchy and white supremacy. The Berkeley Club, LeConte argued, would have "died long since" if it had been "purely intellectual or purely social." Furthermore, LeConte's view of the Berkeley Club as an "remedy" for specialization—delivered only a few months before James spoke at Harmon Gymnasium—underscored the perception of Berkeley as an ongoing experiment in education, even in the eyes of its leaders.

The Berkeley Club was the brainchild of Daniel Coit Gilman, the early president of the University of California who would soon depart Berkeley for Baltimore, where he became one of the architects of Johns Hopkins University's graduate school—perhaps the most significant step in the professionalization of the American academy.⁵⁰ According to John McLean, a charter

member of the Berkeley Club, Gilman saw the club as his own personal advisory board for discussing the purposes of higher education at a moment when the University of California's structure was still quite fluid and open to experimentation.⁵¹ Based on a roster of papers presented during the first three decades of the Berkeley Club's existence—decades that corresponded with the formation of the university—educational experimentation was a constant source of discussion. For example, Mellen Haskell, a mathematics professor, spoke on such topics as “The Future of the University” and “Waste of Time in the Public Schools.” Likewise, George Mooar, one of several local pastors in the club, surveyed “Certain Educational Ventures in California.” Even long after Gilman's departure, reformers like Martin Kellogg, who later became president of the University of California, presented such papers as “A Shorter College Course,” “The Next Generation of Californians,” and “The State and Its University.”⁵² Such papers were accompanied by an array of other topics, including labor disputes, politics, and one proposal to invite a spirit medium for a discussion on spiritualism.⁵³

Beyond the content of its discussions, the core organizing factor in the Berkeley Club was food and drink. During a brief experiment with eliminating meals and limiting meetings to papers and discussion, the membership was, as McLean put it, “decimated.” Had the practice continued, he explained, “the Berkeley Club would have gone up in smoke.”⁵⁴ Indeed, this observation suggests that sociability—in this case white male sociability—was anything but incidental to Berkeley's discussion club scene in the *fin de siècle*. By bringing people together for food, drink, and conversation, groups like the Berkeley Club represented a critical site of generational transmission for intellectuals and education reformers in the region.

For both the Berkeley Club and working class groups like the Mechanics' Assembly, debates over democratic education in the late nineteenth century remained fairly localized, taking

shape in populist battles over the University of California's fidelity to the Morrill Act and alternative modes of knowledge production such as camping, bohemianism, and free public lectures. Accordingly, the first two chapters examine the oppositional discourses and practices, or people's classrooms, that arose in tandem with modern professionalism at Berkeley in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁵ The remaining chapters addresses the broader national dispersals of this struggle through the activities of three innovators—Mary Hunter Austin, William Ritter, and Charles Keeler—in the early twentieth century. James's lecture furnishes a rough-and-ready turning point in the massification of public scholarship: a moment when younger scholars began to parlay *fin de siècle* conversations about democratic education into concrete institutions and mass cultural strategies.

Chapter One addresses the interwoven histories of Yosemite and the University of California as public trusts and sites of intellectual sociability from the 1860s through the early twentieth century. It addresses the way Yosemite functioned as a site of intellectual sociability that challenged the supremacy of the classroom, studio, and laboratory in the production of knowledge during the same moment in which labor groups were seeking greater control of public higher education. Even when the University of California was still a makeshift operation that had yet to make the transition from Oakland to Berkeley, several large camping trips to Yosemite brought together students, teachers, and laypeople, including John Muir and John Swett, the Superintendent of Public Instruction in California who was instrumental in abolishing tuition. Such practices blurred the lines between the University of California and its critics and embraced a model of learning without hierarchy without threatening the professionalization of the university itself. Using archival records such as camping journals, personal letters, and the reminiscences of undergraduates who attended these trips—as well as Theresa Yelverton's novel

Zanita: A Tale of the Yo-Semite (1872), which moves back and forth between Yosemite and the Oakland home of its protagonist Professor John Brown of the State University—this chapter argues that outdoor education ventures simultaneously embraced and contained the struggle for democratic education at Berkeley.

Operating just outside the sanction of university authorities, and away from the pressures of the academic status economy, these trips were particularly appealing to people like Joseph LeConte (the inspiration for Professor Brown) who found themselves marginalized by the rise of the modern disciplines. LeConte described his experiences in magazines like *Overland Monthly* and *Popular Science Monthly* that aspired to reach an audience beyond the limited readership of academic journals. In short, Yosemite helped facilitate public engagement at precisely the moment when the academy was moving in the opposite direction—toward specialization, professionalism, and original research. Yet even as LeConte and others contrasted camping in the High Sierra with what John Muir dismissed as “indoor philosophy,” they repeatedly situated their experience of Yosemite as a classroom writ large, erasing their complicity in its history as a site of bloody conquest and resource extraction. When several faculty and students at Berkeley and Stanford came together to form the Sierra Club in 1892, they brought this whitewashed vision of Yosemite to the middle class environmental movement as a fight to defend these so-called classrooms of experience from the demands of San Francisco’s business leaders and labor groups for access to water.

Chapter Two argued that bohemians and scientists utilized national magazines and public attention in the wake of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire to put forth a new vision of regional intellectual life and its relationship to the natural world. The University of California’s control of the State Earthquake Investigation Committee represented the increasing shift toward

demonstrating the University's public good in terms of expertise and original research. This emphasis on professionalism—on distinguishing real science from quackery through credentials and networks—was accompanied by deteriorating ties with the region's artistic and literary communities. Far from abandoning their ground, writers in the region sought to harness their growing access to national magazines in service of alternative visions of San Francisco's rebuilding and intellectual life. In such texts as Jack London's *Martin Eden* (1909), which cast the University of California as a bastion of elite privilege and celebrated working class autodidacts and bohemian enclaves, these writers advanced a model of vernacular intellectual practice that affirmed the importance of face-to-face interaction, even as the university moved in the opposite direction toward mass education.

To be sure, several writers and artists from California had achieved a national platform prior to this time. John Muir's ability to publish in national magazines was a critical avenue of dispersal of his cohort's fusion of environmental, spiritual, scientific, and bohemian values. Few public intellectuals in California could claim similar resonance, however, and moving to New York City occasionally seemed inevitable for ambitious writers and artists. In an 1895 article for the *San Francisco Call*, "The Future of Art in California," the landscape artist William Keith wrote that California artists in general suffer the disadvantage "of being born in California. . . . This is painfully apparent to artists, and more notorious yet in the matter of literature. Think of books like those of Bierce falling flat and profitless because they bear the imprint of a San Francisco publishing house."⁵⁶ The disaster of 1906 drew attention to California as never before, and brought into focus San Francisco's pivotal and yet precarious position in the imperial and commercial ambitions of the United States. Accordingly, this chapter also addresses how writers, artists, and activists in California imagined their place in the cultural economy of

cosmopolitanism. It positions cosmopolitanism as not only a cultural stance but an entry point into a network of power that promised access to larger publics and more powerful institutions. When figures like Ambrose Bierce and Frank Norris moved to New York, or sought publication in *Harper's* instead of *Overland Monthly*, they helped construct geographies of knowledge that played a major role in shaping the reception and dispersal of ideas from California.

As it turned out, interest in San Francisco's plight quickly faded, and California's power in shaping educational and aesthetic discourses shifted decisively toward the entrenched power of its leading culture industries: the University of California and Hollywood. In the 1910s and beyond, the rise of the studio system shifted cultural power from the San Francisco Bay Area to Southern California. At the same time, the University of California dramatically increased its enrollment and took the first steps toward developing a statewide network through the opening of a satellite campus in Los Angeles, specialized research stations in La Jolla and Riverside, and a Farm School in Davis. Nevertheless, public intellectuals in Berkeley continued to experiment with modes of cultural production that would prove to have a powerful if underappreciated influence on efforts to improve educational access across the country. The remainder of the dissertation focuses on three such figures and the schemes they developed for engaging with publics beyond the university. In their own ways, each took the *fin-de-siècle* criticisms of the modern university and tried to put them into practice on a larger scale with more sustainable regionalist as well as mass cultural strategies.

Chapter Three argues that Charles Keeler's failed efforts to build connections between the University of California and the City of Berkeley heralded a shift in place-based educational activism, as Keeler stopped engaging with the University and instead focused his attention on shaping the built environment of Berkeley and its corporate identity as a city enthusiastic about

the arts and vernacular knowledge production. In the 1890s, Keeler had abandoned his research on the evolution of birds to become an entrepreneur of popular science through poetry, drama, radio scripts, and various educational schemes. During these years, Keeler was very active in the social aspects of California scientific life, including scientific discussion clubs, public lectures, and friendships with artists and writers. He embraced a back-to-nature, communitarian lifestyle that in turn shaped his poetry, philosophical writings, and religious experiments, all of which he explained as an efforts to merge art and science while remaining in touch with California culture and ecology. His most influential book, *The Simple Home* (1904), made the case for urban planning based on blending the built environment with Berkeley's natural landscape. Yet Keeler's career offered no simple antimodern trajectory. During the 1920s, he served as executive director of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce with the goal of strengthening ties with the university and making the city a hub of artistic and cultural activity. And even as Keeler embraced the role of regional booster—later writing an unpublished novel, *Bayville Boosters*, about the fictional city of Bayville, a thinly-veiled version of Berkeley's business community and its relationship with the University of California—he simultaneously marketed himself as a literary celebrity and launched on a world tour of poetry readings and ethnographic observation, which he hoped to parlay into radio shows and lectures for audiences in California and across the United States.

Chapter Four focuses on the writer Mary Hunter Austin, arguing that her experiences in California shaped her efforts to support regional cultural production through the strategic use of mass culture. Building on her involvement in the bohemian enclaves of San Francisco and Carmel-by-the-Sea, Austin utilized her access to national publishers and magazines to reject readymade models of education like the Chautauqua Series and instead advocate for the notion

that universities and educational movements should organically emerge from the surrounding regional culture. In this respect Austin was advocating in educational policy what many other artists were exploring in their aesthetic projects at precisely this moment. As Michael North puts it in *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (1999), “the notion that truth is local and particular came into being as a reflex of the attempt to make it global and universal.”⁵⁷

Indeed, many of Austin’s books in the 1920s and 1930s aimed to carve a space for local, subjective modes of knowledge production—including spirituality—in educational institutions that were dominated by scientific rationalism. These included *American Rhythm* (1923), *Can Prayer Be Answered?* (1934), *Experiences Facing Death* (1931), and *Everyman’s Genius* (1923). Moving from California to New York and later New Mexico, Austin became a savvy player in shaping national conversations about education and regional culture, offering a young Henry Nash Smith advice on how to manipulate the Dallas Chamber of Commerce to support his journal, *Southwest Review*, by tapping into its anxieties of cultural status. As Smith wrote to Austin: “You have rescued me from academicism: I could so easily have been lost!”⁵⁸

Chapter Five focuses on the creation of the Science Service in 1919 by the University of California biologist William Ritter, who had been active in the Berkeley discussion club scene of the *fin de siècle* and retained a deep commitment to the organic interrelationship of human, animal, and plant life. The Science Service was a wire service for scientific news that remains a fixture of the journalistic landscape in the twenty-first century under its new name, the Society for Science & the Public. In collaboration with newspaper tycoon Edward W. Scripps, Ritter envisioned the project as a way to cultivate a more educated citizenry. At the core of the scheme was an understanding of public scholarship as the delivery of expertise from the academy to a wider public—a model that was vigorously critiqued by Mary Austin when Ritter attempted to

secure her support for the project.⁵⁹ Building on the work of Nayan Shah, Alexandra Stern, and other scholars, this chapter also explores how eugenicist themes structured Ritter's understanding of the public sphere.⁶⁰

Despite his efforts to build a national network of scientists in support of the Science Service, Ritter's celebration of amateurism in his writings on woodpeckers were met with charges of quackery from his peers in the fields of biology and zoology. Still, his embrace of mass culture as a means of disseminating scientific knowledge underscored the growing primacy of content delivery over social interaction in the practices of educational activists in California. Decades later, in the neoliberal context of skyrocketing tuition and reduced public investment in higher education, the radical expansion of Ritter's model via free digital content has threatened to make brick-and-mortar universities obsolete, thereby sparking a renewed debate over community engagement, face-to-face interactions, affirmative action, and the diminishing ability of universities to serve as vehicles of class mobility.⁶¹ This discursive turn, which is the focus of my Conclusion, underscores the lasting influence of the values, schemes, and fault lines that characterized the struggle for democratic education in California.

From petitions by the California State Grange for vocational education in the 1870s to the massification of popular science, the struggle for democratic education in California found a focal point in the work of William James. Both Austin and Ritter paid homage to James as they sought audiences beyond California. In her autobiography, *Earth Horizon* (1934), Austin recounted the story of meeting James in Oakland during his 1898 visit and receiving lasting validation for her attempt to develop new modes of scientific and religious investigation outside the academy.⁶² Likewise Ritter—who together with Keeler attended the 1898 lecture and led a public discussion on the work of John Dewey—wrote to James asking whether his own views of

the public role of biology counted as pragmatism. In the letter, Ritter described his growing sense “that I am a Pragmatist unadulterated,” and explained that although he was, as he put it,

gravely untutored in Philosophy I am by no means indifferent to its findings. I have not been able to follow at all adequately the writings of yourself, Professor Dewey, and the others. I have however the strongest desire for intellectual companionship, and if my biological ideals really have any blood kinship with the still wider ideas for which you stand I should be pleased to know it.⁶³

Ritter’s work indeed carried several elements resonant of pragmatism, from his interest in holistic “worlds” of experience to his embrace of “philosophical biology” to his dalliances with eugenics (as underscored by his reference to “blood kinship” in the letter to James).⁶⁴ Likewise James retained strong ties to California after his lecture, accepting a six-month visiting position at Stanford University in 1906—just in time to experience the terror of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire.

Rather than offering a philosophical revision of Jamesian pragmatism, the pages that follow locate its “untechnical” spirit in the sweeping changes to American higher education wrought by California activists and public scholars in the early twentieth century. James’s ideas were less an inspiration than a reciprocal expression of ideas already animating conversations about higher education in the region well before his speech. Thus when James arrived in Berkeley in 1898, he did not enter a vacuum but rather engaged with an existing set of inquiries and practices. These debates revolved around making intellectual life sensitive to structures of power and usable by those seeking change. As such, pragmatism and the struggle for democratic education were but two sides of the same modernist coin. The public intellectuals and activists surrounding the University of California—from John Muir to Mary Austin, Henry George to Xavier Martinez—constituted a contradictory yet influential movement that parlayed debates over the perils and promise of higher education into new cultural formations and new strategies

of reform, including utilization of the circuits and structures of mass media. In so doing, California's public scholars helped transform not only popular understandings of the civic role of higher education, but also the contours of intellectual life in the modern world.

Notes

¹ Details of the visit are logged in “Minutes of the Philosophical Union of the University of California,” Box 6, Folder 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

² Louis Menand, The Metaphysical Club (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 350.

³ William James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” August 26, 1898, Box 4, Folder 24, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also Charles Sanders Peirce, “Illustrations of the Logic of Science: How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” Popular Science Monthly 12 (January 1878): 286-302. It is telling that Peirce chose as his venue a magazine of popular science marketed to educated lay readers.

⁴ William James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” August 26, 1898, Box 4, Folder 24, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵ James’s extensive Berkeley connections included his Harvard colleague Josiah Royce, a graduate of the University of California who, in addition to philosophical writings, published several works on education, race, and provincialism in California. See, for example, Josiah Royce, California, From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1886), and Royce, Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

⁶ The most important antecedents for California’s model of free public education were the public universities and teaching colleges of the Midwest, particularly the University of Wisconsin and the University of Michigan. See, e.g., Lincoln Steffens, “Sending a State to College: What the University of Wisconsin Is Doing For Its People,” American Magazine 67 (February 1909): 349-364. June Howard notes that many Americans in the late nineteenth century believed that “the foundations of social order were under threat from big business and class conflict, ignorant plutocrats and uncivilized immigrants,” but that through education this new public “would be elevated and Americanized.” June Howard, “Introduction: Sarah Orne Jewett and the Traffic in Words,” in Howard, ed., New Essays on The Country of Pointed Firs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11.

⁷ Act of July 2, 1862 (Morrill Act), Public Law 37-108; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives.

⁸ See William Warren Ferrier, Origin and Development of the University of California (Berkeley: Sather Gather Book Shop, 1930), 312.

⁹ The dispute is discussed at length in Chapter One. See J.W.A. Wright, et al., “Memorial of California State Grange, and Mechanics’ Deliberative Assembly on the State University,” in

Ezra Carr, ed., The University of California and Its Relations to Industrial Education (Sacramento: Benjamin Dore, 1874).

¹⁰ William James was a Corresponding Member of the Philosophical Union, as was Josiah Royce. See William James to E.B. McGilvary, October 1, 1897, Box 1, Folder I-J, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹¹ Roll of Members of the Philosophical Union of the University of California (1889-1897), Oversize Vol. 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also Marietta Kies, Institutional Ethics (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1894), esp. 105-162, which anticipated William Ritter in framing the state as an “all-inclusive organic unity.” Kies received her graduate training at the University of Michigan with John Dewey. Franklin K. Lane to Finlay Cook, September 30, 1889, Box 1, Folder L, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

¹² “Philosophical Union of the University of California: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Its Founding,” Pamphlet, 1914, Box 7, Folder 8, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

¹³ “Minutes of the Philosophical Union of the University of California,” Box 6, Folder 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley..

¹⁴ William James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” August 26, 1898, Box 4, Folder 24, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁵ Josiah Royce, Joseph LeConte, George Howison, and Sidney Mezes, The Conception of God: A Philosophical Discussion Concerning the Nature of the Divine Idea as a Demonstrable Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1897).

¹⁶ Requests for copies of the volume included Jonathan Dooner to E.B. McGilvary, November 2, 1895, Box 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California; Calvin French to Secretary of State University of California, December 10, 1895, Box 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley; N.H. Hemiup to Secretary of the Philosophical Society of Berkeley, April 9, 1896, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley; and Charlotte Martins to Executive Council of Philosophical Union, June 5, 1897, Box 2, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Dooner identified himself as “an old and superannuated teacher” in California, French was a pastor from South Dakota, and Martins wrote on behalf of Princeton University Library.

¹⁷ William James, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," August 26, 1898, Box 4, Folder 24, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. John Dewey echoed James's metaphor of the museum, observing that philosophical conclusions acquire value when "they contribute to the common experience of man, instead of being curiosities to be deposited, with appropriate labels, in a metaphysical museum." John Dewey, Experience and Nature, 2nd Edition (New York: Norton, 1929), 19.

¹⁸ Acknowledging this inference, James noted: "I shrink with some terror from saying such a thing before some of you here present." William James, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," August 26, 1898, Box 4, Folder 24, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, University Archives, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

¹⁹ James positioned pragmatism as an offshoot of this tradition. This explained the title of his later book, William James, Pragmatism, a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking: Popular Lectures on Philosophy (New York: Longmans, Green, 1907).

²⁰ Beyond James, the celebration of California as a youthful work in progress was motivated by fears of racial declension in New England and facilitated by the erasure of California's long and complicated past. See William Deverell, Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Josiah Royce, California, From the Conquest in 1846 to the Second Vigilance Committee in San Francisco (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1886). See also Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," Representations, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 107-122, and Alexander Olson, "El Grito and the Tea Party," Boom: The Journal of California 1, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 86-90.

²¹ See, for example, Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Paul Jerome Croce, Science and Religion in the Era of William James: Eclipse of Certainty, 1820-1880 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Louis Menand, The Metaphysical Club: A Story of American Ideas (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); James T. Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?" The Journal of American History 83, No. 1 (June 1996): 100-138; Giles Gunn, Thinking Across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect, and the New Pragmatism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Melvin Rogers, The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and Joshua Miller, Democratic Temperament: The Legacy of William James (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997). The role of pragmatism as a response to modernity is explored in Robert D. Richardson, William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2006); Ross Posnock, The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); John Patrick Diggins, The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); and James Livingston,

Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 1850-1940 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

²² William James, “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” August 26, 1898, Box 4, Folder 24, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU-200, University Archives, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

²³ Lawrence Levine, The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 32.

²⁴ See Peter Mayo, “‘In and Against the State’: Gramsci, War of Position, and Adult Education,” Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies 3 (October 2005).

²⁵ The first of these satellites—a marine biological research station in La Jolla—was established in 1903 by the biologist William Ritter, who is the subject of the fifth chapter of this dissertation. This was followed shortly thereafter by the Farm School at Davis (1905), the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside (1907), and the University of California, Los Angeles (1919).

²⁶ Although some recent texts—most notably Richard Cándida-Smith, The Modern Moves West: California Artists and Democratic Culture in the Twentieth Century (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009)—reject the notion of modernism as a movement radiating outward from metropolitan centers to the East, most nevertheless restrict the term to aesthetic practices of the mid-twentieth century rather than examining broader structural movements such as the rise of the modern research university. See T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Christine Stansell, American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century (New York, 2000); Marjorie Perloff, “The Aura of Modernism,” Modernist Cultures 1, no. 1 (Spring 2005); Casey N. Blake, Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Terry Smith, Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); and T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Although Clark, Smith, Lears and others do explore the connection of modernism to architecture, industrial capitalism, and urban planning, few locate it as aggressively in collective structural projects (rather than individual aesthetic practices) as James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and, much earlier, James Gilbert, Designing the Industrial State: The Intellectual Pursuit of Collectivism in America, 1880-1940 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972). Two other notable exceptions are Daniel Hurewitz, Bohemian Los Angeles and the Making of Modern Politics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), which positions Los Angeles as an originating site of modern identity politics, and Phoebe S. Kropp, California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), which examines how boosters in Los Angeles used the cultural capital of Spanish colonial heritage as a source of economic development. Neither Hurewitz nor Kropp restrict American modernism to

aesthetic practices; instead, both draw attention to the cultural and political formations that arose in Los Angeles in response to the conditions of modernity.

²⁷ David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

²⁸ For example, Barbara Berglund, Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846-1906 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), argues that the establishment and policing of class boundaries, with an emphasis on order rather than futurity, was the central dynamic of late-nineteenth-century San Francisco. Likewise Grey Brechin, Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), argues that the architecture of the University of California echoed the imperial aspirations of the region's elite. He also explores the University's central role in the rise of the military-industrial complex in the twentieth century. See also Philip J. Ethington, The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), and George Henderson, California and the Fictions of Capital (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For California's labor movement of the nineteenth century, see Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley University of California Press, 1971); Carey McWilliams, California: The Great Exception (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); Michael Kazin, "The Great Exception Revisited: Organized Labor and Politics in San Francisco and Los Angeles, 1870-1940," Pacific Historical Review 55 (August 1986): 371-402; Michael Kazin, Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

²⁹ See, for example, John Aubrey Douglass, The California Idea and American Higher Education: 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Maresi Narad, The Academic Kitchen: A Social History of Gender Stratification at the University of California, Berkeley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); and Verne Stadtman, The Centennial Record of the University of California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

³⁰ Michael Denning, The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century (London: Verso, 1996).

³¹ Charles Postel, The Populist Vision (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³² Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

³³ T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

³⁴ Charles Keeler, "The Victorious Life," n.d., Carton 7, Folder 22, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁵ The University of California's lack of tuition remained a point of pride for decades. In 1892, Martin Kellogg noted, "Our State took a step in advance of any other in making tuition in its University absolutely free." Martin Kellogg, "Educational Progress in California," in Kellogg, et al., Addresses Delivered Before the California Teachers' Association (Berkeley: University of California, 1892), 9.

³⁶ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, The Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972). See also Theodor Adorno, "Culture Industry Revisited," New German Critique 6 (Autumn 1975): 3-11. The concept of the "culture industry" is closely associated with the Frankfurt School of social criticism. For the exile of many Frankfurt School critics, including Adorno, in Los Angeles during the 1930s and 1940s, see Ehrhard Bahr, Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

³⁷ Michael Denning, Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America (London: Verso, 1987); Janice A. Radway, A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Lawrence W. Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," American Historical Review 97, No. 5 (December 1992): 1369-1399; James W. Cook, "The Return of the Culture Industry," in Cook, et al., eds., The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 291-317; and Miriam Hansen, Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). As one author notes, Adorno offered a "cartoon of culture" in his view that the publics of the culture industry were "entirely passive." Paul Starr, The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communication (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 400.

³⁸ Thorstein Veblen, The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum of the Conduct of Universities by Business Men (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1918); Christopher Newfield, Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Patrick J. McGrath, Scientists, Business, and the State, 1890-1960 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Eric Gould, The University in a Corporate Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); and Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," Social Text 79, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 101-115. Roderick Ferguson emphatically rejects the notion of the academy as derivative of capitalism. Instead, he argues that universities have a much more active role in the exercise of power, working to "rearticulate the nature of state and capital" as a way of neutralizing threats from social movements through integrative logics—or he calls "malignancies of recognition." Roderick A. Ferguson, The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 11, 14.

³⁹ For present-day public scholarship in higher education, see, for example, Susan Sturm, et. al., Full Participation: Building the Architecture for Diversity and Public Engagement in Higher Education (Syracuse: Imagining America, 2011).

⁴⁰ See Jane Addams, Twenty Years at Hull House (New York: Macmillan, 1910). See also Judith Ann Trolander, Professionalism and Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

⁴¹ While some participants used the lecture circuit for advancing causes like abolition, Emerson offered a vision of intellectual life that stepped outside—or transcended—the market, thereby tacitly affirming the existing social order. See Jeffrey Sklansky, The Soul's Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), and Elizabeth B. Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak’: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America,” The Journal of American History 82, no. 2 (September 1995): 463-493.

⁴² Alexandra Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 84.

⁴³ David Roediger notes that “the pleasures of whiteness could function as a ‘wage’ for white workers. That is, status and privileges conferred by race could be used to make up for alienating and exploitative class relationships[.]” See David Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (London: Verso, 1991), 13. See also Denis Kearney and H.L. Knight, “Appeal from California: The Chinese Invasion,” Indianapolis Times, February 18, 1878.

⁴⁴ Within the academy, the criticism that higher education was disengaged with everyday life was largely overshadowed by the rise of the modern disciplines devoted to original research in narrowly defined domains. This trend was exemplified by national professional organizations such as the Modern Language Association (1883), American Historical Association (1889), American Psychological Association (1892), and other such groups. As Francesca Bordogna has noted, William James was one of the “losers” in this story who offered “resistance against the social effects of professionalization, specialization, and disciplinarity.” Francesca Bordogna, William James at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Science, and the Geography of Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 272.

⁴⁵ Christine Stansell, American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century (New York: Henry Holt, 2000). See also Ann Powers, Weird Like Us: My Bohemian America (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000); Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking, 1986); Casey Nelson Blake, Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders: A History of Bohemianism in America (New York: Covici, 1933).

⁴⁶ See Robert Fletcher, The Annals of the Bohemian Club (San Francisco: Bohemian Club, 1898); James E. Jewell, ed., The Visual Arts in Bohemia: 125 Years of Artistic Creativity in the Bohemian Club (San Francisco: The Bohemian Club, 1997); G. William Domhoff, The Bohemian Grove and Other Retreats: A Study in Ruling Class Cohesiveness (New York: Harper

Colophon, 1975); and Ed Herny, et al., Berkeley Bohemia: Artists and Visionaries of the Early 20th Century (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2008).

⁴⁷ Charles Keeler, “Friends Bearing Torches,” ca. 1936, Cartons 5:42 and 6:1, Charles Keeler Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also Charles Keeler, “My Teacher Friends,” ca. 1936, Charles Keeler Collection, Berkeley Historical Society, Berkeley.

⁴⁸ A biographical sketch of Joseph LeConte was included in the same issue of Popular Science Monthly as the article by Charles Sanders Peirce that James cited in his lecture. See “Sketch of Professor Joseph LeConte,” Popular Science Monthly 12 (January 1878): 358-361. LeConte had been one of the contributors to the Philosophical Union’s 1895 roundtable, “The Conception of God,” that included Josiah Royce. See Josiah Royce, Joseph LeConte, George Howison, and Sidney Mezes, The Conception of God: A Philosophical Discussion Concerning the Nature of the Divine Idea as a Demonstrable Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1897).

⁴⁹ “The Berkeleyans,” Oakland Enquirer (February 11, 1898), Carton 1, Berkeley Club Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

⁵⁰ For Gilman’s work at Johns Hopkins University, see Laurence Veysey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 158-165.

⁵¹ “Twentieth Anniversary of the Berkeley Club” (Program), February 16, 1893, Carton 1, Berkeley Club Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵² “Roster of the Berkeley Club, California, Together with the titles of papers read before the club, 1873-1923” (pamphlet), 1923, Carton 1, Berkeley Club Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵³ Frederic C. Torrey, “A Chronicle of Fifty Years of the Berkeley Club: Compiled from the Minutes of the Club and Other Available Records” (February 15, 1923), Carton 1, Berkeley Club Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵⁴ “Anniversary of the Berkeley Club, 1873-1909” (Pamphlet), February 18, 1909, Carton 1, Berkeley Club Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵⁵ As the University of California adopted the structure of the modern research university, and particularly narrowly defined departments such as Anthropology and Biology, it increasingly sought to justify its work through public displays of research. The most notable such example was the exploitation of Ishi, a member of the Yana people who was brought to Berkeley’s Museum of Anthropology and advertised as the last of his tribe by Alfred Kroeber as a way of demonstrating the utility of anthropological research. Orin Starn, Ishi’s Brain: In Search of America’s Last ‘Wild’ Indian (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), and Theodora Kroeber, Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).

⁵⁶ William Keith, “The Future of Art in California,” San Francisco Call, December 25, 1895.

⁵⁷ Michael North, Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213. John Duvall adds, “Any attempt to link regionalism to American modernism may seem, at first blush, a perverse enterprise. After all, definitions of modernism tend to cast it as nearly the antithesis of regionalism.” However, he continues, regionalism moves front and center once literary modernism is taken to include “all imaginative writing that responds to the intense forces of modernization[.]” John Duvall, “Regionalism in American Modernism,” in Walter Kalaidjian, ed., The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 242.

⁵⁸ Henry Nash Smith to Mary Austin, April 18, 1933, AU 4717, Box 112, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

⁵⁹ Mary Hunter Austin, “Science for the Unscientific,” The Bookman, v. 55, no. 6 (August 1922): 561-566.

⁶⁰ Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001); Alexandra Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Tomás Almaguer, Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁶¹ David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jason DeParle, “For Poor, Leap to College Often Ends in a Hard Fall,” The New York Times, December 22, 2012; Siva Vaidhyanathan, “What’s the Matter With MOOCs?” The Chronicle of Higher Education, July 6, 2012.

⁶² As Austin explained, “I have read practically everything that James has written, without finding anything to alter my conviction that he was actually as interested as he seemed to be, and that he did confirm my own experience that prayer is not merely an emotional response but a creative motion.” She added: “I went away from William James that summer dusk, with the lights coming out all about the Bay, through the deeply luminous blue of the Bay shot by the riffling trail of the ferries, assured for the first time in my life that the true Middle of my search was in myself.” Mary Hunter Austin, Earth Horizon (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932), 283-283. Austin was one of the most prolific and earnest devotees of James’s efforts, as David Hollinger has put it, to balance “belief in a supernatural God potentially responsive to human striving, and the demands of modern science, with its emphasis on intersubjective testing of claims based on the data of the senses.” David Hollinger, “‘Damned for God’s Glory’: William James and the Scientific Vindication of Protestant Culture,” in Wayne Proudfoot, ed., William James and a Science of Religion: Re-Experiencing *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 10.

⁶³ William Ritter to William James, March 31, 1908, Box 1, William Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁶⁴ William Ritter to Joseph Grinnell, August 14, 1907, Box 1, William Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also William Ritter, "The World Versus Matter," Popular Science Monthly (March 1914): 271-283, and William Ritter, "First Meeting, Zoological Seminar, 1906," Carton 10, William Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

Chapter 1

Public Trust: Yosemite and the University of California, 1860-1906

During the early 1860s, with the nation fractured by war, Congress found time for two landmark projects that would transform California. First, in 1862, it passed the Morrill Land Grant Act, which provided federal property to the states for use in establishing colleges and universities “to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts.”¹ Arguably the most important step in the history of U.S. higher education, the Morrill Act led to a university building boom and, for many states, California included, hastened a new outlook on higher education as a public trust.² Two years later, in 1864, the wartime Congress passed another land grant act, in this case transferring the Yosemite Valley and nearby Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the State of California with the stipulation that it remain “unalienable for all time” and “be held for public use, resort, and recreation.”³ Yosemite became a major draw for tourists and naturalists, among them John Muir, who came to California after a sojourn in Canada during the war and later a thousand-mile walk to the Gulf Coast. Meanwhile, after several false starts, the California State Legislature utilized its Morrill Act grant to establish the University of California in 1868.

During this postwar period, the University actively recruited former professors from the South who were unwilling to work in Southern universities during Reconstruction. Indeed, the Regents’ first choice for President was former General George McClellan, who had opposed the

abolition of slavery and ran as the Democratic Presidential nominee in 1864. Faculty recruits included the brothers Joseph LeConte (Professor of Geology and Natural History) and John LeConte (Professor of Physics), both of whom had resigned their positions at South Carolina College. As Joseph LeConte described his reasons for leaving South Carolina, “when the negro legislature began to talk about what they were going to do with the University, I thought it time to quit.”⁴ His views were shared by his brother, John, who served as the Acting President of the University of California upon his arrival in Oakland in 1869. Their sympathetic writings on the South received a response from none other than Jefferson Davis, who later wrote that he remembered the LeConte brothers well, and added: “I would be very pleased to receive the lecture of Prof. Joseph LeConte on ‘The South Revisited.’ I love the old South & all who cherish its meaning.”⁵ The great irony of the University’s decision to hire Southern faculty was that the Morrill Act was made possible by the wartime absence of obstructionist Southern Congressmen who had opposed such expenditures.

As it turned out, the fates of Yosemite and the University of California would remain intertwined for decades. More than any other place in San Francisco’s hinterlands, Yosemite functioned as a sort of shadow to the University of California—a space of intellectual sociability that challenged the supremacy of the classroom, studio, and laboratory in the production of knowledge. From the University’s opening in 1869 through the early twentieth century, a series of university camping expeditions brought together students, faculty, and people with no academic affiliation—including painters, poets, tourists, and policy makers.⁶ Only rarely did these trips include farmers, factory workers, and other labor groups that were highly critical of the University. Partly as a result of this context, the trope of the overeducated professor—awash in theory and detached from practical concerns—became a staple of popular writings on

Yosemite throughout the 1870s. Far from ignoring this image, LeConte and others manipulated it as part of their own agendas for university reform, slowly cultivating reputations as public intellectuals and in turn solidifying support for the University of California as a public trust.

Berkeley professors were not the only intellectuals to visit Yosemite during these years. On May 5, 1871, the aging philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson arrived with an entourage from Harvard. Upon hearing the news, John Muir could hardly contain his enthusiasm. “I was excited,” wrote the young naturalist, “as I had never been excited before, and my heart throbbed as if an angel direct from heaven had alighted on the Sierran rocks.”⁷ Building up the courage to approach his hero, but confident that he would win him over by proposing “to make an immortal Emerson night of it,” Muir eagerly planned a camping excursion into the mountains. To his dismay, however, Emerson refused, preferring to protect his health by sleeping in cabins.⁸ Muir’s disappointment was evident in his description of the encounter many years later. Emerson’s party, he wrote, was “full of indoor philosophy” and captive to “the house habit,” totally failing to see the value of his “wild plan.” Muir found it particularly galling that Emerson’s party had laughed at his claim that one was far more likely to catch a cough in a damp, dirty cabin than from the clean air of the Sierra. The whole affair, concluded Muir, was a “sad commentary on culture and the glorious transcendentalism.”⁹

Despite the bitterness of his remarks, Muir maintained great affection for Emerson. Indeed, Muir’s description of his visit bore striking similarities to his encounter in Yosemite with one of his most cherished mentors, James Butler, a professor at the University of Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin, which Muir had attended, was among the leading public universities in the United States at the time, pioneering a model of higher education for the public good that took hold at several other land grant colleges.¹⁰ After dropping out of college,

Muir spent time designing machines to improve industrial efficiency in Indianapolis before embarking on circuitous travels that eventually took him to California. During the summer of 1869, Muir was in Yosemite when he was suddenly “possessed with the notion” that Butler had entered the Valley. Muir rejoiced when his strange “telepathy” turned out to have been accurate. As with Emerson, Muir invited his mentor to join him in an extended camping trip in the high Sierra, but despite Butler’s joy at seeing his former student, he responded, “Not now.” Butler’s departure left Muir “pitying the poor Professor” for being “bound by clocks, almanacs, orders, duties, etc., and compelled to dwell with lowland care and dust and din, where Nature is covered and her voice smothered, while the poor, insignificant wanderer enjoys the freedom and glory of God’s wilderness.”¹¹

Although Muir harbored no acrimony toward Emerson or Butler, he more bitterly sparred with Josiah Whitney—a professor at Harvard and “ruling potentate of California rocks”—over the origins of Yosemite.¹² Whitney contended that an earthquake or some other cataclysm had caused the valley floor to sink, hence explaining the sheer incline and polished surfaces of the valley’s walls. Muir argued that Yosemite had been formed instead by glaciers much like those still active in the surrounding mountains. Although neither Whitney nor Muir fully apprehended the role of the Merced River in carving the valley, Whitney’s stubborn refusal to reconsider his hypothesis became a vehicle through which Muir and his followers expressed disdain for academic elitism.¹³ Indeed, the story appeared repeatedly in popular guidebooks on Yosemite, remaining a key element of Muir’s hagiography to this day.¹⁴ The sheer volume of scholarship on Yosemite, with Muir as its patron saint, has further amplified Whitney’s error as emblematic of the failings of “indoor philosophy” detached from practical experience.¹⁵ Yet as Muir himself noted, Yosemite’s symbolic importance obscured the fact that there were many such valleys

throughout the High Sierra, suggesting that its selection over any other as a focal point of activism was essentially random.¹⁶ Why, then, did Yosemite achieve such an outsized role in California's educational imaginary? And why was the bumbling professor such a recurring feature of popular writings on the Valley?

This chapter looks beyond the history of the conservation movement to examine how Yosemite—as both a symbol and a place—served the ideological and intellectual projects of university- and state-building in California in the *fin de siècle*. The University of California's supporters were keenly aware that the trope of the professor as an elitist, overeducated buffoon posed a challenge to their credibility, recognizing in this attack—repeated in newspapers, novels, and broadsides from the State Grange and Mechanics' Institute—a threat to public support for the University. As Henry May once put it, “the most dangerous attacks” on the University during its early years “were part of a popular onslaught against elitism, carried on by Kerneyites, Grangers, and other labor and agrarian groups.”¹⁷ Yosemite served as a tool for containing and neutralizing this attack. As a space of intellectual exchange outside the urban centers of San Francisco and Oakland, and as a national tourist attraction, Yosemite served as both a physical and representational field by which the University of California redirected popular resistance and created the conditions for demonstrating the utility of specialized, state-sponsored research in California. Despite its inaccessibility to most working people, Yosemite allowed the university to associate itself with an “outdoor” vision of intellectual life that embraced practice above theory and, eventually, helped secure the university's position as an engine of research.

Spaces of Education in *Zanita* (1872)

In 1870, the British writer Theresa Yelverton arrived in Yosemite to gather material for a new novel and to escape attention from a highly publicized legal dispute with her husband, an

aristocratic bigamist. During her visit she met Joseph LeConte—who was participating that summer in a university camping expedition—and John Muir.¹⁸ Both men later appeared as characters in her novel, *Zanita: A Tale of the Yo-Semite*, published two years later in 1872. *Zanita* was the story of a young girl, Zanita, born in Yosemite but raised for several years in Oakland after losing her mother. Zanita stirs up havoc in Oakland before attending a boarding school in Santa Clara, seducing a mysterious artist, and finally drowning in Yosemite’s Mirror Lake. Yelverton made no effort to conceal Muir as the inspiration for a wild adventurer named “Kenmuir.” LeConte appeared as Dr. John Brown, “a Professor of Geology in a College of California” who helps raise Zanita in Oakland with his wife, Sylvia Brown (the narrator of the novel).¹⁹ Sylvia first glimpses Kenmuir as he is standing on the precipice of Glacier Point, seemingly inches from plunging to his death. Swept up in his charisma, she grows self-conscious of her expected social position as “a Professor’s wife, and a sensible woman” who should not be associating with the likes of Kenmuir. After spending time with her new friend, however, Sylvia concludes that any disapproval from her husband would be wholly unfounded: “Kenmuir, I decided in my mind, was a gentleman; and behind this bold rampart I resolved to intrench myself against the sarcastic tiltings of the Professor.”²⁰

Early on, Kenmuir’s practical knowledge of the Valley is contrasted with the absurdity of Professor Brown’s abstract theories. Discussing the geological origins of Yosemite, Sylvia tells Kenmuir that “when we get the Professor here, he will fight you tooth and nail as to the origin of everything.”²¹ Professor Brown turns out to be a staunch believer in Josiah Whitney’s view that a sudden cataclysm had formed Yosemite, allowing Kenmuir to offer a “wholesale destruction” of the Professor’s hypothesis. Appealing to the evidence of experience, Kenmuir exclaims, “Why! I can show the Professor where the mighty cavity has been grooved and wrought out for

millions of years. . . . I can take you where you can see for yourself[.]”²² In reality, LeConte largely agreed with Muir’s contention that Yosemite had been carved by glaciers, and openly credited Muir in publications and lectures, hedging only slightly as to the conclusiveness of the theory.²³ In an 1872 address to the California Academy of Sciences, “On Some of the Ancient Glaciers of the Sierra Nevada,” published later in *The American Journal of Science*, LeConte openly acknowledged Muir’s collaboration in developing the theory.²⁴ This did not stop Muir from criticizing LeConte’s work in *Harper’s Monthly* as typical of what he believed to be the professorial tendency to build theories based on fleeting observation of geological phenomena. “Professor LeConte,” wrote Muir, “had never before seen a glacier of any kind, and did nothing more by way of investigation of this one than to spend a few minutes on the terminal moraine.”²⁵ Not unlike his scorn for the “indoor philosophy” of Emerson’s party, Muir’s description of LeConte contrasted the supposedly cloistered experience of geology professors with his own sensory proximity to the spaces and places they wrote about.

The archetype of the detached or bumbling professor appeared throughout *Zanita*, which quickly sold thousands of copies and remains the best-known novel of Yosemite. Beyond his disagreement with Kenmuir about the origins of Yosemite, the “unpoetical Professor of Geology” is mocked for his preoccupation with the sources and methods of scientific investigation at the expense of social relationships.²⁶ At one point he is described as an “idiot” who could be found “a moping and a mowing about the rocks.”²⁷ At another point Sylvia asks her husband about Mr. Egremont, an artist who appears midway through the novel with designs on *Zanita*. “I wonder,” asks Sylvia, “who he is, and where he comes from, and how he got here?” The Professor mistakenly thinks she is asking about the sample of rock that he is studying and launches into a lecture about geological origins before she interrupts him to

clarify.²⁸ So distracted is the buffoonish Professor with study that he can barely take care of himself, instead identifying, in David Mazel's words, with "a prosaic linearity of thought."²⁹ When Sylvia leaves for a trip, she "dolefully" admits "that he would mope and grow sick; wear two odd stockings,—even if he were fortunate to find two; never have a handkerchief, and appear in a disreputable neck-tie; that all his linen would take the opportunity of my absence to go astray at the laundry."³⁰

More than a source of humor, however, Professor Brown's role in the novel allows Yelverton to explore, with an anthropologist's eye, the complicated relationship of Oakland, San Francisco, and Yosemite that she encountered during her visit. Yelverton arrived within a year of the opening of the University of California in 1869, and signs of the new institution were apparent in Yosemite as the site of a University Camping Expedition in 1870. Until 1873, when the campus in the Berkeley hills had been developed enough to sustain classes, the university operated at the site of the old College of California in Oakland, where most of its professors lived, including LeConte. The location of classes and homes became a source of contention with the State Grange and other labor groups, who called on the university to live up to the spirit of the Morrill Act by improving access. In addition to seeking the elimination of the classical curriculum in favor of direct instruction in agriculture and other trades, several critics pushed to locate the campus in San Francisco instead of Berkeley to prevent a costly commute for working class students. As one observer wrote, "The truth is the University ought to have been located in the city. Here is to be found *some* of the elements upon which to base an Institution of learning: population, boarding houses, buildings, bakers, tailors."³¹ Despite steps to ensure access such as free tuition for state residents, the Legislature resisted moving the university to San Francisco out of fears of the corrupting influences of the city.³² Critics also proposed a series of free lectures at

the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute as a way of providing educational programming to citizens where they lived and worked—a program that was implemented and generated regular attendance of over five hundred people per lecture in the early 1870s.³³ Given this context of tenuous public support for the research university model, the trope of the overeducated professor detached from the concerns of working people was a potent threat.

In the novel, Zanita's removal to Oakland following her adoption by Sylvia and Professor Brown offers a glimpse into how this cultural geography appeared to Yelverton as a visitor to the region in 1870. By sending the protagonists from Yosemite to Oakland to San Francisco to Santa Clara and back to Oakland and finally Yosemite again, the novel points to the complicated cultural networks that structured educational practice and status in the San Francisco Bay Area. Despite the ridiculousness of Professor Brown's habits and theories, his analytical detachment and obliviousness to social cues enable a different sort of empathy for Zanita than anyone else in the novel. When Sylvia decides to adopt Zanita early in the novel, the Professor keeps his distance from the whole process, grudgingly approving the adoption only on the understanding that he is not to be held responsible for her education. Upon arriving in Oakland, the Professor "declared he was ashamed to go out with [Zanita], for her hat could never be kept straight on her head."³⁴ He soon discovers that sartorial infelicities are the least of his worries. After Zanita carries out a series of pranks, the Professor finds himself locked in "a struggle for mastery" over the sanctity of his study and its cabinet of "geological and biological specimens," which Zanita aspires to disturb for no apparent reason other than to assert power.³⁵

At the crux of the tension between Zanita and the Professor is mastery of space, with the two protagonists—each marginalized in their own way—serving as closely adjacent metonyms for Yosemite and the University. The Professor removes Zanita from Yosemite, but Zanita has

the power to makes the Professor look ridiculous in Oakland. A few months after the adoption, for example, Sylvia arrives home to find the house empty. Soon the Professor returns from teaching, but Zanita is nowhere to be found. Fearing that Zanita has escaped to San Francisco, where “she might choose to remain in any den of iniquity,” Sylvia for the first time begins to regret taking her from Yosemite.³⁶ Underscoring the class division between San Francisco and Oakland, Sylvia and the Professor cross the Bay hoping to rescue Zanita from what they believe to be the pernicious influence of the city. As it turns out, Zanita had been hiding at home in Oakland the entire time, using the occasion of their absence to go “camping” in Sylvia’s pickling cabinet, making liberal use of her “tea-set, jam-pots, apples, peaches, dry tea, and coffee-beans.”³⁷ Zanita’s “squirrelism,” as Yelverton calls it, constitutes a reversal of the usual agency of environmentalism that would mark writings on Yosemite for decades; instead of describing the destruction of wilderness by the technologies of modernity, here the “wildness” of Yosemite creates havoc in the Professor’s home in the city.

Over the next several years, as Zanita is expelled from one school after another, Sylvia begins drawing a sharp distinction between “training” and “education.” Zanita excels at the latter, but refuses to submit to the former. Sylvia attributes the difficulty of finding a school for Zanita to this dynamic:

I sent her to a day-school in Oakland; but soon discovered that instead of being trained herself, she was exercising dominion over all the other girls, little and big. She could tell a great deal they did not know of natural history, ornithology, and mechanics, and was quite beyond the control of mistress or tutors. She was soon expelled for determined insubordination.³⁸

Throughout this process—which takes Zanita from Oakland to San Jose to Santa Clara—the Professor’s neighbors in Oakland begin to question his judgment, noting, “It is strange how a sensible man like the Professor can allow his wife to carry out such vagaries, and the child no

kith or kin to them. It's sheer romantic nonsense."³⁹ Indifferent to these whispers, the Professor grows increasingly fond of Zanita, taking "infinite amusement from her eccentricities." Zanita, in turn, becomes "keenly alive even to the most abstruse of his conversations, and delighted him by her bright intelligence." Far from getting angry, the Professor laughs when he learns that Zanita has been mockingly imitating him behind his back "with a book in hand, a pair of scissors for an eye-glass, her feet crossed upon another chair, and her mouth puckered up" as if absorbed in reading like the Professor.⁴⁰

By the time Zanita meets Mr. Egremont, the artist, and returns to Yosemite, the central personal conflict of the novel—between Zanita and the Professor—has not only entirely faded, but has now been turned on its head as the Professor has become the person most deeply sympathetic to Zanita. Undeterred by her abrasiveness and jealousy, the Professor resists the suspicion that Zanita has committed a murder-suicide when she and Mr. Egremont, her erstwhile lover who rejected her shortly before their death, are found dead in Yosemite. Instead the Professor carefully analyzes the material evidence and determines that "a series of accidents" caused them both to slip to their deaths. As Sylvia notes, "He always did take a different view of everything from every one."⁴¹ In this case, the Professor's skills of observation uncover an explanation overlooked by Kenmuir, Sylvia, and other denizens of Yosemite.

Needless to say, Yelverton could not have apprehended how *Zanita* would relate to the career of LeConte after 1870, when she met him in Yosemite and dreamed up the character of the Professor. Nevertheless, the novel offers a glimpse of how LeConte himself carved a niche as a public intellectual and built local support for the university through his activities in Yosemite, Oakland, and San Francisco. After his early tension with Muir over credit for the glacial theory of Yosemite's origins, LeConte steadily built a close friendship with the young

naturalist and eventually won his cooperation in a series of initiatives, including the Sierra Club, that linked the University of California's research mission to stewardship of the High Sierra as a colonial prize and public trust.

The Value of Roughing It: Yosemite as “Common Fund”

Starting in 1851, a systematic campaign of slaughter and dispossession by the California militia and United States Army drove many of the indigenous residents of Yosemite—the Ahwahneechee—from their homeland. The many who remained were relegated to the margins of many popular accounts of Yosemite—from *Zanita* to LeConte's journals to Muir's writings—and treated as part of the landscape rather than as people actively inhabiting the Valley. As Rebecca Solnit has put it, “the Ahwahneechee didn't disappear, they just became invisible.”⁴² In *Zanita*, the Indian residents of the Valley provide key evidence used by the Professor to build his theory about the circumstances of *Zanita*'s death, but they are nevertheless cast as mysterious thieves holding more in common with animals than white people.⁴³ LeConte and Muir likewise repeatedly positioned the Ahwahneechee as thieves, with Muir writing much more highly of the animals and plants in *My First Summer in the Sierra* than the Miwok people he encounters.⁴⁴ Muir, for example, wrote that “most Indians I have seen are not a whit more natural in their lives than we civilized whites. . . . The worst thing about them is their uncleanliness. Nothing truly wild is unclean.”⁴⁵ In his mode of address to “we civilized whites,” Muir makes clear that the reading public he imagined for himself did not include people of color, Native Americans, or, as he implies elsewhere, working class people uninterested in his “gospel” of Nature.⁴⁶ Rather, Muir banked his career on providing content for white readers in the Eastern United States, who came to California in droves to visit Yosemite.⁴⁷

For the next several decades, sustaining the tourism industry was a focal point of public policy regarding Yosemite. The tourists who invaded the Valley from the 1850s onward vastly outnumbered permanent residents of the Valley.⁴⁸ All parties were keenly aware that Yosemite's symbolic significance—or quite simply its fame—had created a series of expectations around the experience of camping and traveling in the High Sierra. Touristic expectations of witnessing grandeur structured almost every account of visiting Yosemite.⁴⁹ In his journal of 1870, LeConte opened the entry for his first day in Yosemite with the simple exclamation, “Yosemite today!” The same day he wrote to his wife to inform her that he had entered “the famous Yosemite.”⁵⁰ Likewise the actress Olive Logan noted that visiting Yosemite was “*de rigueur*” for tourists. As she wrote in *The Galaxy Magazine* in 1870, “No sooner do you announce to your friends in New York that you are going to California than they immediately cry out, ‘Ah, then you will see the Yo Semite!’” She added that few actual residents of California had visited—or were interested in visiting—the Valley. “Of the scores of people I met in San Francisco,” wrote Logan, “only two or three had been to Yo Semite.”⁵¹ Logan's jocular emphasis on the miserable stage coach ride into Yosemite and culture of tall tales surrounding tourism in the West anticipated the success of Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, which sold 75,000 copies within a year of its publication in 1872.

A former reporter in Nevada and then San Francisco, Twain wrote *Roughing It* shortly after the 1869 publication of *The Innocents Abroad*, which chronicled his travels to Europe and Asia Minor in a series of dispatches to the *Alta California*. Twain emphasized that *Roughing It* was neither a “pretentious history” nor a “philosophical dissertation,” but simply a story of “variegated vagabondizing.” As he notes near the end of the book:

Our wanderings were wide and in many directions; and now I could give the reader a vivid description of the Big Trees and the marvels of the Yo Semite—but what has this reader done to me that I should persecute him? I will deliver him into the hands of less conscientious tourists and take his blessing.⁵²

Clearly familiar with the high-minded language used by professors and tourists in their writings on Yosemite, Twain turned the expectations of aesthetic reverence and geological investigation in the High Sierra into a source of humor. Of one trip to Lake Mono, Twain describes finding petrified gulls' eggs while simultaneously mocking the unreliability of such discoveries, including his own. "How did they get there?" asks Twain, "I simply state the fact—for it is a fact—and leave the geological reader to crack the nut at his leisure and solve the problem after his own fashion."⁵³ In *Roughing It*, such "facts" are never what they seem, and in mocking them Twain delivered on the promise not to "goad" the reader with science. Indeed, Twain wrote that "the real grandeurs of the Pacific coast are not Yo Semite and the Big Trees," but rather the tall tales repeated endlessly throughout the region, particularly one oft-repeated anecdote about Horace Greeley leaving Carson City in a stage coach.⁵⁴

As illustrated by the narratives of both Logan and Twain, Yosemite had generated enough promotional material by the early 1870s that humorists could assume that readers would be familiar with the clichés of tourist literature. In visiting Yosemite, tourists and professors were seen as bringing readymade models of experience with them, whether in geological study of the rocks or touristic astonishment at the view. Both were also cast as outsiders coming to California to bank the experience—hence Logan's carefully chosen title, "Does it Pay to Visit Yo Semite?"—and leave. Josiah Whitney, for example, participated in the Geological Survey of California and published *The Yosemite Book* in 1868 before returning to his professorship at Harvard. Although both Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology recruited Muir, his growing profile as a nature writer hinged largely on his efforts to put down roots in Yosemite

that would outlast the expectations of a quick departure. He explained the situation to his lifelong friend, Jeanne Carr, in a letter addressing overtures from John D. Runkle (the president of M.I.T.) and Emerson to accept a professorship in Boston. Emerson, explained Muir, believed “that I will one day go to him and ‘*better men*’ in New England, or something to that effect. I feel like objecting in popular slang that I can’t see it.” He added that “Runkle wants to make a teacher of me, but I have been too long wild, too befogged to burn well in their patent, high-heated, educational furnaces.”⁵⁵

LeConte faced a similar dilemma in building support for the university and establishing his own profile as a public intellectual. By the time of his death in Yosemite in 1901, he was hailed on the front page of every San Francisco and Oakland newspaper as a local luminary, but as a newly arrived professor in 1869, he was almost totally unknown. Although his earliest camping trips gave rise to caricatures like that of *Zanita*, Yosemite became a critical site through which LeConte built his reputation as a teacher and geologist committed to public engagement beyond the classroom. He believed that scientific expertise in California was not a zero sum game, and that the larger challenge facing the university was to demonstrate the public utility of its activities. Although this included pushing back against instances of what he called “quackery” in the local press, LeConte devoted more of his efforts to building a network of allies outside the university—including amateur scientists like Muir and members of the California Academy of Sciences—through camping trips, public lectures, and other activities. Over the years, this put LeConte at odds with his colleagues, largely because of his refusal to abandon the eclecticism of antebellum natural history and adopt a focused research agenda. Indeed, LeConte’s published writings encompassed optics, philology, geology, zoology, evolutionary theory, religion, visual art, and more.⁵⁶ Despite its damage to his professional reputation, this

breadth served him well as an ambassador of the university to the Bay Area scientific club scene, where overspecialization was routinely condemned.

LeConte had been raised on a prosperous plantation in Georgia with over two hundred slaves. He had completed his graduate work at Harvard with Louis Agassiz, and after the Civil War wrote to Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution explaining that he was looking to escape what he called “Negro Supremacy” in Reconstruction South Carolina.⁵⁷ In response, Henry counseled him to put aside his nostalgia, explaining, “The South can never again be what it was. New habits, new thoughts and new men will have sway.”⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in 1892, LeConte wrote a tract, *The Race Problem in the American South*, which suggested a lasting commitment to white supremacy and nostalgia for white Southern heritage.⁵⁹ Published at a time when Reconstruction was being rolled back across the South through a terror campaign against black voters, LeConte argued that “the blacks as a whole are unworthy of the ballot” and praised what he called legitimate efforts “to diminish the incapable vote.”⁶⁰ LeConte’s views on racial hierarchy pervaded his writings—even a piece on “Domestic Ducks That Fly Abroad Like Pigeons” attributed the incomplete domestication of some ducks in the South to the idea that many “belonged to the negroes, and were tended with but little care.”⁶¹ As he put it in a *Popular Science Monthly* article, “There is little doubt that the survival of the weak and helpless, and the sustentation of the unfit and the vicious, are beginning to poison the blood and paralyze the energy of the race.”⁶² Far from marginalizing him, LeConte’s white supremacy echoed that of many other Californians and indeed contributed to California’s leading role in the eugenics movement after his death.⁶³

In 1870, eight students invited LeConte and Professor Frank Soulé, Jr., to join them on an expedition to Yosemite and the High Sierra in the summer following the first year of class at

the University of California. LeConte's role, as he described it in his journal, was that of "surgeon and scientific lecturer," and in fact he did compose a few formal lectures delivered to students and tourists around the campfire.⁶⁴ It was on this trip that LeConte met both Muir and Yelverton, and it turned out to be the beginning of a long association with Yosemite. As he recalled in his autobiography, "This trip was almost like an era in my life."⁶⁵ Soulé later wrote that the trip transformed his impression of his colleague. Far from appearing uncomfortable outside the classroom, LeConte shared all camp duties equally with the students, from baking bread to building fires. As Soulé wrote, "I was moved by the intense love of nature that saturated Doctor Joe's mind and soul. He loved all men and all things. Even the dust in the road, the weeds by the hedgerow, and the shrubs on the hillside attracted his attention and drew forth his analysis and deduction." He added that LeConte "took any good-natured joke upon himself in the best of temper."⁶⁶ Indeed, LeConte's journal of the trip included several passages that make fun of his own propensity for turning ordinary experiences into "investigations." For example, at one point he described the disappearance from camp of a bag of cheese and bacon as if it were a scientific conundrum. Although its cause would remain a mystery, he noted that "there are many hounds about the premises; this may furnish a key to the investigator." He pushed the joke further with a footnote providing "an additional fact in favor of the *hound theory*."⁶⁷

Through his willingness to make fun of himself and eschew the standard hierarchies for the duration of the trip, LeConte stumbled across a mode of intellectual sociability that could evade, for a while, the limitations of academic professionalism, in large part due to the fleeting character of the campfire. Explaining the expedition as a transitory community, LeConte wrote: "Our party is but a type of all earthly life; its elements gathered and organized for a brief space,

full of enjoyment and adventure, but swiftly hastening to be again dissolved and returned to the common fund from which it was drawn.”⁶⁸ The notion that the “elements” gathered around the campfire were drawn from a “common fund” was critical to the populist vision of the university that LeConte proposed to readers and listeners. Prioritizing social interactions above specialized research, LeConte expressed pleasure when the group’s conversations reached beyond his areas of expertise. As LeConte described one evening in the Valley:

After supper we lit cigarettes, gathered around the campfire, and conversed. Some question of the relative merits of novelists was started, and my opinion asked. By repeated questions I was led into quite a disquisition on art and literature, which lasted until bedtime. Before retiring, as usual, we piled huge logs on the camp-fire; then rolled ourselves in our blankets within reach of its warmth.⁶⁹

Here again LeConte blurred bodily and intellectual experience, avoiding the specifics of his “disquisition on art and literature” in favor of details such as the maintenance of the fire, lighting of cigarettes, location of the conversation, and warmth of the blankets. The reader can feel, taste, and smell the scene. Elsewhere LeConte offered a glimpse into the bonding of the group through a series of nicknames, including “Kangaroo,” “Our Poet,” “Samson Nipper,” and LeConte’s own nickname, “Don Quixote,” due to his being “long and lean and lantern-jawed, and in search of romantic adventure.”⁷⁰

Such was the model of intellectual life that LeConte cultivated over the next three decades at Berkeley. He became an enthusiastic member of several discussion clubs that brought faculty together with students and people outside the academy. Alongside literary societies like the Longfellow Memorial Association and general discussion groups like the Berkeley Club, LeConte actively participated in the Philosophical Union—a group created for graduates of the philosophy department who had pursued careers in other fields—and would later help bring William James and John Dewey to campus in 1897 and 1898 for well-attended public lectures.⁷¹

From his arrival in California until his death, LeConte gave “at least twenty” free lectures as part of the Mechanics Institute in San Francisco as well as numerous University Extension courses in San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles.⁷² His active involvement in campus life made him beloved by students despite the declining reputation of his research among his peers. For example, in response to criticism from local religious leaders regarding his attempts to reconcile evolution and religion, a weekly student newspaper, *The Berkeleyn*, defended him with extremely strong, even violent, language, decrying the “attacks on the teachings of our beloved Professor LeConte by certain barbarians in the world of thought” and calling for one critic to “be forcibly dragged from his den in the home for the feeble-minded, and placed on exhibition in the Anthropological Museum of the Midwinter Fair, where at stated hours he may babble and drool for his own satisfaction and the edification of our visitors.”⁷³ This use of disability as a vehicle for *ad hominem* attack on LeConte’s critics underscored not only the students’ own prejudice, but their sense of what their mentor would condone. Each element of the attack upheld the version of professorial masculinity—racial hierarchy, able-bodied physical exertion, aversion to mere exhibition—that LeConte put forth to build his public persona as a man of action, not just an absent-minded professor, largely through his activities in Yosemite and the High Sierra.

“You Can’t Humbug Me”: Yosemite as People’s Classroom

For the remainder of the nineteenth century, extracurricular, cross-generational camping trips involving professors and students became a Berkeley tradition. For many students, an expedition to Yosemite became a highlight of their college experience. For example, Charles Palache, an undergraduate during the late 1880s and early 1890s, wrote an autobiographical essay of his time at Berkeley that emphasized camping as the most significant aspect of his

education. According to Palache, “The great event of my college years was the horse back trip to the High Sierra with Professor LeConte at the end of my 2nd college year.”⁷⁴ Although, as Palache put it, “I came back from it well experienced in roughing it and taking care of myself in the open,” he reported learning “next to nothing” of geology. That he would call such a trip “the great event” of his time at Berkeley was not simply a matter of prioritizing social life, although he did see his relationship with LeConte—with its unique blend of friendship and scholarship—as something of a substitute for the fact that none of his scientific classmates had joined his fraternity. Rather, the trip awakened Palache to the idea that education might take place through social experiences as much as solitary work in the laboratory or library, an awakening with discursive echoes of the search for authentic, anti-modern experience identified in T.J. Jackson Lears’ pathbreaking book, *No Place of Grace*.⁷⁵ The expedition also made Palache a firm believer in the methodological value of fieldwork as opposed to theoretical reasoning. In subsequent summers, he took on increasingly demanding research assistantships, including one project in the Coastal Range that he called a “hateful dirty trip.”⁷⁶ Despite these difficulties, Palache pointed to his undergraduate exposure to fieldwork as a turning point in his career, which eventually took him to Harvard as a Professor of Mineralogy and to Alaska in 1899 as part of the Harriman Expedition with John Muir and two other students of LeConte’s: William Ritter and Charles Keeler.⁷⁷

LeConte’s own writings similarly emphasized the social dimensions of camping as a form of holistic experiential knowledge. He argued that beauty, for example, was contingent on actually visiting a place and, even better, sharing the experience with others. Although a place might be “picturesque,” beauty had as much to do with smells, sounds, and fellowship as sight—and hence a terrible stench, for example, could tarnish even the most visually magnificent

scenery.⁷⁸ After one particularly stunning vista, LeConte blurred the lines between visual and gustatory experience, explaining:

From this feast I went immediately to another, consisting of excellent bread and such delicious mutton chops! If any restaurant in San Francisco could furnish such, I am sure it would quickly make a fortune. Some sentimentalists seem to think that these two feasts are incompatible; that the enjoyment of the beautiful is inconsistent with voracious appetite for mutton. I do not find it so.⁷⁹

The metaphor of the “feast” figured visuality as something so visceral and intimate that it could be merged with the body like food.⁸⁰ Elsewhere in his journal he positioned ideas—not just beauty—as the product of shared, embodied experience. Over the course of one evening with Muir, for example, LeConte underscored the fluidity with which technical conversations about glacial formation could stem from, and be interwoven into, the physical challenges of hiking and climbing.⁸¹

By accepting that knowledge of a place or practice was contingent on physically visiting or trying it, and by simultaneously embracing the scientific method, LeConte was able to contrast his own work with the touristic culture of tall tales in which writers like Mark Twain, Olive Logan, and Ambrose Bierce thrived. In this way, LeConte built a reputation for himself as a reliable narrator who was comfortable outside the classroom. In his journal, LeConte mocked the myths about Lake Tahoe—including the notion “that it is impossible to swim in it” due to “diminished atmospheric pressure”—that had been propagated by “newspaper scientists, and therefore not doubted by newspaper readers.” He did so not through reasoned argument, but by stripping his clothes and diving straight into the lake as soon as his party arrived, proving the rumors wrong through the evidence of experience.⁸² If this notion of knowledge as experience cut against LeConte’s work in the laboratory, it had much in common with the emerging field sciences like ecology, which retained an emphasis on the importance of examining specimens or

phenomena in the context of whole ecosystems. It is no coincidence that during his early years in California, LeConte's primary research operated on two tracks: his geological investigations in Yosemite, and his optical research on blind spots, binocular vision, and illusions—carried out through homemade experiments at home and in the field—which together made the case that visuality was subjective and embodied.⁸³ In an echo of his attitude toward “newspaper scientists,” who counted on most of their readers to have never actually visited Lake Tahoe, LeConte had nothing but scorn for an unnamed photographer who saw Yosemite as little more than a visual commodity. “We met here,” wrote LeConte, “at the foot of the fall, a real typical specimen of a live Yankee. He has, he says, a panorama of Yosemite, which he expects to exhibit in the Eastern cities. It is evident that he is ‘doing’ Yosemite only for the purpose of getting materials of lectures to accompany his exhibitions.”⁸⁴ This passage encapsulated LeConte's strategy for distancing his own work as a scientist from the more facile experiences offered by the tourism industry.⁸⁵

At the same time, LeConte's description of the photographer as a “Yankee” was far from innocent, for the shadow side of his critique of “pure theory” was his nostalgia for a particular subject position: the antebellum gentleman scholar in the American South. His background in natural history left him with a commitment to unity and descriptive breadth that put him at odds with trends in higher education toward specialization. As a result, LeConte aspired to holistic knowledge drawn from all five senses but accepted without question the racial hierarchy that supported travel in Yosemite, particularly the numerous university camping expeditions that he held up as exemplary of populist educational practices.⁸⁶ In the journal of his 1870 trip, LeConte wrote about the Native inhabitants of Yosemite as if they were animals: “Several Indians visited us while at dinner. This is a favorite time for such visits. They know they will get something to

eat.”⁸⁷ In other trips he was accompanied by a Chinese cook, who his daughter Emma described in her own Yosemite journal as “our little Chinaman.”⁸⁸ Comfortable with the jingoism of white working class politics in California—including that of Denis Kearney’s Workingmen’s Party of California, which launched some of the most vocal attacks on the university during the 1870—LeConte saw no incompatibility between populism and white supremacy, supporting the policy of free tuition but vigorously opposing integration.

As portrayed by LeConte, Yosemite offered friendships and experiences not possible within the institutional confines of the academy. Although acknowledging the caricatured expectations of professorial behavior, he never cast his activities in Yosemite as contradictory or incompatible with his work in the classroom. Rather he wrote of it as a more egalitarian, fleeting, natural, and communal classroom, with the sheer “walls” of the Valley and “roof” of clouds and stars completing the metaphor of Yosemite as an outdoor schoolhouse for a different kind of education—a people’s classroom beyond the control of the University of California. During the 1870 expedition, he offered numerous impromptu lectures despite operating wholly outside the infrastructure of courses, credits, and schedules.⁸⁹ His lessons included formal lectures such as “Glaciers and the Glacial Phenomena of the Sierra” that he prepared in camp (and included in his journal) in direct response to questions raised during the journey. At night, in “University Camp,” his companions asked him “many questions about stars and nebulae and spectrum analysis, and shooting-stars and meteoric stones, which led to quite a dissertation on these subjects.”⁹⁰ Despite such references to academic life, which subtly mocked his own role in the expedition, LeConte contrasted himself with two professors he met on the journey, Albert Church and Henry Kendrick, both of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. LeConte referred to the two men as “very gentlemanly in spirit, polished and urbane,” but not traveling

“in the rough way as we are.”⁹¹ He likewise describes meeting “two ladies from Oakland” whose “little petticoated forms, so clean and white,” contrasted with the crude manners and bedraggled appearance of his compatriots.⁹²

This is not to say the expedition represented LeConte’s vision for the university itself. Status as a “gentleman” (shorthand for white people with “correct speech and manners” and familiarity with the classics) remained an implicit, though somewhat flexible, requirement for faculty appointment at the University of California from its founding through the 1910s.⁹³ But as a space outside the campus, and an example of public land held in trust, Yosemite provided an opportunity to demonstrate an alternative model of scholarly behavior and, further, take a stand against land monopolies. Shortly before California’s Second Constitutional Convention of 1879, which restricted corporate power but dramatically strengthened the university, Denis Kearney cast the Sierra Nevada as one of the few havens for white working people in California, stating in a Workingman’s Party Address: “The poor Laborer can find no resting place, save on the barren mountain, or in the trackless desert. Money monopoly has reached its grandest proportions. Here, in San Francisco, the palace of the millionaire looms up above the hovel of the starving poor with as wide a contrast as anywhere on earth.”⁹⁴ Likewise in *Progress and Poverty*, which sold millions of copies, the self-taught printer Henry George condemned the pernicious consequences of land monopolies in California, where disputes over land and corporate power were arguably more acute than anywhere else in the nation.⁹⁵ For the duration of the 1870s, among the paramount goals of the University of California was to distance itself from Southern Pacific Railroad and avoid getting swept up in the popular agitation against it.

Although his political views were more conservative than writers like George, John Muir became an exemplar of Yosemite as a people’s classroom, largely through the symbolic power of

his image as “a prophet standing before unsullied nature.”⁹⁶ In his first encounter with Muir, LeConte found him to be “a man in a rough miller’s garb, whose intelligent face and earnest, clear blue eye excited my interest.”⁹⁷ Muir immediately impressed him with the idea that expertise need not reside in the academy:

Mr. Muir is a gentleman of rare intelligence, of much knowledge of science, particularly of botany, which he has made a specialty. He has lived several years in the valley, and is thoroughly acquainted with the mountains in the vicinity. A man of so much intelligence tending a sawmill! . . . This is California!⁹⁸

Over the course of the 1870s, partly at the behest of Jeanne Carr, his lifelong friend and mentor, Muir carefully built this image as a mountain prophet in numerous articles for *Overland Monthly* and, especially after 1875, other magazines as well.⁹⁹ According to Donald Worster, Muir’s publications helped the editors of *Overland Monthly* “promote a post-frontier, post-materialist identity for San Francisco that could redeem it from the chaotic decades of the gold rush era. The distant mountains, they hoped, could come to stand for more than quick, easy wealth; they could provide the richness of beauty, a fund of knowledge, and magnificent hiking.”¹⁰⁰

Like LeConte’s endeavors, Muir’s writings repeatedly cast Yosemite as a sort of laboratory for the people, a classroom without walls or entrance requirements. In 1869, a few months before the University of California opened for classes, Muir accepted a position as an manager of shepherds for a flock that would spend the summer pasturing in and around Yosemite. In his journal of the experience, published in 1911 as *My First Summer in the Sierra* and dedicated to the Sierra Club, Muir meditated on the “great mountain manuscripts” that he yearned to read.¹⁰¹ Again and again, he wrote of his desire to remain in the Valley forever, freely pursuing his “studies” of its flora, fauna, and rocks. As he noted in one entry:

How interesting everything is! Every rock, mountain, stream, plant, lake, lawn, forest, garden, bird, beast, insect seems to call and invite us to come and learn something of its history and relationship. But shall the poor ignorant scholar be

allowed to try the lessons they offer? It seems too great and good to be true.¹⁰²

Behind Muir's reference to himself as a "poor ignorant scholar" is a preoccupation with the precariousness of his access to the park's lessons, not due to economic or political barriers but rather the limits of his body. Indeed, Muir specifically detached the problem of accessibility from the conditions of his employment, noting that his employer Pat Delaney sympathized with and enthusiastically supported his "wild notions and rambles and studies."¹⁰³ Instead, like LeConte, he turned the problem into an issue of physical endurance across time and space. Of his immediate surroundings, for example, he celebrated the prospect of "sketching" and "studying" the topography and animals. But of "the vast mountains in the distance," he asked, "shall I be allowed to enter into their midst and dwell with them?"¹⁰⁴

Muir's urgency to explore the Valley—his premonition that his body would not allow a sufficiently thorough investigation—repeatedly collapsed into a yearning for death, leaving a whiff of suicide hanging over *My First Summer in the Sierra*. This was a staple of the literature of deep ecology, from the suggestion of murder-suicide in *Zanita* to the mockery of the trope in *Roughing It*, when Twain surrenders (in jest) to dangerous carriage rides and the prospect of starvation on an island in Mono Lake.¹⁰⁵ For Muir, who never killed himself but seemed to delight in putting himself in situations that promised death, suicide promised the merging of self with nature. He writes of Yosemite Creek, for example, "It draws me so strongly, I would make any sacrifice to try to read its lessons."¹⁰⁶ Likewise he frightens a bear and risks getting mauled for little more than curiosity, noting, "I thought I should like to see his gait in running."¹⁰⁷ And in a passage that echoed the opening of *Zanita*, when Sylvia Brown glimpses Kenmuir on a cliff and mistakenly thinks he is about to kill himself, Muir describes inching along the edge of a waterfall under the "spell" of "Yosemite scenery." After assessing that his climb was far too

dangerous, he writes, “I therefore concluded not to venture further, but did nevertheless.” This loss of control of his own body represented precisely the anti-humanist rejection of subjectivity that offered, in Muir’s words, “enjoyment enough to kill if that were possible.”¹⁰⁸ He added, “I’m glad I’m not great enough to be missed in the busy world.”¹⁰⁹

For Muir, then, the education promised by his “studies” in Yosemite involved not only developing theories of geological origins, but learning to embrace a release of the self into bodily experience, allowing his “whole body” to feel beauty, not “by the eyes alone, but equally through all one’s flesh.”¹¹⁰ This process included personification and emulation of plants and animals, from enjoying the company of “plant people” to pausing for a “sermon” by a grasshopper that Muir imagined would “cuddle down on the forest floor and die like the leaves and flowers.”¹¹¹ Throughout *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Muir searched for ever stronger language to express his identification with Yosemite and desire to sacrifice himself into its landscape. “Gladly,” he wrote, “if I could, I would live forever on pine buds, however full of turpentine and pitch, for the sake of this grand independence.”¹¹² Here Muir verged on treating the Valley as a sort of fantasy prison. He continued later:

The forests, too, seem kindly familiar, and the lakes and meadows and glad singing streams. I should like to dwell with them forever. Here with bread and water I should be content. Even if not allowed to roam and climb, tethered to a stake or tree in some meadow or grove, even then I should be content forever.¹¹³

Whether through death or imprisonment, Muir rejected the humanist emphasis on freedom and life in favor of a radical blurring of the human and non-human world. What remained paramount was the specificity of place and organic interrelationship of all things within it.¹¹⁴ This valuation, notes David Mazel, stemmed not from any inherent characteristics of Yosemite, but rather from Muir’s emerging ideological project of conservation. “Far from being ‘natural,’” argues Mazel, “the Yosemite that became the initial object of institutional environmentalism

owes its modern ‘nature’ to a complex intersection of aesthetic, sociological, ecological, and other discourses attendant upon these events.”¹¹⁵ Among the “other discourses” rarely noted were the debates over education and academic legitimacy raging in San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley that Muir, LeConte, and others adjudicated in Yosemite.

Muir himself recognized as much in his journal. Among his companions in Yosemite in the summer of 1869 was a shepherd named Billy who had little patience for Muir’s pressure to embrace Yosemite as a democratic classroom. Early in the summer, Billy and other shepherds gather for dinner “chatting about such camp studies as sheep-feed, mines, coyotes, bears, or adventures during the memorable gold days of pay-dirt.”¹¹⁶ These “camp studies,” however, were not what Muir had in mind for fully experiencing the landscape. Thus during one lull in the summer, Muir approached Billy and offered “to watch the sheep for a day, while he should enjoy what tourists come from all over the world to see.” In so doing Muir “pressed Yosemite upon him like a missionary offering the Gospel, but he would have none of it.”¹¹⁷ This widely-cited turn of phrase demonstrated the extent to which Muir had transformed Yosemite into a thing—a commodity and ideology rather than what he recognized to be, in more dispassionate moments, “one of many Yosemite valleys.”¹¹⁸ As for Billy, he recognized as much, retorting with a question that underscored the extent to which Yosemite had already been transformed into a symbol and discursive construct, an imitation of a people’s classroom rather than a place of worthwhile meditation:

What is Yosemite but a cañon—a lot of rocks—a hole in the ground . . . There is nothing worth seeing anywhere, only rocks, and I see plenty of them here. Tourists that spend their money to see rocks and falls are fools, that’s all. You can’t humbug me.¹¹⁹

Far from taking Billy’s critique seriously, Muir dismissed it out of hand, writing, “Such souls, I suppose, are asleep, or smothered and befogged beneath mean pressures and cares.”¹²⁰ Even as

he penned these words, however, similar arguments were being raised against the University of California—arguments that threatened to close the campus. Their funding dependent on public support, the University’s administrators could not so easily turn away the farmers, mechanics, and other workers who wanted a utilitarian institution that would serve their own vision of education rather than the abstractions of liberal education. Yosemite remained a potent vehicle with which LeConte and others could defend the public value of higher education, but in order to do so, they had to move beyond the promise of experiential ecstasies to more concrete practices of research, teaching, and activism.

Challenging the “New Education”: Populist Critiques of the University of California

In 1872, with ambitious plans for building a research-oriented university, Daniel Coit Gilman left his position with the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale to become President of the University of California. In his inaugural address in Oakland, “The Building of the University,” Gilman aggressively sought to give his plans a populist veneer. The university, he argued, “must be adapted to this people, to their public and private schools, to their peculiar geographical position, to the requirements of their new society and its undeveloped resources.” Science, he continued, “stands ready to do far more for the community than ever yet, if only you will encourage her wholesome efficiency.” Even as he emphasized practical education and public utility, however, he also expressed the rudiments of the plan for postgraduate education that he would later carry out at Johns Hopkins University. He drew a sharp distinction between young students newly out of high school, and advanced students “who tastes, talents, and wants are specialized,” arguing that undergraduates required more structure while graduate students needed the freedom to pursue original research.¹²¹

As Gilman sensed, but did not fully appreciate, he was stepping into a firestorm that had been burning since the establishment of the university. Within months of the opening of classes in Oakland in 1869, the Regents had abolished tuition in response to the popular outcry for ensuring broad access to the university, which had been established with the mandate to serve “the industrial classes of California.”¹²² In 1870, the same summer that LeConte, Yelverton, and Muir first met in Yosemite, the board of trustees of the Mechanics’ Institute in San Francisco adopted a memorial to the State legislature urging that the university be reconstituted to better serve the interests of farmers and industrial workers. The Mechanics’ Institute—still open and active in the twenty-first century—was formed in 1854 as a library and meeting hall “to serve the vocational needs of out-of-work gold miners.”¹²³ Its trustees believed the university to be hostile to vocational training and oriented to serve children of the affluent who would be drawn to classical and literary courses. The 1870 memorial emphasized the location of the university, seeking to locate a significant portion of its offerings in San Francisco. Staying in Berkeley, they argued:

will operate to exclude from their benefits all persons except the very small number of youths having the means and inclination to incur the heavy expenditure incident to a residence in that immediate vicinity; and as such persons may naturally be expected to give preference to the academic, or merely literary course of studies, the colleges of applied sciences, if established at Berkeley, will become practically useful to the public.¹²⁴

The memorial did not rely on caricatures of buffoonish professors, but rather represented an alternative populist vision for the University. In offering such a vision, the memorialists sought to enforce the spirit of the 1862 Morrill Act and 1868 Organic Act establishing the university, both of which could be interpreted as calling for vocational as well as liberal education.

When a legislative committee charged with responding to the memorial concluded that the university should remain in Berkeley, it did little to quell discontent with the fact that the

university was making virtually no effort to establish vocational courses in the agricultural and mechanic arts. It was in this context that Gilman assumed the presidency, and the image of aging professors detached from practical concerns—and preoccupied with “indoor philosophy” rather than the concerns of working people—grew more potent. Gilman’s speech, notes Henry May, “was too elitist a vision for much of the California public.”¹²⁵ Within two years, in 1874, a group called the Mechanics’ Deliberative Assembly joined with the California State Grange to press forward another memorial, this one much more radical in its aspirations. Seeking a greater voice in administration for working people, the memorial’s goal was “to secure to the industrial classes, through the State University, its educational advantages.” Their main complaint was that the university had made absolutely no effort to establish vocational courses for industrial workers. Indeed, the university’s professor of Physics and Mechanics was John LeConte, who had no interest whatsoever in the mechanic arts as understood by the petitioners. Furthermore, the university’s few agricultural offerings were focused on lecture-based theoretical instruction rather than practice in the field. The memorialists explicitly rejected the suggestion that they were attempting to subvert the liberal arts, arguing instead that a balanced curriculum would better serve the entire population of California. The purpose of the Morrill Act, they noted, had been “to promote the liberal *and practical* education of the industrial classes *in their several pursuits*.”¹²⁶ As a symbolic reminder of this purpose, they called for a sign to be erected on “the main building of the University, marking it for all time with the words, ‘AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.’”¹²⁷

The proposal of the memorialists cut directly against Gilman’s vision for a university focused on the production of original research. Angered by the onslaught of public criticism, Gilman resigned his post and accepted the presidency of Johns Hopkins University, a move that

would be mourned by later partisans of the University of California as an unmitigated loss.¹²⁸ In fact, Gilman's vision eventually carried the day. The road not taken was rather the vision of the Grangers and Mechanics' Institute, which represented a carefully considered vision of education that one defender of the 1874 Memorial called the "new education." The writer, G.W. Pinney, published a pamphlet, *The New Education: Objections to the System as Taught in the University of California*, that echoed and amplified many of the points made by the farmers and mechanics. Pinney argued that the University of California was operating under the guise of the "new education"—by which he meant the idea of colleges for "mechanics, farmers, laborers"—but in fact had built a curriculum geared toward doctors, lawyers, and other professions. The whole purpose of the Morrill Act, in Pinney's view, was to "work a long desired revolution in the leading pursuits of the nation, and establish their claims to a just and equal rank with the learned professions."¹²⁹ By combining liberal education with practical training, Pinney envisioned not simply the production of more workers, but a fundamental change in the class status of these fields. Building a college to serve a broader swath of the public promised to open "avenues to cultivated society," "acquaintance with men of eminence," and "intimacy in personal relations with men of education" to farmers and mechanics. At the same time, Pinney argued that farmers and mechanics would never embrace the university and its potential benefits without a wholesale revolution in teaching methods to emphasize practice over theoretical instruction. As he explained:

The lessons of the lecture room must be illustrated in the field and the workshop. These are the real laboratories where the student can practice and observe the benefits of applied science—the only means by which he can make an accomplishment of an otherwise hard and laborious occupation. Nothing less than a thorough, radical course of instruction can ever convince the farmers and mechanics of the utility of the new system.¹³⁰

This call for vocational training and fieldwork continued to be sounded for the rest of the decade, placing pressure on the university to demonstrate the public utility of its course offerings.

During this time, nearly all courses in the natural sciences were taught by Joseph LeConte, who faced particularly acute pressure in this regard, and thus felt the sting of caricatures like that of Professor Brown, his alter ego in *Zanita*, which was published concurrently with the Granger's Memorial.

Among the strongest critics of Gilman and the Regents was Ezra Carr, a former professor of Muir's at the University of Wisconsin who had accepted a position at the University of California as the Professor of Agriculture before being fired in 1874, largely due to his support of the Grangers. Carr published a pamphlet that reprinted the memorial of the Grangers and Mechanics, and added accusations of misconduct by the Regents. The crux of his complaint was that the Regents were responsible for a failure of public trust by shortchanging the School of Agriculture:

We have thus far presented the anomaly of an institution created by a public fund, endowed from the public treasury, supported by public taxation . . . which is to all intents and purposes a private institution, beyond the reach of penalties, of the press, or of public censure for malfeasance in office.¹³¹

Despite the support of figures like Carr, many perceived the complaints of the farmers and mechanics as a curiosity of California political culture that risked ending its experiment with serious higher education. In 1874, the *Atlantic Monthly* reported on what it called “an interesting discussion in California respecting the scope of university education, which is not yet closed.” After several paragraphs detailed the university's great “prospects” for becoming a leading institution—books, professors, philanthropy, legislative support—the article shifted abruptly to the ominous assertion that “there is a serious danger” to the university's future. In California, explained the *Atlantic*, the state legislature “is supreme, having in its hands a despotic power

such as kings and parliaments have never possessed in the management of colleges and universities.” Although “nominally” reflecting “the supremacy of the people,” the legislature in giving consideration to the views of the Grangers and mechanics risked supporting “the supremacy of ignorant and prejudiced men, acting in haste, under personal pique, and without full consideration of the consequences which are involved.” The *Atlantic* went on to misconstrue the basis of the petitions, asserting that the farmers and mechanics wanted the university to “keep its standard so low that those who have spent their vital force in muscular exertion shall not be dismissed or disciplined because their cerebral action is feeble and confused.”¹³²

The complaints against the university culminated in the Constitutional Convention of 1878-1879, when proposals were considered to radically change the governance structure of the university or possibly even abolish it.¹³³ Aside from education, the driving force behind the effort to draft a new Constitution was widespread opposition to Central Pacific Railroad’s monopolistic control of land and state power, and part of the University’s challenge was to disentangle itself from the Railroad, which was arguably its most powerful supporter.¹³⁴ As President of the University, John LeConte (Joseph’s brother) was asked to submit a report on behalf of the Regents justifying the university’s expenditures. His report emphasized the critical step of abolishing tuition, stating that in its first decade, the Regents and faculty had established “an institution of high grade . . . in which instruction is imparted in all branches of culture and useful knowledge, free to all residents of California, both male and female.”¹³⁵ Appended to the report was a letter from Eugene Hilgard, Professor of Agriculture, who passionately argued for the legitimacy of his lecture-based teaching methods. In so doing, he drew on the language of Pinney’s pamphlet, which argued for changing class valences of agriculture as a vocation. As Hilgard wrote, “Whenever farming comes to be a learned profession amongst us, and to be

considered as such, young men will not need to be surrounded by a dense ‘agricultural atmosphere’ in order to keep them to their profession.”¹³⁶ Ultimately, the adopted draft of the Constitution included a provision protecting the independence of the University of California, leaving the supporters of research-based higher education in California a much stronger position than ever before. It affirmed, “The University of California shall constitute a public trust,” and guaranteed that it would be free from legislative interference.¹³⁷

New Avenues of Fellowship: The University of California and the Sierra Club

Over the years, several journalists and historians of the university dismissed the concerns of the Grangers as misguided.¹³⁸ As the university grew more powerful, teleological readings of its history framed the petitions of the 1870s as worth remembering only as examples of nearly-averted disaster. In 1893, the *Berkeleyan*, a weekly student newspaper, cast the movement as a failure and a cautionary tale about the precariousness of the university’s public support.

We are all too young to remember the Granger’s Movement . . . but we are not too young to read about it, and keep its terrors constantly in our imagination, to act as a wholesome restraint on our ebullient hate of our next-door-neighbor classes. At that time the enemies of higher liberal education almost carried the day against the University, and we narrowly escaped becoming an insignificant ‘cow-college,’ instead of a University that has won respect throughout the country. We must always remember that our support comes from the people, and, therefore, we must make the people our friends.”¹³⁹

This discursive positioning of the movement as a populist terror demonstrates the extent to which the fears of the memorialists had been realized. Despite the abolition of tuition, the University of California had begun to cater more to wealthier students who would nod in agreement to the derisive reference to becoming an “insignificant ‘cow-college.’”¹⁴⁰ Increasingly rare were stories like that of Josiah Royce, the Harvard philosopher and one of the earliest graduates of the University of California who had grown up in a small mining town where he was homeschooled

by his mother.¹⁴¹ To the writers of the *Berkeleyan*, the lesson of the populist petitions of the 1870s was not to take seriously the issue of educational access, but rather to avoid openly lashing out against their “next-door-neighbor classes” for fear of sparking a backlash.

With the immediate threat of populist complaints held in check, a new type of public engagement began to emerge in the form of white collar discussion clubs. Like the University Camping Expeditions to Yosemite in the 1870s and 1880s, these clubs helped demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the relevance of academic study outside the classroom. Even as his professional reputation among fellow scholars declined, Joseph LeConte was a central figure in the web of social relationship that sustained many of these clubs. Since the 1870s, LeConte had grown close to the landscape artist William Keith, who became a leading activist and supporter of young artists who gathered in his San Francisco studio, among them the biologist-turned-poet Charles Keeler, a former student of LeConte’s. When in Oakland, Keith, LeConte, and Muir met often in attorney and historian Theodore Hittell’s family home, which served as a sort of salon.¹⁴² Theodore’s brother, John S. Hittell, wrote one of the earlier Yosemite guide books in 1868, *Yosemite: Its Wonders and Its Beauties*, and the group made several trips to Yosemite over the final three decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁴³

In an unpublished account of one such trip to Yosemite in 1875, Keith reflected on his struggle to “leave the studio behind” and experience the place on its own terms.¹⁴⁴ Eventually Keith grew skeptical of grandiose claims about the Valley’s magnificence. “Yosemite,” he wrote in 1882, “doesn’t say much to me. It’s Nature on stilts.”¹⁴⁵ He came to believe that the best way to avoid letting visual conventions determine his experience of place was to seek more modest locales. As Keeler later explained: “Keith draws all his greatest inspirations from Berkeley, and says he doesn’t need to go any farther than his back yard to find pictures to

paint.”¹⁴⁶ Keith discussed his evolving views of Yosemite in a public lecture in Berkeley in 1888. As the *Daily Alta California* described the event:

On Wednesday afternoon, under the auspices of the Longfellow Society in Berkeley, Mr. Keith, the artist, gave an exceedingly interesting talk on the art of landscape painting. The assembly hall was crowded by University students and other auditors. The speaker said that when he first began to paint he tried to get on to the canvas all the lurid skies and high mountains that he could crowd in, but now he confined himself to the simplest subjects.¹⁴⁷

Keith’s argument for the virtues of painting Berkeley itself reflected a more jaded attitude toward Yosemite. Keith was pushing back against a sharp ontological division between Yosemite and Berkeley, sensing problems with, as one scholar puts it, creating “inviolable wilderness preserves in areas where people are largely excluded while overlooking the desecration of environments where we live and work.”¹⁴⁸

Keith’s turn to local subjects put him at odds with his close friend John Muir. Not long after Keith described his evolving view of Yosemite to a crowded Berkeley auditorium, Muir took Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *Century* magazine, on a camping trip to Yosemite—a trip commonly cited as sparking the plan for Muir and Johnson’s publicity campaign urging the creation of a larger Yosemite National Park. By publishing in a national magazine, Muir made a telling calculation about the receptivity of California audiences to his preservationist message. As Michael Cohen explains, “Johnson and Muir directed their rhetoric almost entirely to the urban East, rather than to rural or western audiences, for whom the aesthetic argument carried little interest in comparison to arguments based on economic development.”¹⁴⁹ The creation of the Sierra Club in 1892 represented a merging of these competing visions. Although Muir was appointed president of the club and remained its symbolic center of gravity, the impetus for the club came largely from professors and students at the University of California.¹⁵⁰ LeConte, Keith, Hittell, and Keeler were all charter members of the club. Muir’s political aims differed

greatly from other charter members, many of whom saw it as a social and educational venture as much as, if not more than, an activist group.

According to Michael Smith, the Sierra Club offered Berkeley scientists a chance to popularize “their knowledge of the region by writing descriptions of excursions that included information on the natural features of the area.”¹⁵¹ Such a mission corresponded with the activities of many other such clubs in Berkeley at the time, including the Philosophical Union, Zoological Club, Longfellow Society, Evolution Club, and Religion Club, all of which involved a combined educational and social mission.¹⁵² Indeed, in 1893 the *Berkeleyan* reprinted an article from the *Sierra Club Bulletin* and included a note urging students to join the new club, which it noted “was originated by alumni and students of the University.” Far from emphasizing wilderness preservation, the *Berkeleyan* explained that the “purpose of the club is to collect and disseminate information concerning our mountains . . . Every student at all interested in mountaineering should help so worthy a society by making application for membership.”¹⁵³ The Sierra Club’s origins in the Berkeley discussion club scene help explain its push for treating Yosemite as a public classroom—a laboratory for geological, aesthetic, and botanical education for the people of California. In an indication of how deeply he had embraced the idea of outdoor education as an escape from the perils of indoor philosophy, Joseph LeConte’s writings on education and nature during this time utilize language drawn directly from the refrain of the Granger petitions for educating both “hand” and “mind.” In one article on education reform, LeConte asserted that “Sense-training and hand-training must go hand in hand with mind-training—observing and doing must co-operate with thinking.” He went on to argue that instruction in natural history in public schools required “field work as well as laboratory work—and field work means much time, small classes and many teachers.”¹⁵⁴

Such a push corresponded with Muir's belief that tourism in Yosemite could strengthen the base of support for its preservation. As Tom Turner writes, "Muir, along with the university contingent at Berkeley, was strongly convinced that only people familiar with an area would be passionate defenders of it."¹⁵⁵ Although this strategy was built on the University of California's three-decade presence in Yosemite, it was by no means a serious engagement with farmers, mechanics, and other populist critics. Rather, the Sierra Club's activism turned the gaze of Berkeley's scientists eastward toward affluent tourists outside California. Although both Yosemite and the University of California were protected as public trusts by the State of California, one of the goals of the Berkeley professors involved with the Sierra Club was to push for the recession of the Yosemite Valley from California to the federal government, thereby uniting the areas encompassed by the 1864 grant with the larger Yosemite National Park established in 1890. In addition to Muir's advocacy in *Century*, several professors lobbied the California legislature to pass a bill allowing the recession, as did Southern Pacific Railroad, which sought to protect its stake in Yosemite tourism.¹⁵⁶

The partnership with Southern Pacific was anathema to the working people who resented the its power in Sacramento. Nevertheless, the Sierra Club embraced the railroad's cooperation in both the recession struggle and its efforts to prevent the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley to bring water to San Francisco. The construction of an Aquifer was vigorously supported by both developers and working people in San Francisco who saw no other way to provide water to the city. It was supported as well by Benjamin Ide Wheeler, the President of the University of California, who recognized the danger of associating the university with anti-utilitarian positions. Although the Sierra Club lost the battle for Hetch Hetchy, it did succeed in securing the transfer of Yosemite from California to the United States in 1906. Casting local opinion aside, the Sierra

Club's advocacy marked a turning point in the political vision of its members away from local publics. Yosemite, they argued, was a public trust that transcended local politics—a classroom for communing with nature, not a resource vulnerable to extraction.

By contrast, the University of California aggressively sought to build a foundation of popular support, preventing a recurrence of the conflicts of the 1870s by extending its reach to all corners of the State and embracing the ethos of the university as a “people’s classroom.” One telling example was its partnership with Southern Pacific Railroad to operate agricultural demonstration trains in the early twentieth century. As Robert Orsi notes:

Many Californians perceived both railroad and university as large, elitist, centralized, monolithic, and ominous concentrations of power, symbolic of the modern, large-scale organizations produced by industrialization. Operating as they did at the state, national, and even international levels and subject to little local control, railroad and university also appeared to many as outsiders, treading on local prerogatives.¹⁵⁷

Recognizing their mutual public image problems, the university and railroad joined together to operate blue-and-gold festooned trains—a “university on wheels”—between 1908 and 1912 that offered exhibits and lessons on scientific agriculture.¹⁵⁸ Together with creation of a Farm School at Davis, these trains gestured to the nineteenth-century demands from the State Grange for a more robust agricultural curriculum. But far from representing a turn toward activism, the growth of the University of California into a comprehensive network represented a shift toward efficient corporate governance providing services to an array of stakeholders. With the educational functions of the university segregated among agricultural schools in Davis and Riverside, a branch campus in Los Angeles, and a maritime research station on the coast of La Jolla, the pressure on individual professors to focus on original research increased, leaving less room for the political activism that had marked Berkeley’s first generation of professors. As Michael Smith notes, “The scientists who replaced them had been trained to view social activism

as unprofessional.”¹⁵⁹ With intellectual life at the main Berkeley campus increasingly focused on research, public intellectuals unaffiliated with the university filled the role in Bay Area public culture that had once been occupied by celebrity teachers such as Joseph LeConte. It was in this context that the region was hit with the devastating Earthquake and Fire of 1906, dramatically reshaping the terrain—both physical and discursive—on which California’s intellectuals connected with their publics, old and new.

Notes

Portions of this chapter were delivered to the Western History Association annual meeting on October 14, 2010, under the title “Yosemite and the Intersections of Art and Science.”

¹ Act of July 2, 1862 (Morrill Act), Public Law 37-108; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1996; Record Group 11; General Records of the United States Government; National Archives.

² Christopher Newfield argues that the Morrill Act “gave a new and lasting momentum to the idea of college education for a growing middle class.” Newfield, Ivy and Industry: Business and the American University, 1880-1980 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 26. Scott Casper likewise positions the Morrill Act as part of the “massive growth in public education and other forms of schooling in the United States” from 1840 to 1880. Casper, “Introduction,” in Casper, et al., eds., A History of the Book in American: Volume 3: The Industrial Book, 1840-1880 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 31. John Thelan, on the other hand, contends that the effects of the Act have been “misunderstood or exaggerated.” Thelan, A History of American Higher Education (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 76. Michael Smith adds that the Morrill Act was the “first sign that California might participate in the national transformation of academic science.” Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 124. See also John Aubrey Douglass, The California Idea and American Higher Education: 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), and Edward Danforth Eddy, Jr., Colleges for Our Land and Time: The Land-Grant Idea in American Education (New York: Harper Brothers, 1956).

³ “An Act Authorizing a Grant to the State of California of the ‘Yo-Semite Valley’ and of the Land Embracing the ‘Mariposa Big Tree Grove,’” June 30, 1864 (13 Stat. 325), in Lary Dilsaver, ed., America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 11.

⁴ Explaining why moving north had not seemed feasible either, LeConte added: “I was practically cut off from intercourse with Eastern scientific men and had to work alone.” Joseph LeConte, The Autobiography of Joseph LeConte (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), 239, 298. See also Lester Stephens, Joseph LeConte: Gentle Prophet of Evolution (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 104-8.

⁵ Jefferson Davis to Mary Graham, February 2, 1889, Box 1, LeConte Family Additions, MSS C-B 1014, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley California.

⁶ See, among many other example, Joseph LeConte, A Journal of Ramblings through the High Sierra of California (New York: Sierra Club, 1971 ed.), Charles Palache, “Autobiography—College,” ca. 1940, MSS C-D 5193, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, and William Keith, “An Artist’s Trip in the Sierra,” unpublished manuscript, 1875, Box 4, MSS C-B 595, Keith-McHenry-Pond Family Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Several excursions in the Coastal Range are listed in University Chronicle 1, no. 1 (February 1898): 95.

⁷ John Muir, Memorandum of after-dinner remarks at Harvard University, 1896, in William Badè, The Life and Letters of John Muir, Vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 253.

⁸ Muir's account matches that of James Bradley Thayer, a member of Emerson's party, in his reminiscence of the trip published in 1884. Thayer described Muir as "an interesting young fellow, of real intelligence and character, a botanist mainly," who had studied "a year or two at Madison." Despite these words of praise, Thayer found Muir's suggestion of a camping trip to be ridiculous, stating: "Occasionally [Muir] rambled among the mountains, and camped out for months; he urged Mr. Emerson, with an amusing zeal, to stay and go off with him on such a trip." James Bradley Thayer, A Western Journey with Mr. Emerson (Boston: Little Brown, 1884), 89-90. See also William Deverell, "'Niagara Magnified': Finding Emerson, Muir, and Adams in Yosemite," in Amy Scott, ed., Yosemite: Art of an American Icon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 9-11, and Eric Rutkow, American Canopy: Trees, Forests, and the Making of a Nation (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 145-6.

⁹ John Muir, Our National Parks (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), in Muir, Nature Writings (New York: Library of America, 1997), 787-788. Despite Muir's disappointment with Emerson's reluctance to go camping, he took solace in the thought that "the trees had not gone to Boston, nor the birds" (789).

¹⁰ Wisconsin's model, coined the "Wisconsin Idea" in 1904 by university president Charles Van Hise, oriented the university toward solving public problems. See Lincoln Steffens, "Sending a State to College: What the University of Wisconsin Is Doing For Its People," American Magazine 67 (February 1909): 349-364, and J. David Hoeveler, Jr., "The University and the Social Gospel: The Intellectual Origins of the 'Wisconsin Idea,'" Wisconsin Magazine of History 59, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 282-298.

¹¹ John Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra (New York: Modern Library, 2003 ed.), 239-250.

¹² Whitney is referred to as the "ruling potentate of California rocks" in Donald Worster, A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 194.

¹³ For details on the dispute and its twentieth-century adjudication, see Dennis Dean, "John Muir and the Origin of Yosemite Valley," Annals of Science 48 (1991): 453-485. Dean refers to Muir as a "tatterdemalion vagrant" who was an "unexpectedly effective dissenter" to Whitney's theory. See also John Muir, Studies in the Sierra (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1950).

¹⁴ One guidebook for tourists calls the dispute "one of the classic amateur-beats-the-pro tales of geology." James Kaiser, Yosemite: The Complete Guide (Chicago: Destination Press, 2007), 55. The disagreement is mentioned as well in Lonely Planet Yosemite, Sequoia, and King's Canyon National Parks, 3rd Edition (Lonely Planet, 2012), 204, and Ann Marie Brown, Moon Yosemite (Moon Handbooks) (Berkeley: Avalon Travel Publishing, 2009), 222. Other examples in books for general readers include Rod Miller, John Muir: Magnificent Tramp (New York: Forge Books, 2005), 82, and Shirley Sargent, Yosemite: The First 100 Years, 1890-1990 (Santa Barbara: Yosemite Park and Curry Co., 1988), 34.

¹⁵ Much of this literature focuses on the history of the U.S. conservation movement, with a particular emphasis on the clash between, on the one hand, deep ecologists like Muir who wanted to preserve a supposedly pristine wilderness and, on the other hand, conservationists like Gifford Pinchot who emphasized managed access to natural resources. Ben Minteer calls this the clash between “anthropocentrism” and “ecocentrism.” Ben A. Minteer, The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 1. Donald Worster contends that Muir was never wholly on the side of the ecocentrists, instead embracing a “more enlightened utilitarianism.” Donald Worster, A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 315. See also John Meyer, “Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought,” Polity 30 (Winter 1997): 267-284, Anne Farrar Hyde, “Temples and Playgrounds: The Sierra Club in the Wilderness, 1901-1922,” California History 66 (September 1987): 208-219, and Bill Deval, “John Muir as Deep Ecologist,” Environmental Review 6 (Spring 1982): 63-86. For the history and ideologies of the U.S. conservation movement in Muir’s time, see Stephen Fox, The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), Michael Cohen, The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), Lawrence Buell, The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), Donald Worster, The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Robert Dorman, A Word for Nature: Four Pioneering Environmental Advocates, 1845-1913 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Finis Dunaway, Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Char Miller, Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism (Washington DC: Island Press, 2001), Susan Schrepfer, Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), Karl Jacoby, Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), and William Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996). For environmentalism in California in particular, see Robert Righter, The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America’s Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), David Mazel, “Four Views of Yosemite,” in American Literary Environmentalism (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 93-156, and, notably, George Henderson, California and the Fictions of Capital (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), which draws inspiration from William Cronon, Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), to examine how ideologies of nature linked cities and their hinterlands in California via irrigated industrial farming. The vast literature on Muir includes several volumes of annotated primary sources, including William Badè, The Life and Letters of John Muir (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), and Bonnie Gisell, ed., Kindred and Related Spirits: The Letters of John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001). Essays from a 1990 conference on Muir at the University of the Pacific are gathered in Sally Miller, ed., John Muir: Life and Work (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993). See also Charles Keeler, “Recollections of John Muir,” Sierra Club Bulletin 10 (1916): 16-19.

¹⁶ As Muir explained, “Cool-headed scientists, standing on the valley floor, and looking up to its massive walls, have been unable to interpret its history. . . . I have found it not full of chaos, unaccompanied and parentless. I have found it one of many Yosemite valleys, which differ not more than one pine-tree differs from another.” John Muir, “Hetch-Hetchy Valley,” Overland Monthly, vol. 11, no. 1 (July 1873): 43. By contrast, Whitney wrote in his popular guide book (originally published in 1868 as The Yosemite Book) that certain features of Yosemite, particularly the Half Dome, were “entirely unique in the Sierra Nevada; and, so far as we know, in the world.” Josiah Whitney, Yosemite Guide-Book: A Description of the Yosemite Valley and the Adjacent Region of the Sierra Nevada, and of the Big Trees of California (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press, 1871), 61.

¹⁷ Henry F. May, Three Faces of Berkeley: Competing Ideologies in the Wheeler Era, 1899-1919 (Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 1993), 5.

¹⁸ In the journal of his 1870 trip to Yosemite, LeConte mentions meeting Yelverton and refers to her as one of “our friends.” Joseph LeConte, A Journal of Ramblings through the High Sierra of California (New York: Sierra Club, 1971 ed.), 57. Yelverton’s relationship with Muir is discussed in Margaret Sanborn, Yosemite: Its Discovery, Its Wonders, and Its People (New York: Random House, 1981), 133-4.

¹⁹ Theresa Yelverton, Zanita: A Tale of the Yo-Semite (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1991 ed.), 3. Originally published by Hurd & Houghton, New York, 1872. In her introduction to the 1991 edition, Margaret Sanborn identifies Professor Brown as LeConte despite views of glacial formation drawn from Josiah Whitney. Margaret Sanborn, “Introduction,” in Yelverton, Zanita, iii.

²⁰ Yelverton, Zanita, 7-8.

²¹ Yelverton, Zanita, 23.

²² Ibid.

²³ After describing (and concurring with) Muir’s views in his journal, LeConte concluded: “I strongly incline to the belief . . . that a glacier once filled Yosemite. I observed other evidences, but I must visit this valley again and examine more carefully.” Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 64. Donald Worster refers to Muir’s 1870 meeting with LeConte as Muir’s “first substantive encounter with mountain geology.” Donald Worster, A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 192. Bart O’Brien notes that “LeConte proved to be an important ally to Muir because of his association with the formal scientific community.” Bart O’Brien, “Earthquakes or Snowflowers: The Controversy Over the Formation of Yosemite Valley,” The Pacific Historian 29 (1985): 37. However, several other scholars accepted Muir’s theory, including John Runkle of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. See John Muir to Jeanne C. Carr, September 8, 1871, in Bonnie Gisell, ed., Kindred and Related Spirits: The Letters of John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001), 146.

²⁴ Joseph LeConte, "On Some of the Ancient Glaciers of the Sierra Nevada," The American Journal of Science, series 3, vol. 5 (May 1873): 325-342. Many years later, LeConte revised his position to be more in accord with Whitney's theory. Joseph LeConte, "The Origin of Transverse Mountain-Valleys and Some Glacial Phenomena in Those of the Sierra Nevada," University Chronicle 1 (December 1898): 479-497. See also Dennis Dean, "John Muir and the Origin of Yosemite Valley," Annals of Science 48 (1991): 480.

²⁵ John Muir, "Living Glaciers of California," Harper's Monthly (November 1875), in Muir, Nature Writings, 625.

²⁶ Yelverton, Zanita, 131.

²⁷ Yelverton, Zanita, 145.

²⁸ Yelverton, Zanita, 108.

²⁹ David Mazel, American Literary Environmentalism (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 148.

³⁰ Yelverton, Zanita, 138.

³¹ Barton S. Alexander to John LeConte, January 10, 1869, Box 1, LeConte Family Additions, 1856-1916, MSS C-B 1014, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³² An 1870 legislative committee report argued that moving the university to San Francisco would "expose the large number of young men that are the most likely to seek education in the University to all the temptations and dangers of a great city. Prudent fathers would hesitate before they would subject their sons to such hazards, and it might well be that for every one that would make a convenience of the University for their spare hours, if the removal was made, ten who would have sought it for thorough education would be kept away." Quoted in William Warren Ferrier, Origin and Development of the University of California (Berkeley: Sather Gather Book Shop, 1930), 312.

³³ Verne Stadtman, The University of California, 1868-1968 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 55-56.

³⁴ Yelverton, Zanita, 77.

³⁵ Yelverton, Zanita, 84-5.

³⁶ Yelverton, Zanita, 79.

³⁷ Yelverton, Zanita, 83-4.

³⁸ Yelverton, Zanita, 96.

³⁹ Yelverton, Zanita, 97.

⁴⁰ Yelverton, Zanita, 99.

⁴¹ Yelverton, Zanita, 205.

⁴² Rebecca Solnit, Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Hidden Wars of the American West (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994), 309. Solnit adds that representations of the Ahwahneechee “played a part in the nineteenth-century idea that the land was not really put to use (and could only belong to those who worked it) and the twentieth-century idea that the landscape was somehow untouched before white incursions, was still wilderness, or virgin, or natural, or any of those adjectives connoting independence” (304). Two accounts of the 1851 slaughter by a member of the Mariposa Battalion of the California militia are Lafayette Bunnell, Discovery of the Yosemite, and the Indian War of 1851, Which Led to that Event (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1880), and Bunnell, “How the Yo-Semite Valley was Discovered and Named,” Hutchings’ Illustrated California Magazine 3 (May 1859): 498-505. See also Mark Spence, Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴³ Yelverton explicitly compares Indians to animals when describing the efforts to gather information about Zanita’s whereabouts: “The Indians were jabbering, like the blue jay, an unintelligible tongue.” Yelverton, Zanita, 194.

⁴⁴ Joseph LeConte, for example, wrote in his 1870 journal, “There are many Indians in the valley. We do not think it safe to leave our camp.” He added in a footnote, “We learned afterwards that we might have left the camp unguarded with perfect safety.” Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 46.

⁴⁵ John Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra (New York: Modern Library, 2003 ed.), 304. He described one group of Indian people he encountered as “queer, hairy, muffled creatures coming shuffling, shambling, wallowing toward me as if they had no bones in their bodies. . . . How glad I was to get away from the gray, grim crowd and see them vanish down the trail. Yet it seems sad to feel such desperate repulsion from one’s fellow beings, however degraded. To prefer the society of squirrels and woodchucks to that of our own species must surely be unnatural” (293-295).

⁴⁶ As Muir described an encounter with a shepherd, “I pressed Yosemite on him like a missionary offering the gospel, but he would have none of it.” Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 197. To be sure, many of Muir’s contemporaries held similar views, believing that preserving access to places like Yosemite could be a source of uplift. As Frederick Law Olmsted wrote in a report on Yosemite following 1864 land grant, “It is the folly of laws which have permitted and favored the monopoly by privileged classes of many of the means supplied in nature for the gratification, exercise and education of the esthetic faculties that has caused the appearance of dullness and weakness and disease of these faculties in the mass of the subjects of

kings.” Frederick Law Olmsted, “The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove” (1865), in Lary Dilsaver, ed., America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), 22.

⁴⁷ According to Michael Cohen, Muir’s insight that “people would resist the destruction of places they had visited” helps explain why he “directed his letters toward the upper middle class, which could contemplate [leisure travel]. These people could become influential allies, as the children of Tar Flat could not. Later, when a battle was won for a new park, Muir would usually see it as a victory for the trees, not for the people.” Michael Cohen, The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 222.

⁴⁸ According to Francis Farquhar, “The transition of Yosemite from mysterious Indian stronghold to a world-famous scenic wonder was incredibly rapid. Hardly had the murderous conflicts of 1851 and 1852 subsided when rumors began to spread from Mariposa about spectacular waterfalls and immense cliffs.” Francis Farquhar, “A Scene of Wonder And Curiosity,” in Yosemite Natural History Association, Yosemite: Saga of a Century, 1864-1964 (Oakhurst, Calif.: Sierra Star Press, 1964), 11.

⁴⁹ For the concept of “the sight” as a historically specific phenomenon driven by nineteenth century commercial tourism, see Dean MacCannell, The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: Schocken, 1976).

⁵⁰ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 39. Joseph LeConte to Bessie LeConte, August 1, 1870, LeConte Family Papers, Box 1, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵¹ Olive Logan, “Does It Pay to Visit Yo Semite?” The Galaxy Magazine 10 (October 1870). In addition to her work as an actress, Logan was an important critic of the emerging U.S. culture industries, including tourism. The same year as her Galaxy article, Logan published Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes: A Book about ‘The Show Business’ in All Its Branches (Philadelphia: Parmelee, 1870).

⁵² Mark Twain, Roughing It (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993 ed.), 420.

⁵³ Twain, Roughing It, 254.

⁵⁴ Twain, Roughing It, 136. In his “Prefatory” note, Twain promises not to “afflict [the reader] with metaphysics, or goad him with science.”

⁵⁵ John Muir to Jeanne Carr, ca. 1872 Spring, John Muir Correspondence, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific. URL: <<http://digitalcollections.pacific.edu/cdm/ref/collection/muirletters/id/10238>>.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Joseph LeConte, “The General Principles of Art and Their Application to the Novel,” Overland Monthly 2nd Series, Vol. 5 (April 1885): 337-347 and Joseph LeConte, “On a Curious Visual Phenomenon,” American Journal of Psychology 3 (September 1890): 364-366.

As LeConte's biographer, Lester Stephens, put it, "LeConte was thus one of the last individuals who endeavored to span the chasm between the older universalists and the modern specialists." Stephens, 83.

⁵⁷ Joseph LeConte to Joseph Henry, November 18, 1867, Record Unit 26, Box 9, Folder 1, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C. See also Joseph LeConte to John LeConte, March 16, 1869, Box 1, LeConte Family Additions, 1862-1928, MSS 70/24c, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, and Louis Agassiz to O.P. Fitzgerald, August 5, 1868, Box 2, Folder 16, Records of the Regents of the University of California, CU-1, Bancroft Library, Berkeley

⁵⁸ Joseph Henry to Joseph LeConte, August 13, 1868, Record Unit 33, Volume 2, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C. See also Caroline LeConte, "An Introductory Reminiscence," in Joseph LeConte, Ware Sherman: A Journal of Three Months' Personal Experience in the Last Days of the Confederacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999 ed.), xxiv.

⁵⁹ Joseph LeConte, The Race Problem in the American South (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 349.

⁶⁰ Joseph LeConte, The Race Problem in the American South (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), 376, 378.

⁶¹ Joseph LeConte, "Domestic Ducks That Fly Abroad Like Pigeons," Science 1 (April 6, 1883): 249. LeConte's lecture notes included sections such as "Effects of Mixed Races" that outlined his view that racial groups were at risk of losing coherency due to integration. Joseph LeConte, "Effects of Mixed Races," Miscellaneous Lecture Notes, Box 3, LeConte Family Additions, 1856-1916, MSS C-B 1014, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

⁶² Joseph LeConte, "Scientific Relation of Sociology to Biology," Popular Science Monthly 14 (January 1879): 336.

⁶³ See Alexandra Stern, "California's Eugenic Landscapes," Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 115-149.

⁶⁴ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 24.

⁶⁵ Joseph LeConte, The Autobiography of Joseph LeConte (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1903), 247.

⁶⁶ Frank Soulé "Joseph LeConte in the Sierra," Sierra Club Bulletin, vol. 4, no. 1 (January 1902), 3-4.

⁶⁷ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 18 (italics in original).

⁶⁸ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 138.

⁶⁹ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 41.

⁷⁰ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 24.

⁷¹ As LeConte wrote of the Berkeley Club, “All sorts of beliefs on politics, social, and religious subjects are compatible with membership. In religion, for instance, there are in the club all grades of orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and no doxy; theism, deism, pantheism, materialism, and atheism—all are tolerated.” Joseph LeConte, Autobiography, 262-3, 289. See also “The Longfellow Memorial Association,” The Berkeleyan (Berkeley, Calif.), May 17, 1893. LeConte is included in membership lists of the Berkeley Club and Philosophical Union in “Roster of the Berkeley Club, California, 1873-1923,” Carton 1, Berkeley Club Papers, MSS C-H 9, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, and “Roll of Members of the Philosophical Union of the University of California,” Oversized Volume 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU 200, University Archives, Berkeley.

⁷² Joseph LeConte, Autobiography, 244, 318, and Stadtman, The University of California, 57.

⁷³ The Berkeleyan (Berkeley, Calif.), October 6, 1893.

⁷⁴ Charles Palache, “Autobiography—College,” ca. 1940, MSS C-D 5193, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁷⁵ T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁷⁶ Charles Palache, “Autobiography—College,” ca. 1940, MSS C-D 5193, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁷⁷ The Harriman Expedition was similarly structured as a short-term mobile community, staffed with the breadth and depth of a small university, including geologists, botanists, poets, photographers, ethnographers, and other specialists. It is discussed in more depth in Chapter 4, which focuses on Charles Keeler’s work as a public intellectual in Berkeley in the early twentieth century. See William Goetzmann and Kay Sloan, Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899 (New York: Viking, 1982).

⁷⁸ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 127.

⁷⁹ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 102.

⁸⁰ On the perceived permeability of the body and environment in nineteenth-century public health in California, see Linda Nash, Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁸¹ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 99-103.

⁸² Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 125. See also Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” Critical Inquiry 17, No. 4 (Summer 1991): 773-797, and John Toews, “Intellectual History After the Linguistic Turn: The Anatomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience,” American Historical Review 92, No. 4 (October 1987): 879-907.

⁸³ This work was published as a textbook on optics, Joseph LeConte, Sight: An Exposition of the Principles of Monocular and Binocular Vision (New York, 1881). For over a decade, from 1869 until 1880, LeConte wrote a series of articles for American Journal of Science on the theme of “On Some Phenomena of Binocular Vision.”

⁸⁴ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 53.

⁸⁵ In distancing himself from tourists, LeConte depended on widespread perceptions of touristic experience as artificial and facile. As James Buzard explains, “Uncomfortable impressions that tourism destroys the ‘sanctity’ or unity of culture, supplanting it with a discrete tourist world of cliché and confirmed expectations, flourished alongside the nineteenth century’s expansion of tourist institutions and services” (11). Thus, continues Buzard, “The anti-touristic gesture needed to be made just as noticeably as the reviled touristic one: it needed a theatre, a script, an audience” (96). James Buzard, The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Writing of California scientists in particular, Michael Smith adds that such “distancing tactics” stemmed from the “the young geologists’ uncomfortable awareness of how closely they might appear to resemble the tourists they denounced.” Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 77.

⁸⁶ For erasures of racial “others” in representations of wilderness, see Martin Berger, Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). See also Tomás Almaguer, Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁸⁷ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 106.

⁸⁸ Emma LeConte Furman, illustrated Yosemite journal, 1882, p. 14, Box 6, Folder 9, LeConte/Furman/Carter Family Papers, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

⁸⁹ Though Jeffrey Pappas has called it “a summer session course offered through the science department,” the trip was not officially sanctioned by the university. See Jeffrey P. Pappas, Forest Scholars: The Early History of Nature Guiding at Yosemite National Park, 1913-1925 (Ph.D. Thesis, Arizona State University, 2003), 153. Tracing back to LeConte, Pappas examines the establishment of state-sponsored interpretive programming at Yosemite under the leadership of Stephen Mather and Harold Bryant in the 1910s and 1920s.

⁹⁰ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 13-14.

⁹¹ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 29.

⁹² Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 30.

⁹³ Henry F. May, Three Faces of Berkeley: Competing Ideologies in the Wheeler Era, 1899-1919 (Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 1993), 21-22. May adds that “religion was no longer crucial” to securing a faculty appointment, and even gender declined as a barrier to entry, as a handful of women were appointed to faculty positions in the early 1900s, largely at the behest of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, a regent and major benefactor of the university.

⁹⁴ Denis Kearney and H.L. Knight, “Appeal from California: The Chinese Invasion,” Indianapolis Times, 28 February 1878.

⁹⁵ Henry George, Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth (San Francisco: W.M. Hinton, 1879). For the problem of land monopoly and the power of Southern Pacific Railroad in particular, see Richard Orsi, Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Richard White, Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), and Frank Norris, The Octopus: A Story of California (New York: Doubleday Page, 1901).

⁹⁶ Donald Worster, A Passion for Nature, 331. Worster notes that Muir was introduced to George through his friend and landlord, John Swett, but never gave indication that he supported George’s political views (221). Nevertheless, George Henderson asserts that Muir’s “passions for nature were stoked by Henry George’s well-known arguments against the buying and selling of nature.” George Henderson, California and the Fictions of Capital (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 202.

⁹⁷ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 51.

⁹⁸ Joseph LeConte, Ramblings, 54.

⁹⁹ In 1872, Carr wrote to Muir that she was resolved to bring his work to press, writing, “All this fugitiveness is going to be gathered up, lest you should die like Moses in the mountains and God should bury you where ‘no man knoweth.’” William Badè, The Life and Letters of John Muir, Vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 318. One historian notes that Carr worked “to draw Muir deeper into the public sphere” and that “Carr’s role in shaping his career cannot be overemphasized.” Bonnie Gisel, “Up into Mountain Light, Down into Town Dark,” in Gisel, ed., Kindred and Related Spirits: The Letters of John Muir and Jeanne C. Carr (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2001), 159.

¹⁰⁰ Donald Worster, A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 220.

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- ¹⁰¹ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 308.
- ¹⁰² Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 322.
- ¹⁰³ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 288. David Mazel notes that Muir obscured the extent to which his work in Yosemite was “underwritten by the conjuncture of quite specific historical events—in particular the influx of capital into post-Civil War California and the diversification of resource extraction enterprises that occurred as the gold fields played themselves out.” David Mazel, American Literary Environmentalism (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 93.
- ¹⁰⁴ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 162.
- ¹⁰⁵ Mark Twain, Roughing It, 84, 124, 252.
- ¹⁰⁶ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 347.
- ¹⁰⁷ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 181.
- ¹⁰⁸ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 156-160.
- ¹⁰⁹ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 250
- ¹¹⁰ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 175.
- ¹¹¹ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 23, 188, 208.
- ¹¹² Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 237.
- ¹¹³ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 286.
- ¹¹⁴ As Michael Smith notes, “For Muir, interdependence was the essence of the geological sublime.” Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 93.
- ¹¹⁵ Mazel, American Literary Environmentalism, 105.
- ¹¹⁶ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 13.
- ¹¹⁷ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 197.
- ¹¹⁸ John Muir, “Hetch-Hetchy Valley,” Overland Monthly, vol. 11, no. 1 (July 1873): 43.
- ¹¹⁹ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 197-198.

¹²⁰ Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra, 198.

¹²¹ Daniel Coit Gilman, “The Building of a University, an Inaugural Address” 1892, Days of Cal, Digital Collection, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Online: <<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/CalHistory/inaugural.gilman.html>>.

¹²² J.W.A. Wright, et al., “Memorial of California State Grange, and Mechanics’ Deliberative Assembly on the State University,” in Ezra Carr, ed., The University of California and Its Relations to Industrial Education (Sacramento: Benjamin Dore, 1874), 109. For the abolition of tuition, see John LeConte, “Notes on the History of the Organization of the University of California,” unpublished manuscript, 1881, Portfolio 1, LeConte Family Additions, 1856-1916, MSS C-B 1014, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹²³ Mechanics’ Institute website: <<http://www.milibrary.org/about>>.

¹²⁴ Excerpted in William Warren Ferrier, Origin and Development of the University of California (Berkeley: Sather Gather Book Shop, 1930), 309.

¹²⁵ Henry F. May, Three Faces of Berkeley: Competing Ideologies in the Wheeler Era, 1899-1919 (Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 1993), 14.

¹²⁶ J.W.A. Wright, et al., “Memorial of California State Grange, and Mechanics’ Deliberative Assembly on the State University,” in Ezra Carr, ed., The University of California and Its Relations to Industrial Education (Sacramento: Benjamin Dore, 1874), 110 (italics in original). To address this problem, the memorialists called for “The appropriation of a sufficient amount to secure the necessary practical instruction in the mechanic arts; to provide blacksmiths’, carpenters’, cabinet, and machine shops, and printing press, under the supervision of competent persons.”

¹²⁷ Wright, et al., 112.

¹²⁸ See, for example, Verne Stadtman, The University of California, 1868-1968 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), which notes: “Unfortunately, Gilman did not please everybody. Many Californians honestly misunderstood what he was trying to do” (66). Stadtman chalks up the complaints of the Grangers largely to ignorance.

¹²⁹ G.W. Pinney, The New Education: Objections to the System as Taught in the University of California, Together with the Memorial of the California State Grange and Mechanics’ Deliberative Assembly (Oakland: Butler & Stilwell, 1874), 6.

¹³⁰ Pinney, The New Education, 13.

¹³¹ Ezra Carr, “Prof. Carr’s Reply to the Grangers and Mechanics,” in Ezra Carr, ed., The University of California and Its Relations to Industrial Education (Sacramento: Benjamin Dore, 1874), 8

¹³² “Education,” The Atlantic Monthly 34 (July 1874): 124-125.

¹³³ Stadtman, The University of California, 82

¹³⁴ Jeff Lustig and several others have identified opposition to Central Pacific (which became Southern Pacific) as a major force in the convention. See Jeff Lustig, “Private Rights and Public Purposes: California’s Second Constitutional Convention Reconsidered,” California History 87, no. 3 (2010): 46-70, and George Mowry, The California Progressives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 18. One historian calls the status of the university one of the “lesser issues” of the convention. Carl Brent Swisher, Motivation and Political Technique in the California Constitutional Convention, 1878-1879 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 98. The relationship of Southern Pacific Railroad and the University of California is discussed in Orsi, Sunset Limited, 280-283.

¹³⁵ John LeConte, “What Have the Regents of the University to Show For Their Expenditure?” in Report of the Board of Regents, State University, to the Constitutional Convention (Berkeley, 1878), 11.

¹³⁶ Eugene Hilgard to J.R. Freud, November 18, 1878, in Report of the Board of Regents, State University, to the Constitutional Convention (Berkeley, 1878), 13.

¹³⁷ Edward Treadwell, ed., The Constitution of the State of California, Adopted in Convention, at Sacramento, March 3, 1879 (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney, 1911), Article IX, Section 9, p. 288.

¹³⁸ Verne Stadtman counts the Grangers among those who “unfortunately” misunderstood what Daniel Coit Gilman had been trying to accomplish, believing instead “that he was really intent on deemphasizing the mechanical arts to the greater glory of language, history, and literature.” Stadtman, The University of California, 66-7.

¹³⁹ Berkeleyan (Berkeley, Calif.), August 30, 1894.

¹⁴⁰ Lynn Gordon note that roughly 30% of students at the University of California in 1905-6 came from farming or mechanic families, but there was a social “gulf” between these and wealthier students. Lynn Gordon, Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 206. For the class dimensions of social life at the University of California during this era, see also Laurie Wilkie, The Lost Boys of Zeta Psi: A Historical Archaeology of Masculinity at a University Fraternity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁴¹ In an autobiographical sketch describing his background, Royce listed among the “principal philosophical influences” of his time at Berkeley “the really very great and deep effect produced upon me by the teaching of Professor Joseph LeConte.” Josiah Royce, The Hope of the Great Community (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 128.

¹⁴² For the Hittell house as salon, see Caroline LeConte to Mary McHenry Keith, April 5, 1927, Box 10, Keith-McHenry-Pond Family Papers, MSS C-B 595, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁴³ John S. Hittell, Yosemite: Its Wonders and Its Beauties (San Francisco: H.H. Bancroft, 1868). The book included photographs by Eadweard Muybridge.

¹⁴⁴ William Keith, “An Artist’s Trip in the Sierra,” unpublished manuscript, 1875, Box 4, MSS C-B 595, Keith-McHenry-Pond Family Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Transcript by Susan Snyder, 2004.

¹⁴⁵ William Keith to Mary McHenry Keith, July 18, 1882, MSS C-B 595, Keith-McHenry-Pond Family Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. The centrality of mountaineering to Keith’s reputation as a painter can be seen in a description of an exhibition of Keith’s work in the Argonaut a few months later: “It reflects, in the first place, the wide range of the artist’s interest in every aspect of California scenery. Keith has explored the Sierra from Mount Whitney to Mount Shasta, clambering over the living glacier of Mount Lyell, descending, for long sojourns, into Yosemite, and mounting again to the calm heights.” Argonaut (San Francisco), October 4, 1882.

¹⁴⁶ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 18, 1892, MSS C-H 105, Box 1, Charles Keeler Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁴⁷ “The Eastern Shore: News from Alameda, Berkeley, Oakland and Environs,” Daily Alta California, March 5, 1888.

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Olwig, “Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore—A Meandering Tale of a Double Nature,” in William Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature (1996), 381.

¹⁴⁹ Michael P. Cohen, The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970 (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 7.

¹⁵⁰ As Susan Schrepfer notes, “The men who established the Sierra Club, like the founders of other groups, are best characterized by their high levels of formal education, their white-collar status, and the ways in which they described themselves. . . . Most were professors of history, art, English literature, German, and the natural sciences[.]” Susan R. Schrepfer, Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 24.

¹⁵¹ Michael Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 149. By contrast, several books on the Sierra Club have sought to downplay the heterogeneity of the club’s early mission, particularly those interested in celebrating John Muir’s legacy. Holway Jones, for example, wrote: “From its very beginning the Sierra Club had an intimate relationship with Yosemite; the goal of its preservation took

precedence over all other early objectives.” Holway Jones, John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite (San Francisco: The Sierra Club, 1965), xiii.

¹⁵² The Sierra Club’s roots in Berkeley can be seen in the fact that its first formal outing to the Sierra did not occur until 1901. See Theodore Hittell, “First Outing of the California Sierra Club,” 1901, Carton 2, Hittell Family Papers, MSS CB 405, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. In a sign of how the composition of Berkeley discussion clubs overlapped, Hittell, Keeler, LeConte, and Keith all appear on the membership roll of the Philosophical Union as well. “Roll of Members of the Philosophical Union of the University of California,” Oversized Volume 1, Records of the Philosophical Union of the University of California, CU 200, University Archives, Berkeley. The Sierra Club’s roots in Berkeley can be seen in the fact that its first formal outing to the Sierra did not occur until 1901. See Theodore Hittell, “First Outing of the California Sierra Club,” 1901, Carton 2, Hittell Family Papers, MSS CB 405, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁵³ The Berkeleyan (Berkeley, Calif.), March 3, 1896. Robert Kohler explains that such arguments were common in the late nineteenth century: “Collegians thus enacted in daily routines the middle-class ideal of improving outdoor recreation. In such places it was hard to say where hiking, climbing, fishing, and camping ended and fieldwork began.” Robert Kohler, All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 73.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph LeConte, “Sense and Hand-Training in the Public Schools,” Pacific Educational Journal 3 (March 1888): 43, 45.

¹⁵⁵ Tom Turner, Sierra Club: 100 Years of Protecting Nature (New York: Harry Abrams, 1991), 47.

¹⁵⁶ William Colby, “Yosemite and the Sierra Club,” Sierra Club Bulletin 23 (1938): 14.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Orsi, Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 292.

¹⁵⁸ Orsi, Sunset Limited, 279, 301.

¹⁵⁹ Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 185. The next several decades witnessed the institutionalization of nature interpretation in Yosemite under the auspices of the National Park Service with the cooperation from the University of California. The Superintendents’ Report for Yosemite National Park in 1923 discussed the close relationship between the Park Service and University of California: “Under a cooperative arrangement with the University of California, students are enrolled at the Yosemite Museum in correspondence courses, and free bulletins on hundreds of subjects are available for free distribution.” W.B. Lewis, “Yosemite National Park, California,” 1923, Box 1, Superintendents Annual Reports, Yose-7171, Yosemite National Park Archives, El Portal, California.

Chapter 2

“The Sermon in San Francisco’s Stones”: Public Intellectuals and the Cultural Economy of Disaster, 1906

At 5:14 a.m. on April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake shook the San Francisco Bay Area, destroying hundreds of buildings—including most of Stanford University—and killing thousands of people. The damage was most heavily concentrated in San Francisco itself. Due to problems with the city’s water supply, several isolated conflagrations morphed into a giant firestorm that destroyed much of the city, including the entire working class district south of Market Street and most of Chinatown. Among intellectuals of the region, the suffering was less acute but still significant.¹ The poet Ina Coolbrith was left homeless, and the photographer Carleton Watkins lost nearly his entire life’s work. An image of Watkins with a cane being helped from his studio as a fire rages in the background has become one of the iconic images of the disaster (fig. 1). The painter Xavier Martinez was likewise driven from his studio and forced to relocate in the Piedmont hills above Oakland, where he began painting landscapes and launched a new career as an instructor at the California College of Arts and Crafts.² Even the Sierra Club lost its office and complete archives, resulting in a brief relocation to Berkeley.³ Indeed, the Earthquake and Fire became a trope of devastation for decades to come.⁴

The Earthquake and Fire had very different consequences for Berkeley, which was spared significant damage and became a hub of refugees from across the Bay. The city added roughly 12,000 permanent residents within a year of the disaster, growing from a population of thirteen

Figure 1



Credit: "Carleton Watkins," POR 1, Portrait Collection, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Available online through the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Digital Collection.

<http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb6h4nb5bh/?&query=watkins&query-join=or&brand=eqf>

Figure 2



A version of this image appeared in Henry Anderson Lafler, "My Sixty Sleepless Hours: A Story of the San Francisco Earthquake," *McClure's Magazine*, Vol. 27 (July 1906): 281. Photo credit: "Author Henry Lafler at typewriter," Bear Photo Co., 1906, California State Library, Sacramento. Available online through the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Digital Collection. <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb2d5nb1sd/?brand=eqf>

thousand at the turn of the century to approximately 38,000 in 1907.⁵ Just as significantly, the University of California seized on the catastrophe to establish itself as a leader of seismological research, securing the appointment of Andrew Lawson, its Professor of Geology, to lead the State Earthquake Investigation Committee.⁶ This step was part of the University's shift away from teaching and toward an overarching emphasis the development of original research. For both San Francisco and Berkeley, the disaster occasioned fierce debate over the future of the region and its built environment. What, its residents asked, would be the role of a rebuilt San Francisco in the cultural and economic context of the new century? With Stanford University severely damaged and Berkeley flooded with refugees, how would the disaster challenge the promise of democratic education that populist groups had fought for since the 1860s? And would visionary reformers see the flattening of the city as a moment of "creative destruction" to reorient San Francisco toward new publics and new purposes?⁷

As it turned out, the sudden wave of attention directed at the region gave California's intellectuals virtually open access to the national press, a moment that several writers, activists, and public intellectuals utilized to put forth competing visions of education and its relationship to regional culture and the built environment. Among the most significant fractures, given the failure of San Francisco's water system, was the increasingly urgent effort by commercial and labor groups to build a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley to provide water for an aqueduct.⁸ For its advocates, the project was critical for attracting capital to the region and ensuring a more effective response to future fires in San Francisco.⁹ As an alternative to large new public works projects, many writers from the region's literary circles cast the disaster as an opportunity for strengthening social bonds and gaining a deeper, more authentic understanding of the natural world. From this perspective, the scenes of ruin were less an invitation for steel construction

than a catastrophic destruction of indoor spaces. For better or worse, the Earthquake and Fire had forced the city outside into a makeshift classroom for the intimate experience of nature and community.

In the years before the disaster, debates over the role of ideas in public life had unfolded against the assumption of collective marginalization from the academic and publishing centers of New York, Paris, and Boston. As Gelett Burgess explained in *Bayside Bohemia: Fin de siècle San Francisco and its Little Magazines*, “strange threads of local pride” were interwoven with “fetish-worship of the established centres of the world’s culture.”¹⁰ Even as writers like Mary Austin challenged the perception of places like Yosemite and Death Valley as static and beyond history, their descriptions of landscape shared with popular novels of the West an implicit appeal to the “picturesque.” Despite the appetite of publishers for more work in this tradition after the Earthquake and Fire, the ensuing negotiations over the future of San Francisco were not so simple. The catastrophe scrambled California’s niche reputation as a source of “local color” writing, spurring a wholesale revision of how many scientists, activists, and bohemians of the San Francisco Bay Area understood their publics and the public sphere. Although some believed the lesson of the disaster—“the sermon in San Francisco’s stones”—was that future catastrophes could be averted with careful planning based on modern architectural principles, others called for a new, more organic relationship with the natural world.¹¹ Instead of building “New York on the Pacific,” or envisioning the disaster as a clean slate for concrete dreams, many California intellectuals imagined a series of people’s classrooms from Carmel to San Francisco to Berkeley that would offer liberation from the old patterns of urban living that had come crashing down.¹² Despite their utilization of mass cultural industries, these writers saw harmony with nature as the key to the future.¹³

Two Passings

On July 6, 1901, Joseph LeConte suffered a fatal heart attack in his beloved Yosemite Valley, in a camping party with John Muir, William Keith, Frank Soulé, Jr., and Andrew Lawson.¹⁴ The following year, one of LeConte's most renowned students, the novelist Frank Norris, died of a ruptured appendix in San Francisco. Although the two men could not have been further apart in their philosophical positions, their passings prefigured—on the eve of the great disaster of 1906—the changes that would soon shake California cultural and intellectual life to its core.¹⁵

LeConte's death was greeted with front-page headlines in every major San Francisco and East Bay newspaper, a sign of how dramatically his reputation had changed from the caricature of him in Theresa Yelverton's *Zanita* (1872).¹⁶ A local celebrity, LeConte was beloved by generations of students and perhaps the figure most closely associated with the University of California in the *fin de siècle*. Despite his diminishing reputation among research scientists, the Professor of Natural History and Geology maintained an intensive schedule of public lectures and magazine writings that popularized his sometimes reactionary ideas on social organization, evolutionary science, theism, and geology. According to a front-page article on his death in the *San Francisco Call*, "Famous Educator of the World," the source of LeConte's public appeal could be traced to the accessibility of his lectures for non-specialists: "Dry and coldly scientific as his subjects were, under his hands they took on the shades and color of interest."¹⁷ Indeed, his lectures on the geologic origins of Yosemite and writings on religion and evolution attracted students from across the country to Berkeley, including William Ritter. His style was captivating enough that the photographer Eadweard Muybridge created a stereograph of him in the middle of a lecture.¹⁸

Less known was his participation in Berkeley literary groups. In one presentation to the Longfellow Society in Berkeley, later published in *Overland Monthly* as “The General Principles of Art and their Application to the Novel,” LeConte positioned “true art” as the application of philosophical and scientific principles to specific forms for the purpose of spiritual uplift. In a detailed taxonomy elaborating on this point, LeConte argued science and literature were not bounded and homogeneous domains, but intertwined means of exploring “the nature of man—actual and ideal.”¹⁹ The difference between entertainment and education was less important than the shared responsibility of artists and scientists “to disentangle and separate the gold from the dross” in human nature.²⁰ LeConte’s taxonomy subsumed regional literature within a larger system of idealism. He criticized the “common artist” who “strives to reproduce with utmost accuracy what every one, even the clown or the contemplative ruminant, may see as well as he.” Instead, he called for artists to eschew public accolades for mere “imitation of nature” and instead strive to represent “the divine significance of nature.”²¹

Although his interactions with LeConte were limited to geology lectures, Frank Norris encountered similar taxonomies in his literature classes at Berkeley.²² Scorning what he called the “classification” method of teaching English literature, Norris argued in 1896 that:

literary courses of the University of California do not develop literary instincts among the students who attend them. The best way to study literature is to try to produce literature. It is original work that counts, not the everlasting compiling of facts, not the tabulating of metaphors, nor the rehashing of text books and encyclopedia articles.²³

Perhaps most telling of the philosophical distance between the two men, LeConte argued that the ideal novelist “softens or neglects somewhat the sensuous impression” and instead “selects the really characteristic and significant from the obscuring multiplicity of insignificant and distracting detail.”²⁴ Norris shared none of LeConte’s impulse to downplay the “animalistic”

side of human nature for the sake of uplift.²⁵ What Norris did share with his teacher was a sense that artists and scientists in California were ethnographic witnesses to a peripheral culture.

In the late 1890s, Norris urged other young writers to carry out, in the tradition of Kipling, a cultural archeology of San Francisco's strangeness as an imperial outpost. His plea echoed the wide-ranging reportorial mode he employed as a writer for *The Wave*, a San Francisco weekly. According to Gelett Burgess, a former University of California instructor who joined the newspaper after leaving the university, Norris's contributions included "reviews of books, interviews, 'write-ups,' fiction stories . . . humorous clippings, poems, and anything else that he could think of."²⁶ Typical of his work for *The Wave* was an essay on May 22, 1897, announcing "An Opening for Novelists: Great Opportunities for Fiction-Writers in San Francisco." In Norris's view, "There are certain cities in the world which are adaptable to the uses of the writer of fiction, and there are others which are not." He went on to explain that San Francisco was one of these cities—a place where "things can happen"—with several attractive settings for stories: "Kearny street, Montgomery street, Nob Hill, Telegraph Hill, of course Chinatown, Lone Mountain, the Poodle Dog, the Palace Hotel and the What Cheer House, the Barbara Coast, the Crow's Nest, the Mission, the Bay, the Bohemian Club, the Presidio, Spanish town, Fisherman's wharf."²⁷

Significantly, Norris located the uniqueness of San Francisco in its "picturesque" places and personalities, its "local color," not its promise as a modern metropolis. This emphasis on locality as cultural commodity put Norris in the tradition of the California nature writers, from Muir to the early Austin, who found success through eco-ethnographic reporting that prioritized synchronic thick description over diachronic narratives of social change. "Here we are," wrote Norris, "set down as a pin point in a vast circle of solitude. Isolation produces individuality,

originality.” Instead of writing against marginalization, Norris argued that writers should recognize it as a strength—from an economic as well as literary point of view. As he put it: “The tales are here. The public is here. A hundred clashing presses are hungry for you, future young story-writer of San Francisco, whoever you may be.”²⁸

Norris explored the dark side of such possibilities in a short story, “Dying Fires,” which portrayed territorial roots as a commodity that could be squandered through an embrace of New York bohemianism. The story traces the rise and fall of Overbeck, an aspiring novelist and son of a newspaper editor from Colfax, California. Overbeck’s first novel draws on his first-hand experience with the California working class: “blacksmiths, traveling peddler, section-bosses, miners, horse-wranglers, cow-punchers, the stage drivers, the storekeeper, the hotel-keeper, the ditch-tender, the prospector, the seamstress of the town, the postmistress, the schoolmistress, the poetess.”²⁹ The novel is accepted by a New York publisher and achieves such success that young Overbeck is invited to “the Great City” to join the editorial staff. He quickly falls under the influence of the “New Bohemians,” a group of minor poets, third-rate novelists, and failed dramatists who blamed their failures on everyone but themselves. These bohemians turn out to be the source of his downfall. Overbeck’s second novel, a complete failure, was “a far cry from Colfax, California. It was a city-bred story, with no fresher atmosphere than that of bought flowers. Its *dramatis personae* were all of the leisure class, opera-goers, intriguers, riders of blood horses.”³⁰ Recognizing his failure, Overbeck “tried to go back . . . to the mountains and the cañons of the great Sierras,” but it was too late: his fire as a writer “had been stamped out beneath the feet of minor and dilettante poets” in New York.³¹

Published in 1902 in *The Smart Set*, “Dying Fires” drew on Norris’s own experience leaving California for New York to build his reputation and professional network. In a letter in

1899 to Elizabeth Davenport, Norris complained bitterly of New York City's monochrome urban environment: "There is not much color here and very little of the picturesque. I have almost forgotten how a mountain looks and I can never quite persuade myself that the Atlantic is an Ocean—in the same sense as the Pacific. I miss the out of doorness of the West more and more."³² Norris nevertheless distanced himself from his roots, believing that "novelists of all people should take keen interest in contemporary movements, politics, international affairs, the Big things of the world."³³ The implication was that Berkeley was not "of the world" in the same way as New York or Chicago, and indeed shortly before the publication of "Dying Fires," Norris wrote to poet Edwin Markham to explain, "I do not wish to seem unaccommodating to the Overland Monthly, or to anyone who hails from the town of my alma mater, but I do think that my 'origin, history, and development' has been over-exploited of late."³⁴

The idea that Western purity could be perverted by the urbanism of New York carried forward, in modified form, a common issue in Norris's earlier work, including *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (1899) and *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901). Although neither are primarily stories of migration, key destructive forces in each—professionalism in *McTeague* and the railroad in *The Octopus*—are portrayed by Norris as fundamentally exogenous, bringing unwanted change to an otherwise stable, if depraved, equilibrium. In *McTeague*, the title character, McTeague, receives an impersonal cease-and-desist letter from the city forbidding him from practicing dentistry due to his lack of a dental degree. The city government is cast as an easily-manipulated and disruptive outside presence:

The letter had been sent from the City Hall and was stamped in one corner with the seal of the State of California, very official [. . .] The letter—or rather printed notice—informed McTeague that he had never received a diploma from a dental college, and that in consequence he was forbidden to practice his profession any longer. A legal extract bearing upon the case was attached in small type.³⁵

McTeague and his wife, Trina, surmise that the city government was acting on a tip by Marcus Schouler, a jealous rival for Trina's affection. The tip was indeed accurate, as McTeague had never attended dental college but rather apprenticed with an itinerant dentist in the mining camps. But although purportedly an attempt to enforce standards of professionalism—much like the crusades against midwives carried out by several municipalities in this period at the behest of the American Medical Association—the city's action has nothing to do with complaints about McTeague's skill as a dentist, but rather Marcus's desire for revenge.³⁶

The shock of the letter brings not a flurry of activity but a grinding halt: "It was like a clap of thunder. McTeague was stunned, stupefied. He said nothing."³⁷ Trina, too, is stunned into acceptance: "Suddenly the conviction seized upon her that it was all true. McTeague would be obliged to stop work, no matter how good a dentist he was."³⁸ The realization sends Trina into a "panic terror" that cements her obsession with protecting her savings acquired earlier in a lottery, preventing the money from being used as capital for a fresh start. McTeague eventually exhausts his options and finds himself back in mining country in a sort of boomerang to his past. "Straight as a homing pigeon, and following a blind and unreasoned instinct, McTeague had returned to the Big Dipper mine. Within a week's time it seemed to him as though he had never been away."³⁹ On some level, this logic of endless return underscores Jennifer Fleissner's observation that "naturalism has often been described as a genre without a future. Its own refusal to grant one to its characters, its tendency to leave them stalled in place, leaves the novels themselves in a kind of critical limbo, with readers uncertain of how to enter into this universe without getting similarly trapped."⁴⁰ On another level, the boomerang structure of *McTeague* can also be read to support Norris's skepticism about California's modernity in particular, offering for the urbanizing region a fate not unlike Overbeck's in "Dying Fires." Norris himself

hinted at such a reading in one of his weekly columns for the *Chicago American Art and Literary Review*, where he noted: “A boom in literature is liable to be a boomerang, just as it is in town lots and Western cities.”⁴¹

Over the next three decades, Norris’s framing of a doomed, dysfunctional modernity was rejected by a generation of public intellectuals—including Charles Keeler, Mary Austin, and William Ritter—who envisioned California as a cultural laboratory with potential to transform practices of education, citizenship, and knowledge production along more democratic lines. Nevertheless, from 1899 until his death in 1902, Norris’s observations about the relationship of California to the culture industries of New York and Boston helped lay the groundwork for the discursive upheaval of 1906, when several writers and scholars seized on the national attention occasioned by the Earthquake and Fire as a chance to explore new ways of reaching a wider public. In New York, Norris served as a manuscript reader for Doubleday, Page & Company, an experience that inspired several critical writings on the publishing industry. In one essay published posthumously, “The Volunteer Manuscript,” Norris offered advice to unsolicited contributors to “the baker’s dozen of important New York publishing houses.”⁴² Far from offering false encouragement, his list of suggestions included such gems as “Don’t write novels” and “Try to keep your friends from writing novels.”⁴³ In another essay, “The American Public and ‘Popular’ Fiction,” Norris added:

It is a great animal, this American public, and having starved for so long, it is ready, once aroused, to devour anything. And the great presses of the country are for the most part merely sublimated sausage machines that go dashing along in a mess of paper and printer’s ink turning out meat for the monster.⁴⁴

Even as he referred to the presses of New York as “sublimated sausage machines,” he sought to use his position of power to help his friends in California, writing glowing reviews of the work

of Burgess and others and offering to recommend their work for publication.⁴⁵ In one letter, found tipped in a copy of *The Spinners' Book of Fiction* in the UCLA Library in 1954, Norris offered the unknown recipient: "By the way I am still reading for Doubleday and if you have a new novel on hand you may be sure I will give it a *big* chance."⁴⁶

Norris may have been writing to fellow California novelist Gertrude Atherton, who organized the publication of *The Spinners' Book of Fiction*, an anthology of California writers, to raise money for poet Ina Coolbrith following the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. Needless to say, by offering to connect his friend with a publisher, Norris violated his own rule of "Try to keep your friends from writing novels." At the same time, the letter's serendipitous discovery in a copy of *The Spinners' Book of Fiction* connected it with the disaster of 1906: a quintessential example of a moment when the "sublimated sausage machines" of the American publishing industry turned their attention to California in a frenzy to provide "meat for the monster" of public attention. What the presses received was far more complicated, as writers, scientists, artists, and commercial leaders sought to parlay the disaster into a new vision of what Philip Ethington has called "the public city."⁴⁷

Harper's Weekly and the National Press

As soon as word of the Earthquake reached news offices around the country, editors of national magazines such as *McClure's*, *Collier's*, and *Everybody's* set about finding writers to contribute pieces. As expected, many magazines turned to writers who were in California when the Earthquake struck, or who were closely identified with the city. Although the people who lived through the disaster immediately recognized that they were witnessing history, many also soon recognized the potency of what Joan Scott has called the temptation to treat "experience as incontestable evidence."⁴⁸ The ability to wield the authority of experience as irreducible

knowledge gave writers who wrote dispatches for national magazines a significant opening to muscle their way into larger conversations about nature, science, and the future of San Francisco. As illustrated by the case of Yosemite, however, experience and knowledge were unstable and highly contested categories, central to critiques of intellectual authority from John Muir to *Martin Eden*.⁴⁹ The demand for personal narratives can also be attributed to changing patterns of news consumption. The notion that news consists of the objective representation of a reality was not as embedded in the journalistic conventions of 1906 as it was even twenty years later; the reporter's subjectivity could even enhance an article's authority.⁵⁰

Unraveling the tangled web of disaster descriptions therefore demands careful attention to modes of address, tropes, and ways of thinking about representation itself. Although the articles solicited by national magazines demonstrated awareness of what readers wanted—"sensational personal details," as Gertrude Atherton put it in *Harper's Weekly*—the discursive field created by the sudden demand for stories became an opportunity for artists and scholars to attempt to marshal new publics and claim a new type of identity as public intellectuals.⁵¹ This reading follows the critic Michael Warner's argument that by achieving wide circulation, or specifically by obtaining widespread attention, texts can become organizing mechanisms for publics. "Public discourse," explains Warner, "craves attention like a child. Texts clamor at us. Images solicit our gaze. Look here! Listen! Hey!"⁵² Through modes of address, writers can seek to manipulate this process in advance, but once a text is unleashed the precise contours of its reception is difficult to predict. Warner thus offers, like Franco Moretti, a Darwinian model in which subtle variations allow some texts to catch hold and others to vanish.⁵³ Indeed, a survey of post-disaster narratives reveals an array of practical goals such as rebuilding the city,

protecting its credit, advancing scientific knowledge, and validating regional literature—some of which caught hold more firmly than others.

The earthquake struck at a moment when magazines, according to John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, “were the only national communications medium” and served as “the voice of the vast middle class.” And for a few weeks in April 1906, the attention of these magazines was fixed squarely on California. The most extensive coverage appeared in *Harper’s Weekly*, which devoted a large part of four issues to the disaster. Even an article on an unrelated topic opened with the observation: “In the week of the burning of San Francisco ordinary news had a hard time to get any notice. People had no thoughts and newspapers no space for anything but San Francisco.”⁵⁴ The sense of frenzy was evident in the first issue of *Harper’s* after the quake, which included an emergency supplement added “just as we go to press.” The supplement was filled with alarming misinformation about the scale of the disaster, including the claim that the Cliff House, which in fact sustained little damage, had “slipped into the Sea.”⁵⁵ One reason for *Harper’s* lengthy coverage was the belief of its editor, George Harvey, that the rebuilding of San Francisco was an allegory for the resilience and beneficence of U.S. imperialism. His editorial comments in the weeks following the disaster emphasized this point repeatedly, with San Francisco cast as an urban outpost destined for renewed greatness due to its role in the broader geography of empire. His stance was not unique among the editors of national magazines; as historian Kevin Rozario has noted, “A talent for seeing mangled bodies and burnt-out buildings as signs of progress was widely shared among Harvey’s class.”⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Harvey’s enthusiasm for San Francisco’s reconstruction was inextricable from his efforts to position *Harper’s Weekly* as a mouthpiece for American imperial aspirations. Even the magazine’s masthead telegraphed Harvey’s vision of benevolent empire—complete with free postage—in

the wake of the Spanish American War: “Postage free to all Subscribers in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Hawaii, Porto Rico, the Philippine Islands, Guam, and Tutuila, Samoa.”⁵⁷ In one post-disaster editorial, for example, Harvey argued that San Francisco “is endowed imperishably with an imperial future, with the queenship of the Pacific, by her vast and almost landlocked bay.”⁵⁸ From his vantage point in New York, Harvey had much confidence in his vision of California’s future significance but little awareness of the complex networks of knowledge production that shaped intellectual life in the San Francisco Bay Area.

These literary and scientific networks would become the primary source of content for *Harper’s Weekly* in the wake of the disaster. Alongside his editorials, Harvey published articles by San Francisco writers such as Gertrude Atherton, Herman Whitaker, and James Hopper, not all of whom echoed his perspective. For example, the May 5, 1906, issue included an article by San Francisco novelist Miriam Michelson, who cast the Earthquake as a sudden break from the innocence of the *fin de siècle*. Michelson—who later contributed a story to an anthology edited by novelist Gertrude Atherton to raise money for relief efforts—was one of several writers who advanced the “Old San Francisco/New San Francisco” framework as an explanatory rubric for putting to rest San Francisco’s niche literary reputation as a source of “local color” by banishing it to the past.⁵⁹ Among the tropes that constituted this framework was the image of a calm-before-the-storm. “At 5.15,” wrote Michelson, “the city was still asleep. An early student, a rattling milk-wagon, the carrier delivering the papers, had the morning to themselves.” After a moment’s complacency owing to familiarity with earthquakes—even fairly strong ones—Michelson describes being shaken out of her expectations by the realization “that this was the real thing in earthquakes.” Implicit in Michelson’s account was the notion that California had entered a new, more uncertain relationship with nature that would require careful planning to

overcome. As Michelson put it, “what a fearful distrust of solid earth was born in our hearts then! It will never leave us. We know now that stone pavements can crackle and crunch like finely split kindling-wood.” The rest of Michelson’s narrative involved wandering around the city witnessing the transformation of hardened hierarchies into newer, supposedly more egalitarian relationships. Like other writers, Michelson used people of color as metonyms for the destroyed “Old San Francisco” that would be relegated to the past. She described “a group of negresses” and “a chattering crowd of Chinamen” as part of a “fearful hegira,” or “exodus from the doomed city,” even though most refugees remained well within the city’s borders in camps located in the huge parks of western San Francisco.⁶⁰

The next three issues of *Harper’s Weekly* included a steady stream of articles contributed by San Francisco writers, scientists, and engineers, particularly those who—in contrast to the regionalist, populist-minded, nature-driven modernism of public intellectuals like Austin and Keeler—envisioned the disaster as an opportunity for careful master planning. The May 12th issue featured Gertrude Atherton’s article, “San Francisco’s Tragic Dawn,” on the cover of the magazine. Echoing Michelson’s emphasis on the destruction of “Old San Francisco,” Atherton cast much of her article as an elegy for an eclectic architectural aesthetic that would soon, in her view, be superseded by new construction.⁶¹ Granting that “Old San Francisco” was “a great cosmopolitan city with a bit of Hong Kong in its middle and of Italy on its skirts,” Atherton expressed hope that this cultural diversity would be relegated out of sight in a new plan for rebuilding San Francisco as an imperial metropolis worthy of “Athens in the height of her glory.”⁶² As Atherton put it:

But while we are all excited over the prospect of the new and ‘most beautiful city in America,’ there are few of us that were born and brought up here that will not regret the old San Francisco, which, if ugly, was the most individual and interesting of cities, full of queer landmarks, traditions, and associations.⁶³

Atherton's Progressive politics and close relationship with the city's establishment put her at odds with bohemians like Mary Austin, who maintained a lifelong dislike of Atherton as a conservative with few original ideas. Several times in the article, Atherton positioned herself as speaking from "across the bay" in Berkeley, a detail that excused her from offering "horrifying details," or a series of disconnected images, and instead allowed her to offer a prescription for rebuilding.⁶⁴ Arguing that San Francisco should be rebuilt along City Beautiful principles, Atherton felt that the "hyper-civilization or frivolity" of life before the disaster had sapped the city of political will. It was this complacency that she hoped the disaster would sweep away. Unlike Michelson, who cast the earthquake as the source of a "fearful distrust of nature," Atherton argued that the reminder of living in "partnership with Nature" would accelerate a "deindividualizing process" from which the city could put aside personal interests and make a collective plan for rebuilding with the common good in mind.⁶⁵

In place of the "picturesquely ugly and shabby city," its public culture supposedly weakened by its haphazard built environment and diverse demographics, Atherton argued for the implementation of the Burnham Plan, a comprehensive master plan drawn up the year before by Daniel Burnham, chief architect of the neoclassical White City for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Although Burnham plan was in fact a pastiche of styles, Atherton saw in the plan the promise of a public culture sanitized of racial and ethnic diversity and haphazard construction.⁶⁶ Atherton had been given a copy of the plan a few days before the April 17th disaster by James Phelan, former mayor of San Francisco. As it turned out, San Francisco's business community rejected the plans and began rebuilding the city by their own initiative with an influx of capital from fire insurance and other sources.⁶⁷ In the immediate aftermath, however, the outcome was far from clear, and writers like Atherton sought to use the platform of

Harper's Weekly to parlay the disaster into a tool for political action. In this respect, Atherton's article was echoed by that of engineer Henry Harrison Suplee, who on May 26, 1906, published an article, "The Sermon in San Francisco's Stones," that cast the rubble of the city as a laboratory for innovative engineering.

Despite the "sermon" of its title, Suplee's article was not, in fact, an estimate of divine judgment but rather an argument for "how the new city may be made proof against devastation by earthquake and fire."⁶⁸ Writing in *Harper's Weekly* over a month after the disaster, Suplee cast the ruins as a public classroom, using the language of ontological transformation—Old San Francisco vs. New San Francisco—to make the case for his vision of the built environment. In the ruins could be found answers to "many of the questions which must be met if the new San Francisco is to stand on the old site, assured of safety and freed from apprehension for the future." Suplee's overriding concern for security against future disasters echoed the concerns of commercial leaders for protecting the city's credit rating. His more technocratic bent, however, manifested in a desire to tamp down on the activities of individual businesses. He used the language of housekeeping, common among Progressive reformers, to reconfigure the disaster as a painful but necessary purification, and he offered solutions in which purposeful action meant following the advice, or learning the lessons, of experts like himself:

[I]t is within the power of the engineer and architect so to direct the work of reconstruction that no similar disaster need be feared in the future. But that this result may be attained, it is essential that many individual interests yield to the common good, and that a broad and comprehensive system of reconstruction be adopted before individual action shall have gone so far as to render united operation impracticable.⁶⁹

It is this strand of early-twentieth-century reform that struck some observers as antidemocratic, predicated as it was on a fetishization of the blank slate and the conquering of history (not unlike high modernist architects such as Le Corbusier). Indeed, there is a certain violence to Suplee's

assertion that “now that the ground has been so effectively cleared, there is no reason why the rebuilt city should not be far safer than any of its contemporaries which have not been purified by the ordeal of fire.”⁷⁰

Thus while Suplee saw the disaster as a tool for social change, he differed from many of the literary contributors to *Harper's* in limiting its use to a certain type of expertise. This expertise had its foundation in empiricism: “When, of two buildings, the one is taken and the other left, we need only look at what remains to learn the story. The story is full of lessons.”⁷¹ Like Le Corbusier, Suplee's particular zealotry was for structural steel as opposed to “ordinary” brick or wood construction, and on the authority of the “sermon” in the fallen stones, he was uncompromising: “The ruins of San Francisco mark the failure of ordinary brick, set with ordinary care, in ordinary lime mortar.”⁷² Casting improved technical education as the ultimate solution to these problems, Suplee proposed that labor organizations and capitalists alike must be brought in line with a new series of building codes. Sympathetic or not to such proposals, other *Harper's* contributors differed sharply in their approach to the production of knowledge; like Michelson's account of her “distrust of solid earth,” these texts positioned the built environment as a form of representation as ephemeral as any other.

Two such examples—by Julie Heyneman and James Hopper—were essentially stories about the failure of “solid earth” to mean what it used to mean. “In every familiar object is the threat of death,” wrote Heyneman (under the pen name Cecil Chard) in the May 19th issue of *Harper's Weekly*. “Fear,” she continued, “is the only sensation left in a universe that reels and shakes like a storm-tossed vessel.”⁷³ Hopper echoed these points in articles for both *Harper's Weekly* and *Everybody's*. Even William James, who experienced the Earthquake in Palo Alto while in residence at Stanford University, marveled at the sense that the ground had come to life,

observing in the *Youth's Companion* that “it was impossible not to conceive [the earthquake] as animated by a will, so vicious was the temper displayed.”⁷⁴ Whereas Heyneman’s article, “The Long Day,” grappled with the disruption of temporal experience, Hopper tackled the central modernist dilemma of representing an urban space that is too complex to possibly be mastered by a single author. For Heyneman and Hopper alike, security could not simply be assured through better building codes, but also demanded new modes of writing and new ways of imagining community. The lessons of the catastrophe, for them, were not as clear-cut as engineers like Suplee imagined. Instead, they grappled with the complicated and painful modes of experience that the disaster had opened. For them, the city had become a classroom for experiencing place from a wholly new perspective.

Like Michelson and others, Heyneman opens with the trope of a calm-before-the-storm. Having attended *Carmen* the night before (this is a recurring point in narratives of the disaster), Heyneman lingers with her party at the Palace Hotel, discussing the opera “with the deep earnestness which we waste upon immaterial things. Then we strolled homeward through the silent streets, commenting on the quiet, starlit beauty of the night.”⁷⁵ Despite the focus on collective experience (Heyneman uses “we” throughout), the article is structured around temporal rupture.⁷⁶ The clear division of the article into three sections (“morning,” “noon,” and “night”) is subverted by the chaotic, non-linear experience. As Heyneman described the moment of the earthquake: “There was no beginning to the tragedy. Peaceful slumber was exchanged, by a process too swift for thought, for chaos.” Then: “Everything that a moment before had been inert and motionless is suddenly possessed with hideous life.”⁷⁷ As these sentences illustrate, the effect of temporal dislocation is amplified by transitions from past to present tense and back again. For the most part, the past tense is coded as an indicator of security, signaling the

consolidation of thought from moments of collective reflection. Yet these moments are shattered by the unpredictable pace of sensory experience. Time moves both fast and slow (“It is incredible with what swiftness rumors become facts, and still time creeps along on leaden feet”), due to the collapse of usual communication channels (“we are cut off from the world”).⁷⁸ The article closes not with a solution for preventing such a disaster in the future, but rather with the insight that such planning can be strangely disconnected from what is happening in the existing community. “Overawed,” she writes, “by the terrible magnificence of the spectacle being enacted in the east and along the whole plain to the southern horizon, it was, strangely enough, possible for one to think, to form plans, even to hope—while the work of wholesale annihilation went on.”⁷⁹

Hopper reaches a similar conclusion, though he focuses more on the disorientation of space rather than time. When the earthquake struck, Hopper’s impulse as a reporter for the *San Francisco Call* was to begin the work of gathering information. Soon, however, he found himself overwhelmed by the task: it was impossible, he discovered, for a single person to capture a “story” that was occurring simultaneously in all parts of the city, and indeed the region.⁸⁰ He eventually published articles in two journals: *Everybody’s* and *Harper’s Weekly*. In the title of his *Everybody’s* piece, “Our San Francisco,” one can glimpse the rationale for his approach.⁸¹ Although he, too, opens his article with the image of *Carmen* and calm (“The night struck me as particularly peaceful”), and closes it on a note of apparent desolation (“It was as if I walked through a dead city”), Hopper resists the language of “Old San Francisco” and “New San Francisco.” Instead of asserting that the city is dead, Hopper treats this death as figurative—“it was *as if* I walked through a dead city”—rather than ontologically decisive. In another example, he notes how the Fairmont Hotel, “*like* a great Greek temple upon its hill, was blazing *like* a

funeral pyre.” His solution to the impossibility of capturing the entire city in a single story is to cover as much ground as possible, using short declarative sentences constructed around verbs (“I went up to my room.” “I got up and walked to the window.” “I went down to the *Call* to report.” “I went back to Market Street and stopped an automobile.” “Back to the paper we whizzed.”).

It should be noted that Hopper’s strategy for coping emerges over the course of the article. Its narrative arc follows the movement from disorientation to confidently traversing the city. Like Michelson, Heyneman, and James, Hopper initially casts the earthquake as a living creature: “It pounced upon the earth as some sidereal bulldog, with a rattle of hungry eagerness. The earth was a rat, shaken in the grinding teeth, shaken, shaken, shaken, with periods of slight weariness followed by new bursts of vicious rage.” His terror soon transitions into “a strange elation” of reportorial possibility:

As I walked slowly down the street I was very busy taking notes—for the paper. “Such and such number, such and such street, cornice down; this building, roof down; that building crumbled.” And then, “Good Lord!” I exclaimed to myself after a while, with childish peevishness, “I’m not going to take a list of all the buildings in the city!” I kept on going toward the paper. I thought that I was observing very carefully, but I wasn’t.⁸²

Here Hopper mentions two representational limitations—the scope of the disaster and the clouding of judgment from shock. Both of these resolve into the decision to “keep on going toward the paper,” as if the duty and process of reporting helped stabilize his disorientation by giving him something to do.

In this sense of purpose we see another possible implication of his title, “Our San Francisco.” Although the editor of *Everybody’s* prefaced the article by asserting that “his whole literary life has trained him to see and feel and tell this story,” Hopper’s use of “our” rather than “my” draws attention to his role in San Francisco’s literary community, and interpellates the reader—Easterner or Westerner—into a sense of identification with what is lost. Indeed, the

editor's prefatory remark underscores the sense of breakthrough that the disaster brought to the region's literati in the form of access to national periodicals. In the article, Hopper describes checking up on his friends Henry Anderson Lafler, who contributed an article to *McClure's*, and Xavier Martinez, a painter trained in Paris and relocated to Piedmont after the disaster.⁸³ The *Berkeley Reporter* similarly emphasized camaraderie, crediting Mary Austin with "working day and night aiding in the work of relief, doing red cross service and baking biscuits and bread for the hungry."⁸⁴ Likewise the *Argonaut* noted that the disaster had driven artists out of the studio and into new modes of artistic production and sociability. Of Xavier Martinez, it wrote: "The shaking and burning of Martinez out of his old studio in Montgomery street, sent him out into the country, a fact which may be put to the credit of the calamity. He had been painting studio pictures, pure and simple, and the inspiration which characterized former work seemed to have left him entirely."⁸⁵ In short, by selecting "Our San Francisco" as the title of his piece, Hopper seems to have had in mind what Rebecca Zurier has called "the city on paper," the collective representational project of journalists, artists, scientists, and novelists alike.⁸⁶

Hopper's article for *Harper's Weekly*, "A Stricken City's Days of Terror," was published nearly a month before his article in *Everybody's* and functioned as a sort of first draft. In *Harper's*, unlike the later version, Hopper's realization that he cannot capture everything is subordinated to his persona as an intrepid reporter. "I am a newspaper man," he notes, "and I began to think of my paper and my responsibilities toward it...I walked slowly down the street, taking notes of injured buildings that seemed to me of value for the paper."⁸⁷ After a parataxical compression of the day's activities—driving, eating, rescuing, writing—Hopper notes: "Out of that experience several pictures remain detached but vivid." His subsequent list of strange and titillating images, very much in the mode of "local color" writing, would seem to support the

historian David Wyatt's observation that "The San Francisco earthquake and fire mark the eclipse, in California, of a world of dimension and depth. . . . As the century turned, both still and moving photography were beginning to create an alternative universe."⁸⁸ Here Wyatt puts Hopper's attempts at vivid ekphrasis in the context of the heightened demand by illustrated magazines for sensational photographs of disasters and other current events.⁸⁹

Without a doubt, photography functioned as a powerful authorizing device during the disaster. Alongside an article by writer and poet Henry Anderson Lafler, *McClure's* published a photograph of Lafler at a typewriter in a park, legitimizing his status as an "eyewitness" by showing him writing the dispatch in the midst of the burning of the city (fig. 2). The photograph was accompanied by a caption that sought to affirm its authenticity: "This photograph of Mr. Lafler was taken unawares to him. He afterwards came across it accidentally."⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Hopper's revision of his article for *Everybody's* into a collective biography suggests that Wyatt's reading underestimates the complexity and diversity of responses to the disaster. In light of the *Everybody's* piece, the flattened individualism of Hopper's shorter article in *Harper's* suggests that it was edited to serve the latter magazine's agenda of linking the disaster to a nationalist future in which the "New San Francisco" would buttress American domination in the Pacific. This was the running thread connecting the high modernist visions of Atherton, Suplee, and the *Harper's* editors. By contrast, writers such as Keeler and Austin—and, significantly, James—shifted emphasis from the rebuilding of the city to the ways the disaster put interpersonal bonds of community to the test.

Wyatt is thus mistaken in concluding that "James and the Californians he wrote about survived the earthquake and fire by subsuming the experiencing into the spectatorial self."⁹¹ Far from turning to the distance of spectatorship for relief, James embraced experience—particularly

the proximity to others wrought by *collective* experience—as the primary redemptive aspect of the disaster. James explained this point in his account of the disaster, first published in *Youth's Companion* on June 7, 1906, and posthumously reprinted five years later.

In our drawing-rooms and offices we wonder how people ever *do* go through battles, sieges and shipwrecks. We quiver and sicken in imagination, and think those heroes superhuman. Physical pain, whether suffered alone or in company, is always more or less unnerving and intolerable. But metal pathos and anguish, I fancy, *are usually effects of distance*. At the place of action, where all are concerned together, healthy animal insensibility and heartiness take their place.⁹²

By casting intense experience as a source of empathy, James did not flatten the disaster to an object of spectatorship, but rather emphasized the radical distance between our perception of strangers in the press and actual face-to-face interactions.⁹³ “Private miseries,” he added, were merged “in the all-absorbing practical problem of general recuperation.”⁹⁴ Much like the difference between a reading room and a classroom, the disaster brought together groups of people to solve collective problems rather than dwelling on their own individual challenges. In other words, far from endorsing Atherton’s vision of a sanitized public sphere sustained by the distancing awe of neoclassical architecture, James saw the burning landscape of San Francisco as a place “where all are concerned together” already. This tension between competing visions of community underscores the degree to which the written dispatches following the earthquake were part of a process of place-making—one that was performed for new publics in national magazines but contested as well in local universities and the local press.⁹⁵

Rupture and Community: “Californianism” and Boosterism after the Earthquake

According to the historian Barbara Berglund, San Francisco elites were preoccupied, on the eve of the disaster, with proving that their city “had gone from the social disorder of the gold rush years to a society organized along lines that were much more in keeping with national

norms.”⁹⁶ The decision to reject the Burnham Plan as a template for rebuilding the city in 1906 represented, Berglund continues, the degree to which elites had already managed to construct ordered hierarchies of race, class, and gender.⁹⁷ Indeed, much of the agitation for the Burnham Plan sought to move even further in the direction of white supremacy. An article on rebuilding the city in *The Literary Digest* was typical: “The new San Francisco will be a cleaner, saner, and safer city. The rookeries and tenements have been annihilated and Chinatown has disappeared. The new San Francisco will not be a city of traditions.”⁹⁸ Although the city’s post-disaster racial imaginary was most visible in regard to the debate over rebuilding, it was crucial, as well, to the modes of public engagement employed by professors from the University of California as they worked the disaster into various disciplinary discourses.

Some of these projects were explicitly designed to create archives of the disaster via contributions from readers. In the criteria they provide for acceptable contributions, these pieces simultaneously created and constricted the type of information that would ultimately comprise the archives they envisioned. One such article, “The Earthquake Commission,” was published on April 28, 1906, in the *Mining and Scientific Press*. The article describes the formation of the California State Earthquake Investigation Commission—led by Andrew Lawson, a professor of geology at Berkeley and active member of the scientific club scene—which eventually published two lengthy volumes on the disaster.⁹⁹ The Commission claimed authority partly by contrasting itself with more sensational perspectives published in national magazines. At its first meeting, the group issued a short “statement” meant to calm fears “in view of the alarming reports which had been circulated.” This suggests that the Commission envisioned a reciprocal relationship with its publics, and indeed at its second meeting the Commission issued a request for information to be sent to Berkeley for inclusion in the official report. As the *Mining and*

Scientific Press noted in an addendum: “We trust that any of our readers that can help the cause of science and the safety of our people, by transmitting such data as are requested by the Commission, will do so at once, while their memory is fresh.”¹⁰⁰

The bulk of the Commission’s request details the nine categories of information. For the most part, the guidelines attempt to control for qualitative assessments by minimizing room for improvisation. For example, the longest explanation involves a request for “the intensity of the earthquake on the Rossi-Forel Scale” along with a description for each point on the one-to-ten scale. The seventh category, “time of commencement and duration,” is the most heavily qualified. In so doing, the commission seems to be training readers in its methodology:

The exact time of the beginning of a shock (to the nearest second), one of the most important of all observations, is difficult to get correctly . . . because the watch or clock must be immediately compared with a clock known to be keeping standard time. . . . The observation cannot be regarded as a good one, unless it is stated that this has been done.¹⁰¹

The Commission envisioned its archive as a statistical composite of many different observers, but at the same time limited participation to those readers who could “immediately” check their clocks against standard time. Thus the Commission specified telegraph operators, watchmakers, and railroad officials as ideal sources.

Lawson’s availability to devote his time to the Commission’s work owed in large part to the University’s immediate closure following the Earthquake. According to Joseph Nisbet LeConte—photographer, engineer, and son of Joseph LeConte the elder—the cessation of classes allowed him to accompany Lawson on some of his investigations of fault lines. Although the University suffered severe financial losses from the destruction of its many properties in San Francisco, the main reason for closure was that its students took on a leading role in patrolling the streets of San Francisco.¹⁰² Although some hoped the participation of student cadets would

reflect well on Berkeley, the growing class divisions between San Francisco and the University of California quickly became apparent as many students lacked the social ability to cooperate with local law enforcement. After students pointed guns at police and shot a Japanese resident for disobeying orders, one San Francisco policeman wrote, “These young fellows are causing no end of trouble.”¹⁰³ That some students believed they were entering a situation of unfettered chaos can be seen in the recollections of Lesley Einstein, a student at Berkeley involved in the patrols, who wrote, “People seemed to lose all control of themselves and began to shriek and run to the middle of the streets.”¹⁰⁴ In his narrative, Joseph Nisbet LeConte also noted that “the students in the Military Department were needed to guard San Francisco,” and that he himself had just returned from the city after attending *Carmen* the night before.¹⁰⁵

The juxtaposition of military patrols and theater, supposedly far removed from Lawson’s scientific work, underscores the racial and cultural boundaries of the Commission’s project. In engineer D’Arcy Weatherbe’s account of the disaster—published alongside the Earthquake Commission’s request for information in the April 28, 1906, issue of *Mining and Scientific Press*—trigger-happy guards were needed to deal with the refugees from Chinatown and the city’s Barbary Coast district. The streets thronged, according to Weatherbe, with people who “looked more like leprous animals than human beings, and many had probably not been out of their over-crowded dens for years.” From the Barbary Coast, meanwhile, “beasts in human shape in every stage of drunkenness, and delirious from stolen liquor taken from wrecked saloons, shouted or sang in a perfect pandemonium.”¹⁰⁶ The publication of such observations alongside the Commission’s request make clear the strict limits to the public—educated white readers of a trade journal—that Lawson and other scientists envisioned as potential participants in compiling knowledge of the earthquake.

In addition to Lawson's Earthquake Commission, the University of California was also involved in more qualitative archival efforts. One such group, "The Committee on History and Statistics," was described in an article, "Preparing a History of Quake and Fire," in *The Evening Post* on May 8, 1906. Though interested in statistics as well, the committee's guidelines seem to have embraced subjective experiences, apparently with the goal of creating an archive conducive to the future production of historical narratives (though the whereabouts of the Committee on History and Statistics' collection is unknown).¹⁰⁷ The committee—which included Berkeley history professor H. Morse Stevens and several of his students—clearly placed a premium on individual experience, as indicated by the adverbs in its description of the public it envisioned: "that part of the community which suffered *directly* from the calamity *personally*."¹⁰⁸ The subheading to its list of questions—"Want Experiences"—made the group's aims unmistakable. Indeed, the questions included "What was your personal experience?" (#3), "What was your personal experience during the fire?" (#5), and "Give your personal experience of the work of relief" (#10). The questions also included a request for "personal observations" about the performance of "the University Cadets" in ensuring "the perfection of order." On the whole, the questions suggest that Stevens and the others on the Committee saw the aggregation of a multiplicity of personal experiences as crucial to "the formation of an accurate historical record."

The efforts of the Earthquake Commission and Committee on History and Statistics to use rudimentary crowd-sourcing to gather information did not always coincide with the aims of local boosters. On the whole, the publishing decisions of regional magazines in the aftermath of the disaster—including *Sunset* and *Overland Monthly*—focused most intensely on bolstering the city's ability to attract investment by downplaying risk factors and emphasizing the health of the San Francisco's finances. In the months following the disaster, contributors to *Overland*

Monthly included Arthur Inkersley and former mayor James D. Phelan—men with close ties to the city’s business community.¹⁰⁹ As others have noted, the strategy of boosters involved downplaying the role of the earthquake itself by shifting attention to the presumably more preventable danger of fire.¹¹⁰

Boosters also used the local press to push back against the notion that the city had been destroyed, a common motif of articles by writers dissatisfied with the status quo ante. Indeed, *Sunset* published an article, “The City That Is,” as a direct rebuttal to “The City That Was,” a narrative of destruction that journalist Will Irwin, a graduate of Stanford and member of the Bohemian Club, used to launch his career in New York.¹¹¹ William Reedy, editor of *Reedy’s Mirror* in St. Louis, took a similar approach in an article, “The City That Has Fallen,” which cast San Francisco as a place with an “aesthetic atmosphere” where “business, politics, the law, life, all life was picturesque and blood color.”¹¹² Needless to say, these were not the preferred narratives of the city’s commercial establishment. By casting the disaster as manageable, the boosters writing in *Sunset* and *Overland Monthly* were seeking to restore a sense of agency and confidence that had been disrupted by the “distrust of solid earth” that Michelson noted in her *Harper’s Weekly* piece.

Unlike the Earthquake Commission, boosters used science as a mere patina to justify their pursuit of confidence. For example, in a 1908 article by real estate publicist William Magee, “Two Years Later,” *Sunset* published numerous “facts and figures” to give the impression that everything was under control. The article’s vernacular mode of address is apparent in its summary of its multiple table and graphs: “Some of the figures are startling—they’re not nearly as dry as they look.”¹¹³ Similarly the caption to the first graph states: “Figures that tell better than words how San Francisco is righting itself.” As tools for storytelling,

however, the figures were subordinated to Magee's narrative goals. The slippery quality of the statistics in the graphs can be illustrated by one in particular, a table of real estate values in eleven American cities. Although there are eight columns in the table, the caption ("Table 'A,' showing that San Francisco's mortgage debt today is lower than that of any other large city in the United States") only directly relates to two: "cities" and "estimated mortgage indebtedness." In this light, the graph falls apart, since six of the eleven cities lack data for the key category. The function of the six other columns becomes clear: they help sustain the illusion that the statistics are substantive by merely increasing the quantity of numbers on the page.

In one sense, the practical aim of the article was to seek financing for reconstruction, since its author concludes that, "with the remarkable basis of security indicated in the above figures, San Francisco should be able to induce large amounts of capital to come here for loans on mortgages."¹¹⁴ At the same time, *Sunset* also echoed the narrative of therapeutic experience that became an important strand of California boosterism. To this end, the article's appeal for capital was balanced by a celebration of struggle-as-growth—of the disaster as an impromptu classroom—that echoed the essays of James and others: "The period has been one of stress and struggle, and yet no San Franciscan who has been through it would have missed it for five years in routine civilization."¹¹⁵ Indeed, this point was emphasized in another *Sunset* article, "Two University Presidents Speak for the City," featuring Benjamin Ide Wheeler, president of the University of California, and David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University. Both Wheeler and Jordan spoke in "vigorous defense and protest in reply to Eastern critics," namely "anonymous correspondents of eastern journals."¹¹⁶

Both presidents also portrayed San Francisco as a place where the excesses of modernity were being salvaged by virile white masculinity. In so doing, they embraced an understanding of

the public sphere as a domain constituted by white liberal bodies at risk of what Gail Bederman has called “overcivilization.”¹¹⁷ This is why so many of the narratives that cast the Earthquake as a rupture—and the access to culture industries as a new beginning—nevertheless claimed their own redemptive stake in the “Old San Francisco.” Wheeler and Jordan, on the other hand, made the case that the region’s social order had not only retained, but strengthened its foundation in rugged white masculinity. Thus Wheeler wrote of Californians as “a people of quick blood, moody and outright, fond of its liberties . . . [and] not much given to the machinelike unities of corporate action. Jordan added that this spirit of “Californianism” involved vanishingly little “of what in older communities is called Public Opinion,” which he defined as the efforts of “maiden aunts” to determine “at the tea-table how men ought to behave.” He went on to explicitly link this model of California masculinity to a social vision of white supremacy, one that he repeatedly embraced in speeches and writings about Stanford University’s student body. Jordan scorned unnamed “Eastern critics” who attributed the spirit of “Californianism” to climate or cosmopolitanism. Instead, he argued that the polyglot atmosphere of “Old San Francisco” was a source of “vulgar weakness only” and that “its cosmopolitanism was conspicuous as a cause of bad government, wasted revenues, and vile environment.” “In my judgment,” Jordan concluded, “the essential source of Californianism lies in heredity.”¹¹⁸

Given Jordan’s prominent role in the region’s scientific community, his embrace of eugenics played an important role in debates over the public purposes of scientific investigation, particularly in the wake of the earthquake. Jordan edited an anthology in the aftermath of the disaster that compiled several scientific reports along with an article written by Mary Austin for *Out West* magazine. While some engineers, like Henry Harrison Suplee, positioned scientific knowledge as a means for reconstructing the city on improved principles of construction, others

saw the earthquake as a source of deeper theoretical lessons. Some projects, moreover, had both practical and theoretical angles. The California State Earthquake Investigation Commission was an example of this, since the public service it provided was both short-term (as indicated by its efforts to ease widespread fears) and long-term (reaching a better understanding of geological phenomena). Another such example was an article, “A Story in Stone,” written by Thomas A. Rickard, an engineer and editor of the *Mining and Scientific Press*, on May 5, 1906.¹¹⁹ Rickard’s article does not even mention the disaster. Rather, he tells the story of a small pebble in terms of “geological time,” thereby seeking to reassure readers by connecting earthquakes to long-term processes of geological and biological evolution. “The life of a generation,” writes Rickard, “is to the age of this pebble as a dewdrop to the sea.”¹²⁰

The short-term purpose of Rickard’s article is apparent in its modes of address. The direct command of his opening sentence—“Look at it for a moment”—resurfaces again and again throughout the narrative, positioning the reader as a student. The article is less an attempt to convey information than a primer on scientific method as a means of assimilating shocking phenomena like the earthquake into an existing, and thus comforting, system of knowledge. Regarding the pebble, Rickard writes: “To trace its origins we must penetrate through the mists of a dim remoteness guided only by that fairy of science which men call the constructive imagination.” Despite his romantic tone, Rickard sticks with the theme of scientific knowledge-production throughout. “We observe,” he writes, “Nature’s handiwork today and thus infer her method in that geologic past . . . This is the key to all geological research.” By describing spatial movements in the life of the pebble, including water erosion, volcanic explosions, and glacial movement, Rickard puts the earthquake in perspective in relation to long-term geologic and evolutionary processes. From the millennium-long story of the pebble, readers are presumably

to take comfort. “We cannot stay its wandering, we may put it on a shelf or throw it into a corner, but it will fulfill its purpose nevertheless.” The sense of comfort is bound up in a sort of religious awe at the scale of geologic processes, an awe that nevertheless remains tethered to geology as a practical scientific discourse. “There is poetry,” concludes Rickard, “even among the pages of geology.”¹²¹

Austin, too, emphasized the poetic dimensions of the disaster in her article for *Out West* magazine. Specifically, Austin adopted the spectatorial orientation of “the botanist and the poet” while simultaneously connecting the representational challenge posed by the earthquake to her own, more holistic idea of knowledge-as-experience. On the one hand, she playfully notes that “San Franciscans never lost the spirited sense of being audience to their own performance” and illustrates this response in the structure of the article through jumps from anecdote to anecdote. On the other hand, she explains her discomfort with such representational patterns, noting: “It was all like this, broken bits of human tragedy, curiously unrelated, inconsequential, disrupted by the temblor, impossible to this day to gather up and compose into a proper picture.” The notion of a “proper picture” here does not refer to the snapshots being produced by the thousands, but rather the deeper, fuller sort of understanding she had attempted to convey in her nature writing, particularly *The Land of Little Rain* (1903). Thus even though Austin bemoans “the inadequacy of my terms,” she ultimately responded much like Hopper and Heyneman by trying to reach toward a cohesive whole. Despite the impulse to reduce experience to spectatorship, “the bulk of San Franciscans,” in Austin’s view, “discovered the place and the spirit to be home rather than the walls and the furnishings. No matter how the insurance totals foot up, what landmarks, what treasures of art are vanished, San Francisco, *our* San Francisco is all there yet.”¹²²

Tinged as it is with an anti-modern distaste for “man-contrivances,” Austin’s notion of a multi-layered sort of vision—or rather a way of imagining knowledge that moves beyond the problem of mimetic representation—resisted the onslaught of cameras that brought snapshots of ruin to readers across the world. Despite her utilization of the national press, Austin remained wary of the power of the modern culture industries to flatten the texture of places like California through the distribution of images that, in turn, served as a cultural shorthand. In an educational system driven by textbooks, images of ruin could become metonyms for the city, and regional culture could lose its vibrancy. Jack London, by contrast, was one of the dozens of amateur photographers who opted to roam the burning streets with handheld cameras.¹²³ He described the experience in an article, “The Story of an Eyewitness,” which appeared in *Collier’s* on May 5, 1906. London was offered a substantial sum for his services and reportedly agreed to write the piece largely because he needed the money.¹²⁴ Far from offering a vision of the city as a reconstituted whole, London used the disaster to critique the social and economic order that had been, in his view, destroyed.

His article conformed to the stark, metonymic style of many of his novels. Most notably, he saw the disaster as an unequivocal death to the city, an absolute ontological rupture. “Not in history,” wrote London, “has a modern imperial city been so completely destroyed. San Francisco is gone.”¹²⁵ London’s certainty about the revolutionary consequences of the disaster—developed through the image of the city as a capitalist organism suffering the inevitable consequences of disease—assumed a sort of representational mastery over the categorical whole of the city, offering a sequence of absolutes: “There was no organization, no communication.” “Surrender was complete.” “With me sat Japanese, Italians, Chinese, and negroes—a bit of the cosmopolitan flotsam of the wreck of the city...It was like the meeting of the handful of

survivors after the day of the end of the world.” Such passages would seem to lend credence to Vernon Parrington’s assessment of London as a writer “carried away by zeal of revolution.”¹²⁶ Yet if London’s article lacked nuance, his “zeal” helped him understand the disaster as an example of the creative destruction of capitalism.¹²⁷ Mary Austin too understood this, noting that “most man-made things do inherently carry the elements of their own destruction.”¹²⁸ This insight was the converse of those who welcomed the disaster as purification in advance of urban improvement that would escape the cycle of destruction—the converse, in short, of Atherton’s vision of a New White City or Suplee’s “Sermon in San Francisco’s Stones.”

In a larger sense, then, London’s representational choices can be understood as part of a strategy of activism. For London, getting the details “right” did not matter as much as making the larger connection of the disaster to capitalism. In making this connection, he located himself squarely within the critical tradition of bohemians in Paris and New York. As Walter Benjamin later observed of the nineteenth-century Paris Arcades, the creative destruction of the built environment was inextricably linked with a Progressive understanding of history, and it was the socio-economic logic of liberal Progressivism that many bohemians rebelled against.¹²⁹ Where some reformers saw the cleaning up of “cosmopolitan flotsam” as a good thing, bohemians tended to embrace this diversity, albeit under the fraught matrix of “slumming.”¹³⁰ The final two sentences of London’s article can thus be understood as deeply ironic; through the sudden shift from the apocalyptic tone of the rest of the article, he mocks the idea that post-disaster relief efforts were about compassion, and nothing more: “The Government has the situation in hand, and, thanks to the immediate relief given by the whole United States, there is not the slightest possibility of famine. The bankers and business men have already set about making preparations to rebuild San Francisco.” Here London encapsulates the message put forward by dozens of

writers closely associated with business interests in the city, but in his hands the spirit of the description is completely different. Although London has been treated as typical of the artists who abandoned San Francisco after the disaster of 1906—indeed he soon left for a two-year journey in the South Pacific—he spent much of his time abroad composing *Martin Eden* (1909), a novel of the relationship of Bay Area bohemians to the national culture industries after the Earthquake that poet Robert Hass has called “the only fictional portrait we have of Berkeley in the decade of the 1900s.”¹³¹

Martin Eden and The Heart Line as Disaster Allegories

For decades following the disaster, historians understood the art colony at Carmel on the Monterey Peninsula to be the greatest beneficiary of the apparent exodus of intellectuals from San Francisco. Those who spent significant time in Carmel after 1906 included Mary Austin, James Hopper, George Sterling, Henry Anderson Lafler, and several professors from Berkeley and Stanford. In his classic 1933 study of American bohemianism, *Garrets and Pretenders*, the historian Albert Parry called the decade following the disaster the “golden age of Carmel.”¹³² Likewise in her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, Austin romanticized these years by describing Carmel as a place that had not yet “suffered the metamorphosis of asphalt, concrete, and carbon monoxide, which go in the world of realtors by the name of improvements.”¹³³ Despite its visibility, however, Carmel was only one of many centers of artistic and literary production in the Bay Area after 1906. As historian Scott Shields notes, “the great exodus of artists from San Francisco to the Monterey Peninsula has been greatly exaggerated.”¹³⁴ More precisely, Carmel functioned as a temporary retreat for a highly mobile community of bohemians and scientists.

Also obscured by narratives of exodus from San Francisco to Carmel was the growing role of Berkeley and Oakland as artistic and intellectual centers. Although many Berkeleyans

journeyed often to Carmel, the Piedmont Hills above Oakland became a base from which the Arts and Crafts Movement and Hillside Club burgeoned, with such residents as architect Bernard Maybeck, Xavier Martinez, Charles Keeler, and Yoné Noguchi.¹³⁵ One important account of the Berkeley-Carmel-San Francisco circuit during this period was given in 1964 by Elsie Whitaker Martinez, the widow of artist Xavier Martinez and daughter of Herman Whitaker, who she describes conducting research on faults after the disaster on “assignment for *Harper’s Weekly*.”¹³⁶ As a young girl in Piedmont, Martinez recalled sitting in her father’s office and listening “to his friends—scientists exploring or expounding their theories, writers examining and criticizing each other’s work, engineers and entrepreneurs from the Arctic or the tropics.”¹³⁷ This intersection of scientists, bohemians, engineers, and entrepreneurs had much to do with the proximity of Piedmont to the University of California, which had long served as an important vehicle for conversations about both the theoretical and practical implications of new ideas.

Elsie and Xavier Martinez married shortly after the earthquake, which destroyed the latter’s studio and nearly killed him. Xavier had recently returned from training in Paris, where, Elsie claimed, he became transfixed with theories of a mestizo “new race” before joining “the small group that adopted the cause of the ‘Moderns.’”¹³⁸ After the disaster of 1906, Elsie and Xavier settled in the Piedmont Hills, where, in his wife’s words, Xavier worked in “a studio in the woods over by the old reservoir. He loved the life with us in Piedmont—the closeness to nature that stirred his Indian blood.”¹³⁹ Their first several years of marriage witnessed a great deal of movement from Berkeley to San Francisco to Carmel and back to Berkeley. Unlike other writers who left for New York and consistently sought publication with leading presses, Xavier Martinez cultivated a different sort of public, spending the next several decades teaching art and writing a column for a local Spanish-language newspaper, the *Hispano America*. As Elsie put it,

he “had wide interests and loved poetry, music and philosophy and the great cultures. To him the struggle for fame was not worth giving up the hours he devoted to them.”¹⁴⁰

This “struggle for fame” was at the heart of two novels published out of New York in the aftermath of the Earthquake—Jack London’s *Martin Eden* (1909) and Gelett Burgess’s *The Heart Line* (1907). Although neither made more than passing reference to the disaster, both represented book-length meditations on the issues that fellow members of the Bay Area literary and scientific community grappled with in national magazines, particularly the ability of unexpected events like the earthquake to catapult writers to fame. As a former instructor at the University of California and friend of Frank Norris, Burgess himself had struck gold in 1895 with a brief nonsense poem, “The Purple Cow,” that brought him international acclaim:

I never saw a purple cow
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I’d rather see than be one!

The poem’s popularity befuddled Burgess, who despite his frustration continued to receive inquiries about it for the rest of his life, including a note from Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1938, who wrote: “Long live the purple cow!”¹⁴¹

With *The Heart Line*, Burgess followed the path of Will Irwin, the California journalist who launched his career in New York after publishing a widely-read article, “The City That Was,” which mourned the romance of “Old San Francisco” after the Earthquake. Like Irwin, Burgess moved to New York to build connections that enabled him to publish *The Heart Line*, which capitalized on his familiarity with the city as a former reporter for *The Wave* and which he dedicated “In Memory of the City That Was.” A review of *The Heart Line* in the *San Francisco Call* echoed this romanticism, noting, “The book is filled with what we are used to calling local color. Places we all knew well before the fire are described.”¹⁴² Some of his friends in

California resented his abandonment of the region, including poet George Sterling, who a few years before committing suicide wrote to Burgess to say: “Of course we claim you as a Californian—you, the Irwins, and the other dear ‘expatriates.’”¹⁴³

The Heart Line’s plot revolves around several San Francisco spirit mediums—“Professor Vixley,” “Madam Spoil,” and others—who are exposed by local bohemians who, with little else to do but claim allegiance to modern science, stage an elaborate sting operation during a séance. These bohemians, thinly disguised versions of Burgess’s friends, gather to eat and drink every night at Fulda’s—a thinly disguised version of Coppa’s, the actual hangout destroyed in the earthquake—and accomplish little. The most talented of the crowd are “not long for San Francisco,” and in a passage that would have infuriated his friends, Burgess explained:

The artist, the writer or the musician must fly East to the great market-place, New York, or to the great forcing-bed, Paris, to bloom or fade, to live or die in competition with others in his field. . . . To have gone East and to have returned without abject failure is here, in the eyes of the vulgar, Art’s patent of nobility.¹⁴⁴

The culminating burst of activity—the sting—turns out to be an allegory of the smallness of the bohemian life in San Francisco as Burgess sees it. Despite calling “public attention” to the widespread fraud, the “outburst was one of the periodic upheavals of reform, but the talk would soon die down and business would be resumed in perfect safety by the charlatans.”¹⁴⁵ The book closes on the eve of the Earthquake and Fire, which similarly, according to Burgess, will neither exhaust San Francisco’s “treasury of Romance,” nor offer a shortcut to modernity.¹⁴⁶

Like Burgess, London’s *Martin Eden* included a full cast of thinly-veiled versions of his friends, including Brissenden, a poet modeled on George Sterling, who introduces Martin Eden (standing in for London himself) to “the real dirt”—San Francisco’s bohemian haunts in “the heart of the working-class ghetto, south of Market Street.”¹⁴⁷ Like other bohemian enclaves, the group involves several former professionals who disavow their class status and embrace poverty.

One is a “one time professor—fired from university—usual story.”¹⁴⁸ Martin himself is a former sailor and autodidact who falls in love with Ruth Morse, an undergraduate at Berkeley who inspires him to devote his life to study and writing. He sits at a typewriter for hours on end in his tiny North Oakland apartment, writing manuscripts that he sends on a seemingly endless cycle of rejection to presses across the United States—the “inhuman editorial machine”—even while living in desperate poverty. “Surely,” he decides, “there were no live, warm editors at the other end. It was all wheels and cogs and oil-cups—a clever mechanism operated by automatons.”¹⁴⁹ Despite this long period of rejection by publishers, Martin Eden remains in awe of Ruth’s education and class status, seeking etiquette advice on how to impress her from the librarian at the Oakland Public Library, a position held in London’s youth by the poet Ina Coolbrith. One afternoon he accompanies Ruth’s brother “to the University of California, and, with bated breath and a feeling of religious awe, went through the laboratories, saw demonstrations, and listened to a physics professor lecturing to his classes.”¹⁵⁰

As he grows entranced with the ideas of Herbert Spencer, however, and particularly after he encounters the authentic intellectual world of “the real dirt,” Martin Eden begins to have contempt for the shallowness and effeminacy of Ruth’s traditional education. London paints a deeply misogynistic portrait of bohemian life, using eugenicist ideas of virility and racial health to explain Martin’s ability to teach himself advanced scientific theories without even a elementary education. One character modeled after Mary Austin remains a bit player in the male-dominated world of “the real dirt,” quietly observing the vigorous conversations between Martin Eden, Brissenden, and the others. Like Frank Norris, who excoriated literary education at Berkeley in *The Wave*, Martin holds particular scorn for the echo chamber relationship of critics

and English professors. Of Ruth's respect for the opinions of both, Martin exclaims, "You worship at the shrine of the established." The critics, he continued:

are the popular mouthpieces. They back up your professors of English, and your professors of English back them up. . . . And their function is to catch all the young fellows attending the university, to drive out of their minds any glimmering originality that may chance to be there, and to put upon them the stamp of the established.¹⁵¹

Martin Eden's preconception of English professors is put to the test when, at a social gathering with Ruth's family, he encounters a certain Professor Caldwell of the University of California. Caldwell turns out to contain a hidden largeness of mind that surprises Martin, who spends most of the evening "talking shop" with his new friend. For one, Caldwell feels out of place "in the university pond," feeling that he was "cut out to be a radical" and would feel more at home "in Paris, in Grub Street, in a hermit's cave, or in some sadly wild Bohemian crowd, drinking claret."¹⁵²

Entranced with Caldwell but viewing his ideas through the lens of Spencer, Martin Eden ventures to criticize him for ignoring biology in his study of literature, outlining a holistic approach to philosophical biology along the lines of what William Ritter was then developing as a young professor of biology at Berkeley. Ruth watches in horror at Martin's criticism of Caldwell, a man she saw "as the living repository of all knowledge." Caldwell, on the other hand, is delighted by Martin's argument, pausing to think before responding: "I've had that same criticism passed on me once before—by a very great man, a scientist and revolutionist, Joseph LeConte. But he is dead, and I thought to remain undetected; and now you come along and expose me. . . . [But] LeConte was right, and so are you, Mr. Eden."¹⁵³ London's grasp of the basic outlines of LeConte's work—as well as the intellectual fractures that it generated—underscores the extent to which scientific and literary discourses in California were interwoven

during these years. As a charismatic public intellectual, LeConte had devoted much of his time to translating the technical language of modern science for audiences of non-specialists, whether on camping trips, in discussion clubs, in the press, or in the classroom. Particularly in his writings on evolution and religion, LeConte was beloved for by many Californians for giving them the tools to integrate scientific ideas in their everyday lives.

Martin Eden was therefore an archetype for a mode of democratic education that London believed to be threatened by the modern research university and the concentration of publishing power in New York. Despite his interactions with Brissenden, Caldwell, and the “real dirt” of San Francisco, Martin Eden continues to receive, with few exceptions, a long string of rejection from publishers and is forced to pawn most of his possessions. He draws inspiration from speeches by “wordy socialists and working-class philosophers that held forth in the City Hall Park on warm afternoons,” but has virtually no readership of his own except for Brissenden.¹⁵⁴ In this novel that Carolyn Johnston calls London’s “most complex anticapitalist book,” Martin’s work earns him nothing until it has been turned into a commodity through mechanisms of publicity beyond his control.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, he puts the finishing touches on his final manuscript, “Overdue,” while the typewriter company’s representative sits on his bed waiting to repossess the machine. Then suddenly, through “sheer jugglery of fate,” the tide turned, and publishers began accepting his work.¹⁵⁶ One publication serves as catalyst for another, and suddenly Martin Eden finds himself a celebrity, with all the same presses that had relentlessly rejected him now clamoring for his wares.¹⁵⁷ He writes nothing new, responding to solicitations with manuscripts already written. Far from enjoying his newfound acclaim, Martin Eden grows obsessed with the notion that all the attention was being showered on him for work already performed.

This dynamic suggests that *Martin Eden* acts as an allegory of the Earthquake of 1906. Just as Jack London himself left for the South Seas after the disaster, Martin Eden responds to the earthquake of public attention by doing the same. In both cases, the sudden frenzy to provide what Frank Norris called “meat for the monster” had to do with random events beyond the control of the writers who benefited. As London put it:

Martin Eden, the famous writer, was a vapor that had arisen in the mob-mind . . . He read the magazines about himself, and pored over portraits of himself published therein until he was unable to associate his identity with those portraits.¹⁵⁸

“He had,” in short, “taken the public off its feet,” and in so doing had been transformed from a living, breathing person into a commodity.¹⁵⁹ Unlike any previous novel of California, *Martin Eden* turned the tables on the very thing—lack of access to the culture industries of New York and Paris, Boston and Berlin—most integral to the intellectual marginalization of Berkeley and San Francisco in the *fin de siècle*.

Through the Earthquake and Fire of 1906, London and his compatriots developed a more critical understanding of what it meant to be a public intellectual on a national or international scale. Rather than assuming a transmutation of local communities into mass publics through the silver bullet of access to East Coast publishers, these writers cast the ruins of San Francisco as a classroom that had driven the city outside and destroyed what John Muir and Mary Austin called “the house habit.”¹⁶⁰ Instead of wiping away the city’s “residual” culture with concrete dreams, these modernists sought to turn “emergent” institutions and structures, including mass culture and the modern research university, to new purposes.¹⁶¹ The remainder of this dissertation offers a collective biography of three such writers—Charles Keeler, Mary Austin, and William Ritter—who sought out new strategies of public engagement, including building institutions of their own, in pursuit of very different visions of democratic education.

Notes

¹ Latimer, Tirza True, “The Art of Starting Over: San Francisco Artists and the Great Quake of 1906,” American Art 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 96-107.

² Anna Pratt Simpson, “The Del Monte Gallery,” The Argonaut, April 27, 1907. Later, Xavier Martinez also served as a political columnist for the Spanish-language newspaper, Hispano America.

³ Holway Jones, John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite (San Francisco: The Sierra Club, 1965), 21.

⁴ For example, in Tony Kushner’s play on the AIDS crisis, *Angels in America* (1993), the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 signified the worst possible catastrophe of modernity—the day when “human progress” collided with the “buckled garden,” and God abandoned heaven. Tony Kushner, Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993), 194-195.

⁵ Richard Schwartz, Earthquake Exodus: Berkeley Responds to the San Francisco Refugees (Berkeley: RSB Books, 2005), 115.

⁶ Andrew C. Lawson, et al., The California Earthquake of April 18, 1906: Report of the State Earthquake Investigation Commission, In Two Volumes and Atlas (Washington, D.C., 1908).

⁷ The term “creative destruction” was popularized by the iconoclastic Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter in his book, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), to push back against the notion that capitalism is propelled by endless growth. Instead, argued Schumpeter, capitalism’s ability to self-destruct is a critical way in which it opens new opportunities. The term has been used by many historians in recent years, among them Max Page, The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940 (Chicago, 1999), and Samuel Zipp, Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁸ Philip Fradkin notes that San Francisco’s pre-1906 water supply depended on reservoirs and distribution mains adjacent to, or even crossing, the San Andreas Fault. Philip Fradkin, The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 72-73. Michael Cohen notes that within a few months of the fire, San Francisco had gained the support of Gifford Pinchot and other key players for building a dam and reservoir in Hetch Hetchy. Michael Cohen, The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 22. Much of the historiography on the disaster has focused on assessing the causes of the fire that swept the city and other ways in which human error and poor urban planning worsened the destruction. In addition to Fradkin, these include Carl-Henry Geschwind, California Earthquakes: Science, Risk, and the Politics of Hazard Mitigation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Ted Steinberg, Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Kevin Rozario, “What Comes Down Must Go Up: Why Disasters

Have Been Good for American Capitalism,” in Steven Biel, ed., American Disasters (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 72-102. Another strand has focused on how class, race, and gender divisions in San Francisco were upended or reinforced by the disaster. These include Andrea Henderson, “Reconstructing Home: Gender, Disaster Relief, and Social Life after the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, 1906-1915” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005); David Wyatt, Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997); Anthony W. Lee, “Photography in the Books,” Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Richard Schwartz, Earthquake Exodus: Berkeley Responds to the San Francisco Refugees (Berkeley: RSB Books, 2005). Many older texts simply recount the damage in a reportorial style with little to no argument, among them William Bronson, The Earth Shook, The Sky Burned: A Photographic Record of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1959), and Charles Keeler, San Francisco Through Earthquake and Fire (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Co., 1906).

⁹ In a sign of the class divisions among educational activists, this effort was vigorously opposed by the Sierra Club, which had been formed by middle class University of California faculty and students as a way to protect the High Sierra for camping and geological research.

¹⁰ Gelett Burgess, Bayside Bohemia: Fin de siècle San Francisco & its Little Magazines (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1954), 16. Burgess wrote these sketches in 1899-1900 based on his own experiences as a writer for several local periodicals. After his death, they were compiled and published by the Book Club of California.

¹¹ This phrase is drawn from Henry Harrison Suplee, “The Sermon in San Francisco’s Stone: How the New City May Be Made Proof Against Devastation By Earthquake and Fire,” Harper’s Weekly (May 26, 1906): 730-732. Suplee, an engineer, embraced a view of the disaster far more in line with high modernist architects than with figures like Charles Keeler or Mary Austin.

¹² Both Keeler and Austin also embraced alternative architectural theories that involved the seamless blending of built and natural environment. For their architectural ideas, see Linda Leigh Pail, Cottages by the Sea: The Handmade Homes of Carmel, America’s First Artist Community (New York: Universe, 2000), and Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Co., 1904).

¹³ The resistance of these intellectuals (as well as a large portion of the business community) to centralized master planning contributed to the demise of Daniel Burnham’s plan for the city. See Mansel G. Blackford, The Lost Dream: Businessmen and City Planning on the Pacific Coast, 1890-1920 (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1993). The environmental modernism of Keeler and Austin can be understood in contrast with the aggressive visions of architects like Baron Haussmann and Le Corbusier. Haussmann’s plans for rebuilding Paris in the 1860s are examined in T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). For Le Corbusier’s high modernist urbanism, see James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Robert Fishman, Urban

Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier (New York: Basic Books, 1977); and David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

¹⁴ “Educators Will Form Notable Camping Party,” Berkeley Daily Gazette (Berkeley, Calif.), June 27, 1901. In a sign of how widely the idea of Yosemite as a public classroom had been accepted, the newspaper grouped the artist Keith and naturalist Muir together with Berkeley professors as a party of “educators.”

¹⁵ Although several critics have argued that Norris was influenced by LeConte’s idealism, one recent biography raises doubts about this conjecture, noting that “Norris never directly referred to LeConte in his writings” and “Though he lived until 1901, LeConte never referred to Norris.” Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Jesse S. Crisler, Frank Norris: A Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 122 and 448ft.42. See also Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., “Frank Norris’s ‘The Puppets and the Puppy’: LeContean Idealism or Naturalistic Skepticism,” American Literary Realism 26 (Fall 1993): 50-59.

¹⁶ See the collection of clippings on LeConte’s death in Ellen McHenry Scrapbook, MSS C-V 3, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Theresa Yelverton, Zanita: A Tale of the Yo-Semite (Hurd & Houghton, New York, 1872).

¹⁷ “Famous Educator of World,” San Francisco Call (July 7, 1901).

¹⁸ The image suggests that LeConte wrote on the board and utilized large props and pictures to illustrate his lecture. Eadweard Muybridge, “State University, Berkeley, College of Agriculture, a Lecture on the Antiquity of Man by Professor Joseph LeConte,” n.d., Lone Mountain College Collection of Stereographs, Series 2: Stereographs of San Francisco and the Bay Area, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁹ Joseph LeConte, “The General Principles of Art and their Application to the Novel,” Overland Monthly 5, no. 28 (April 1885): 338. A footnote in the article states: “This article was read at a recent meeting of the Longfellow Society of the University of California.”

²⁰ LeConte, “The General Principles of Art and their Application to the Novel,” 339. He goes on to explain that “the effect of science as a teacher or revealer is similar to that of art, though in a different field.” LeConte, 341.

²¹ LeConte, “The General Principles of Art and their Application to the Novel,” 341. LeConte’s opposition to mimetic art echoed the critical reception of tromp l’oeil painting. See James W. Cook, “Queer Art Illusions,” The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 214-255.

²² Frank Norris, Transcript, University of California, 1890-1894, Volume 7, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Norris enrolled in Geology and Zoology during the 1892-

1893 academic year, during a period when LeConte was still teaching such courses. See also Joseph LeConte, "Lecture Notes for Course in Geology, 1872-1875," Box 1, and "Joseph LeConte Notebook, 1896," Box 6, LeConte Family Papers, MSS C-B 452, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²³ Frank Norris, "The 'English Courses' of the University of California," The Wave 15 (November 28, 1896): 3.

²⁴ LeConte, "The General Principles of Art and their Application to the Novel," 341.

²⁵ Norris instead embraced what Jennifer Fleissner has called "stuckness in ongoing description," or dwelling in slow, gritty brutality rather than a progressive ideal. Jennifer Fleissner, Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 32.

²⁶ Gelett Burgess, Bayside Bohemia: Fin de siècle San Francisco & its Little Magazines (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1954), 37.

²⁷ Frank Norris, "An Opening for Novelists: Great Opportunities for Fiction-Writers in San Francisco" The Wave (May 22, 1897), Volume 5, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. The list of places suggests that the concept of "local color" ranged from tourist destinations to spectacles of poverty, wealth, and exoticism.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Frank Norris, "Dying Fires," The Smart Set (July 1902): 96.

³⁰ Norris, "Dying Fires," 99.

³¹ Norris, "Dying Fires," 101.

³² Frank Norris to Elizabeth Davenport, March 22, 1899, Volume 1, Folder: Letters Written 1899, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³³ Frank Norris to Ward Macauley, April 4-9, 1899, Volume 1, Folder: Letters Written 1899, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁴ Frank Norris to Edwin Markham, ca. May 14, 1902, Volume 1, Folder: Letters Written 1902, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁵ Frank Norris, McTeague: A Story of San Francisco (New York: Modern Library, 2002 ed.), 284, 287.

³⁶ For anti-midwife crusades in the late nineteenth century, see Leslie Reagan, When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

³⁷ Norris, McTeague, 291.

³⁸ Norris, McTeague, 291.

³⁹ Norris, McTeague, 423.

⁴⁰ Fleissner, 216.

⁴¹ Frank Norris, "Frank Norris' Weekly Letter," Chicago American Art and Literary Review (August 10, 1901), Volume 3, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴² Frank Norris, "The Volunteer Manuscript," in The Responsibilities of the Novelist, and Other Literary Essays (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1903), 169.

⁴³ Norris, "The Volunteer Manuscript," 172.

⁴⁴ Frank Norris, "The American Public and 'Popular' Fiction," in The Responsibilities of the Novelist, and Other Literary Essays (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1903), 104-105.

⁴⁵ For example, Norris praised Burgess's work in "Special Letter to the Chicago American Art and Literary Review," Chicago American Art and Literary Review (May 25, 1901), noting that Burgess had "once more gone back to his starting point—San Francisco" and that his latest collection of short stories was "unquestionably the best he has ever done."

⁴⁶ Frank Norris to unknown recipient, n.d., Volume 1, Folder: Letters Written 1901, Frank Norris Papers, C-H 80, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴⁷ Philip J. Ethington, The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁴⁸ Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," Critical Inquiry 17, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 777. As Mary Kupiec Cayton observes, "What we know and experience can only be known and experienced through the prism of what we share with others." Mary Kupiec Cayton, "What Is Public Culture? Agency and Contested Meaning in American Culture," in Marguerite S. Shaffer, ed., Public Culture: Diversity, Democracy, and Community in the United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 1

⁴⁹ Please note that Chapter One of my dissertation addresses Yosemite as a touristic space that attracted makeshift "classrooms" outside the reach of the University of California. It focuses in particular on accounts of camping trips written around 1869-1875 by Joseph LeConte, John Muir, William Keith, Mark Twain, and others, as well as Theresa Yelverton's Zanita (1872). In Yosemite, tourism and scientific nature writing were deeply intertwined, and Muir in particular

fashioned an identity as a place-based intellectual fulfilling multiple roles—priest, sentry, interpreter, democratizer—that attracted high-profile pilgrims from the academic world and offered a template for twentieth-century park rangers as public intellectuals. Jack London’s *Martin Eden* (1909), which vigorously critiqued the University of California’s emerging role as a professional gatekeeper, is discussed later in this chapter.

⁵⁰ For reportorial subjectivity, see Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), and Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded-Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). This dynamic followed a long-term intellectual trend, as the Enlightenment faith in objective description gave way, over the course of the nineteenth century, to a suspicion that such descriptions are at best approximations of a moving target. See James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). For the history of national magazines in this period, see Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵¹ Gertrude Atherton, “San Francisco’s Tragic Dawn,” *Harper’s Weekly*, May 12, 1906, 656. Several historians have treated the years following the disaster as a period of conservative reaction in the Bay Area arts. Nancy Boas, for example, has concluded that, “Perhaps a clean break with the past and a new artistic beginning were possible after 1906, but they did not occur. Both artists and patrons responded to the loss of their many valued possessions with nostalgia, and conservatism in art and architecture was the result.” Nancy Boas, *The Society of Six: California Colorists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 22.

⁵² Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 89. Warner, it should be noted, adds a crucial caveat: through the idea that public discourse has a “poetic” function, Warner leaves open the question of whether the breadth of attention is really what matters most.

⁵³ Franco Moretti, “The Slaughterhouse of Literature,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 2000): 207-227.

⁵⁴ *Harper’s Weekly*, May 5, 1906, 618.

⁵⁵ “San Francisco Destroyed,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Supplement, April 28, 1906, 610.

⁵⁶ Kevin Rozario, "What Comes Down Must Go Up: Why Disasters Have Been Good for American Capitalism," in Steven Biel, ed., American Disasters (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 73. Harvey's first biographer noted that he keenly felt his lack of a college degree. Willis Fletcher Johnson, George Harvey: A Passionate Patriot (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

⁵⁷ Harper's Weekly, May 12, 1906, 652.

⁵⁸ "Comment," Harper's Weekly, May 5, 1906, 616.

⁵⁹ Gertrude Atherton, ed., The Spinners' Book of Fiction (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1907).

⁶⁰ Miriam Michelson, "The Destruction of San Francisco," Harper's Weekly, May 5, 1906, 623-624.'

⁶¹ For more on the Burnham Plan, see Mansel G. Blackford, The Lost Dream: Businessmen and City Planning on the Pacific Coast, 1890-1920 (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1993). Atherton explains that she had seen Burnham's plan a few days before the disaster.

⁶² Gertrude Atherton, "San Francisco's Tragic Dawn," Harper's Weekly (May 12, 1906): 660. For the trope of San Francisco as a new Rome or Athens, see Gray Brechin, Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁶³ Atherton, "San Francisco's Tragic Dawn," 660.

⁶⁴ Atherton, "San Francisco's Tragic Dawn," 656.

⁶⁵ Atherton, "San Francisco's Tragic Dawn," 675. Atherton's optimism about the creative possibilities of destruction echoed that of the Italian Futurists, particularly F.T. Marietti, who celebrated World War One as an opportunity to wipe the slate clean and rebuild civilization from scratch. See Marjorie Perloff, The Futurist Moment (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Giovanni Lista, Futurism (New York: Universe Books, 1986); Marjorie Perloff, "'Grammar in Use': Wittgenstein/Gertrude Stein/Marinetti," Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 83-112; and Giovanni Lista, "The Activist Model; or the Avant-Garde as Italian Invention," trans. Scott Sheridan, South Central Review 13, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1996): 13-34.

⁶⁶ For Burnham's designs for the World's Fair, see James Gilbert, Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), and Robert W. Rydell, All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 38-71.

⁶⁷ Mansel G. Blackford, The Lost Dream: Businessmen and City Planning on the Pacific Coast, 1890-1920 (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1993), 40-52. See also Russell Quinn,

“The San Francisco Press and the Fire of 1906,” History of San Francisco Journalism, Volume 5 (San Francisco: Work Projects Administration, 1940), 50-61, and Kevin Rozario, “What Comes Down Must Go Up: Why Disasters Have Been Good for American Capitalism,” in Steven Biel, ed., American Disasters (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 85.

⁶⁸ Henry Harrison Suplee, “The Sermon in San Francisco’s Stone: How the New City May Be Made Proof Against Devastation By Earthquake and Fire,” Harper’s Weekly (May 26, 1906): 730-732. Other writers did tackle the question of divine agency. For example, see: “Was the Destruction of San Francisco a Judgment?” The Literary Digest, Vol. 32 (May 12, 1906): 725. Not all metaphysical narratives were Christian. John Ball, a spirit medium, claimed to have sensed the earthquake in advance, though without enough precision to foretell the date. John Ball, Spirits. And the Destruction of San Francisco, pamphlet, San Francisco, 1906, PAM 10034, California Historical Society, San Francisco.

⁶⁹ Suplee, 732.

⁷⁰ Suplee, 732.

⁷¹ Suplee, 730.

⁷² Suplee, 731. See also Robert Fishman, Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

⁷³ Cecil Chard, “The Long Day: The Eighteenth of April in San Francisco,” Harper’s Weekly (May 19, 1906): 700. Julie Heyneman’s pen name is identified in Ella Sterling Mighels, Literary California: Poetry, Prose, and Portraits (San Francisco: Harr Wagner, 1918), 386. See also Julie Heyneman Papers, MSS C-H 152, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁷⁴ Quoted in David Wyatt, “The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire: The Culture of Spectacle,” in Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 107. James’s account appeared in Youth’s Companion on June 7, 1906, and was posthumously published in William James, “On Some Mental Effects of the Earthquake,” in Memories and Studies (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 209-226. Wyatt notes that James’s “openness to the irrational and primitive nature of his own responses produced some of the best writing about the earthquake, imposing conflict and suspense on an otherwise random, physical event.”

⁷⁵ Cecil Chard, “The Long Day: The Eighteenth of April in San Francisco,” Harper’s Weekly (May 19, 1906): 700. The anecdote of Carmen was later adapted to the 1936 MGM film, San Francisco, which depicted the earthquake striking in the middle of a performance in a Barbary Coast theater

⁷⁶ The tension of strict temporal frame and contingent temporal experience is similarly explored in Henry Anderson Lafler, “My Sixty Sleepless Hours: A Story of the San Francisco Earthquake,” McClure’s Magazine, Vol. 27 (July 1906): 275-281. Lafler writes, for example,

“Portsmouth Square is half a block from my doorway. In its center is a memorial to Robert Louis Stevenson; to the east, facing it, is the Hall of Justice; to the west (I use my tenses with care), Chinatown.”

⁷⁷ Chard, 700.

⁷⁸ Chard, 702.

⁷⁹ Chard, 703.

⁸⁰ For the problem of navigating urban crowds and complexity, see John F. Kasson, Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990).

⁸¹ James Hopper, “Our San Francisco,” Everybody’s Magazine, Vol. 14 (June 1906): 760a-760h. Emphases in quotations are added.

⁸² Hopper, “Our San Francisco,” 760b.

⁸³ Martinez’s time in Paris is detailed in George W. Neubert, Xavier Martinez (Oakland: The Oakland Museum, 1974), 21-25. Lafler, an assistant editor for The Argonaut, is identified in McClure’s as “the editor of a monthly published in San Francisco.” Henry Anderson Lafler, “My Sixty Sleepless Hours: A Story of the San Francisco Earthquake,” McClure’s Magazine, Vol. 27 (July 1906): 278.

⁸⁴ “Keith’s Paintings are Saved—Trying Experiences of Literary Folk,” Berkeley Reporter, April 24, 1906, in Keith Scrapbook, Carton 1, Vol. 9, Keith-McHenry-Pond Family Papers, MSS C-B 595, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. In the clipping in Keith’s papers, the word “saved” in the title is crossed out, and “all burned” is written instead. Note “red cross” is not capitalized in original.

⁸⁵ Anna Pratt Simpson, “The Del Monte Gallery,” The Argonaut, April 27, 1907.

⁸⁶ Zurier utilizes this term to reflect the increasing emphasis on “experience” that emerged along with pragmatism in the 1890s. This development changed the stakes of realism by “shifting authority from universal laws and descriptions of perception to the physical presence of the individual participant.” Rebecca Zurier, Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 9-10.

⁸⁷ James Hopper, “A Stricken City’s Days of Terror,” Harper’s Weekly (May 12, 1906): 661.

⁸⁸ David Wyatt, “The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire: The Culture of Spectacle,” in Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 134.

⁸⁹ For the expansion of the illustrated press in the late nineteenth century, see Neil Harris, “Iconography and Intellectual History: The Halftone Effect,” Cultural Excursions: Marketing

Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 304-317; and Joshua Brown, Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of Gilded-Age America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁹⁰ Henry Anderson Lafler, "My Sixty Sleepless Hours: A Story of the San Francisco Earthquake," McClure's Magazine, Vol. 27 (July 1906): 281.

⁹¹ David Wyatt, "The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire: The Culture of Spectacle," in Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 109. Indeed, Clarence Edwords rejected this view, writing: "Those to whom only the surface of things is visible are prone to express wonder at the love and enthusiasm of the San Franciscan for his home city." Clarence E. Edwords, Bohemian San Francisco: The Elegant Art of Dining (San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1914), 2.

⁹² William James, "On Some Mental Effects of the Earthquake," in Memories and Studies (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 225-226. Emphasis added. A prefatory note states, "These observations appeared in the Youth's Companion for June 7, 1906."

⁹³ This concept echoes James's speech in 1898 to the Philosophical Union in Berkeley, which is discussed at length in this dissertation's Introduction, "William James at Berkeley."

⁹⁴ James, "On Some Mental Effects of the Earthquake," 225.

⁹⁵ As the ethnographer Keith Basso puts it in his study of Apache place-names, stories about places are "thoroughly reciprocal and incorrigibly dynamic." Keith H. Basso, Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 107.

⁹⁶ Barbara Berglund, Making San Francisco American: Cultural Frontiers in the Urban West, 1846-1906 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 172.

⁹⁷ Berglund, 223.

⁹⁸ "San Francisco: Rebuilding," The Literary Digest, Vol. 32 (May 5, 1906): 671.

⁹⁹ Andrew C. Lawson, et. al., The California Earthquake of April 18, 1906: Report of the State Earthquake Investigation Commission, In Two Volumes and Atlas (Washington, D.C., 1908). Lawson's participation in clubs included a paper read to the Berkeley Club, Andrew C. Lawson, "The Spirit of Science," 1920, Carton 2, Berkeley Club Papers, MSS C-H 9, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Lawson was in the Yosemite camping party with Joseph LeConte when LeConte died of a heart attack in 1901.

¹⁰⁰ "The Earthquake Commission," Mining and Scientific Press (San Francisco), April 28, 1906.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² For the University's losses, see Verne A. Stadtman, The University of California, 1868-1968 (New York: McGraw-Hill and the University of California, 1970), 188-189.

¹⁰³ "Complain of the Cadets," Oakland Tribune, April 22, 1906. Quoted in Richard Schwartz, Earthquake Exodus: Berkeley Responds to the San Francisco Refugees (Berkeley: RSB Books, 2005), 45.

¹⁰⁴ Lesley Einstein, "An Eyewitness Account of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire," 1906, California Historical Society, San Francisco.

¹⁰⁵ Joseph Nisbet LeConte, "Recollections: A Few Notes Descriptive of a Happy Life," n.d., Carton 1, LeConte Family Papers, MSS C-B 452, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁰⁶ D'Arcy Weatherbe, "First Observations of the Catastrophe," Mining and Scientific Press (San Francisco), April 28, 1906.

¹⁰⁷ This seems to be the "missing history collection" noted in Philip Fradkin in The Great Earthquake and Firestorms of 1906: How San Francisco Nearly Destroyed Itself (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 248-251, 345.

¹⁰⁸ "Preparing a History of Quake and Fire," The Evening Post (San Francisco), May 8, 1906. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁹ See, among others, Arthur Inkersley, "What San Francisco Has to Start With," Overland Monthly, June-July 1906; James D. Phelan, "The Builders," Overland Monthly, August 1906; Harold French, "How the Red Cross Systematized Relief Work in San Francisco," Overland Monthly, October 1906.

¹¹⁰ This trend was noticed within days by William E. Dargie, editor of the Oakland Tribune, who in turn was attacked by the San Francisco Bulletin for seeking "to frighten capital and population away from San Francisco." Among Dargie's transgressions, according to the Bulletin, was to declare "that the disaster must be called the earthquake and would be called an earthquake by the Tribune." Russell Quinn, "The San Francisco Press and the Fire of 1906," History of San Francisco Journalism, Volume 5 (San Francisco: WPA, 1940), 20. See also Ted Steinberg, Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹¹¹ Will Irwin, The City That Was: A Requiem of Old San Francisco (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1908). For a discussion of Sunset's rebuttal, see Fradkin, 279.

¹¹² William Reedy, "The City That Has Fallen," Reedy's Mirror (St. Louis), April 26, 1906. One early historian contended that Irwin's and Reedy's were the most memorable accounts of the disaster. Oscar Lewis, "Foreword," in William Reedy, "The City That Has Fallen" (Berkeley: The Bancroft Library, 1916 ed.).

¹¹³ William Magee, “Two Years Later: Facts and Figures that Tell the Story of the Making of San Francisco Since April, 1906,” Sunset Magazine, Vol. 20 (April 1908): 547.

¹¹⁴ Magee, 550.

¹¹⁵ Magee, 547.

¹¹⁶ Benjamin Ide Wheeler and David Starr Jordan, “Two University Presidents Speak for the City,” Sunset Magazine, Vol. 20 (April 1908): 543.

¹¹⁷ Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 200.

¹¹⁸ Wheeler and Jordan, 544-546.

¹¹⁹ After the office of the Mining and Scientific Press was destroyed in the fire following the earthquake, Rickard published the journal in Berkeley with the help of his cousin, also named Thomas Rickard, the mayor of Berkeley. California Biography Collection, California Historical Society, San Francisco.

¹²⁰ Thomas A. Rickard, “A Story in Stone,” Mining and Scientific Press (San Francisco), May 5, 1906.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Mary Austin, “The Temblor: A Personal Narration,” Out West (June 1906), reprinted in David Starr Jordan, ed., The California Earthquake of 1906 (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1907), 355. As one art historian has noted of the artists of the region: “Collectively they helped to imagine, to image, and thus to bring the new city into being.” Tirza True Latimer, “The Art of Starting Over: San Francisco Artists and the Great Quake of 1906,” American Art 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 105.

¹²³ Most of London’s photographs of the earthquake’s aftermath are located in the Jack London Papers collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

¹²⁴ Fradkin, 270.

¹²⁵ Jack London, “The Story of an Eyewitness,” Collier’s (May 5, 1906).

¹²⁶ Vernon Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginning to 1920, Volume Two (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930), 352.

¹²⁷ For the disaster as “creative destruction,” see Kevin Rozario, Kevin, “What Comes Down Must Go Up: Why Disasters Have Been Good for American Capitalism,” in Steven Biel, ed.,

American Disasters (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 72-102. See also note seven, above, on the term “creative destruction.”

¹²⁸ Mary Austin, “The Temblor: A Personal Narration,” Out West (June 1906), reprinted in David Starr Jordan, ed., The California Earthquake of 1906 (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1907), 358.

¹²⁹ See Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking, 1986); Max Page, The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940 (Chicago, 1999); Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, 1999 ed.); Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1968 ed.).

¹³⁰ Christine Stansell, American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century (New York, 2000); Anthony W. Lee, “Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco (Berkeley, 2001); Chad Heap, Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Robert M. Dowling, Slumming in New York: From the Waterfront to Mythic Harlem (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); and Seth Koven, Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹³¹ Kevin Starr, Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 210; Robert Hass, “Green Fire, the Still Point, and an Oak Grove: Some Reflections on the Humanities and the Environment,” Lecture, March 12, 2009, Berkeley, California.

¹³² Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders: A History of Bohemianism in America (New York: Cosimo, 2005 ed.), 245. Originally 1933.

¹³³ Austin, Earth Horizon, 301.

¹³⁴ Scott A. Shields, Artists at Continent’s End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1875-1907 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 204.

¹³⁵ For the Arts and Crafts Movement, see Kenneth Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville, 1993). For the Hillside Club, see Ed Herny, Shelley Rideout, and Katie Wadell, Berkeley Bohemia: Artists and Visionaries of the Early 20th Century (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2008).

¹³⁶ Elsie Whitaker Martinez, “San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists,” p. 57, Interviewed by Franklin D. Walker and Willa Klug Baum, 1969, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹³⁷ Martinez, “San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists,” pp. 70-71.

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- ¹³⁸ Martinez, “San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists,” pp. 65-66.
- ¹³⁹ Martinez, “San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists,” p. 78.
- ¹⁴⁰ Martinez, “San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists,” p. 86.
- ¹⁴¹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Gelett Burgess, February 17, 1938, Box 2, Gelett Burgess Papers, MSS C-H 52, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also Gelett Burgess, “The Purple Cow—Genesis and Exodus,” n.d., Carton 2, Gelett Burgess Papers, MSS C-H 52, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ¹⁴² San Francisco Call, November 3, 1907.
- ¹⁴³ George Sterling to Gelett Burgess, May 15, 1923, Box 2, Gelett Burgess Papers, MSS C-H 52, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. While in New York, Burgess gradually grew disgusted with what he perceived to be the commercialization of American higher education, writing a spoof of “The University of Nemo” in which “business is business” and academic decisions were decided in terms of financial profit, with courses he considered ridiculous such as “History of the Dime Novel” despite his own early scrambling for success in the publishing industry. Gelett Burgess, “The University of Nemo,” n.d., Carton 5, Gelett Burgess Papers, MSS C-H 52, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ¹⁴⁴ Gelett Burgess, The Heart Line (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1907), 136.
- ¹⁴⁵ Burgess, The Heart Line 550. Discussing The Heart Line in his unpublished autobiography, Burgess wrote that the premises of spiritualism seemed “idiotic” to him. Gelett Burgess, “Escape from Reality—Autobiography,” n.d., Carton 3, Folder 2, Gelett Burgess Papers, MSS C-H 52, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ¹⁴⁶ Burgess, The Heart Line, 579. “Time alone can tame the town,” concludes Burgess.
- ¹⁴⁷ Jack London, Martin Eden (New York: The Modern Library, 2002 ed.), 304. Originally published in 1909.
- ¹⁴⁸ London, Martin Eden, 305.
- ¹⁴⁹ London, Martin Eden, 199.
- ¹⁵⁰ London, Martin Eden, 97.
- ¹⁵¹ London, Martin Eden, 201.
- ¹⁵² London, Martin Eden, 233.
- ¹⁵³ London, Martin Eden, 236.

¹⁵⁴ London, Martin Eden, 107.

¹⁵⁵ Carolyn Johnston, Jack London—An American Radical? (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984), 85.

¹⁵⁶ London, Martin Eden, 347.

¹⁵⁷ For changes in the category of “celebrity” over time, see Loren Glass, Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980 (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Charles L. Ponce de Leon, Self-Exposure: Human Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Joshua Gamson, Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Fred Inglis, A Short History of Celebrity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁸ London, Martin Eden, 379.

¹⁵⁹ London, Martin Eden, 394.

¹⁶⁰ The term “house habit” had appeared in Mary Austin, The Land of Little Rain (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903), and John Muir, Our National Parks (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901).

¹⁶¹ For the terms “residual” and “emergent” culture, see Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), and “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” Problems in Materialism and Culture (London: Verso, 1980).

Chapter 3

The Public Face of Berkeley: Charles Keeler, Boosterism, and the Romance of Rusticity

At first blush, Charles Keeler would appear to be a straightforward example of what T.J. Jackson Lears has called “antimodernism.” According to Lears, many enthusiasts of the Arts and Crafts movement—Keeler among them—were “professional people who felt most cut off from ‘real life’ and most in need of moral and cultural regeneration.” Such practices, continues Lears, were in direct defiance of liberal Christianity’s search for the “clean, well-lighted place” of modernity, its walls illuminated by science.¹ As an undergraduate in 1892, Keeler had been a founding member of the Sierra Club, joining a circle of friends twice his age and devoting much of his time to camping. A decade later, in Keeler’s most influential book, *The Simple Home* (1904), the scientist-turned-poet argued for a return to a deeper, more authentic lifestyle through unadorned architecture tailored to the surrounding landscape and utilizing local building materials. He railed against factory-produced decorations, furniture, and paint, and later found confirmation for his theories in the Earthquake and Fire of 1906, which he believed to have revealed the rotten underbelly of the modern metropolis. As Keeler explained, “People are growing weary of shams and are longing for reality.”²

Other aspects of Keeler’s career are more difficult to contain within the umbrella of antimodernism. Far from simply attacking the emergent culture of modern California, Keeler embraced its most visible excesses, serving as Executive Director of the Berkeley Chamber of

Commerce, writing lowbrow adventure scripts for a proposed radio program, and aggressively marketing himself as a poet, dramatist, and world traveler.³ As he became Berkeley's most visible booster, Keeler built connections with the University of California, his alma mater, and embraced an ethos of environmental bohemianism that merged a spirit of regional rootedness—as he remembered it from the 1890s—with an embrace of idealist philosophy that was oriented toward the future. Although he would transform the landscape and culture of Berkeley, creating what Charles Wollenberg has called “a tradition of Bay Area home building that was to last for much of the twentieth century,” his attempt to integrate environment, commerce, and education ultimately crashed against the shoals of professionalism.⁴ A reformer and bohemian at heart, Keeler had difficulty accepting conventions of certification, specialization, profit motive, and even clothing. As a result, Keeler's unconventional aesthetic, economic, and educational plans met with skepticism from businesses and university authorities.

Though many of Keeler's contemporaries perceived him as out of step, his work was not a rejection of modernity, but rather a vision of the public role of education that shared much in common with the populist activists of the late nineteenth century. Despite abandoning his career in biological research, his educational ideology was shot through with a progressive faith in modern science and the ability of philosophical investigation—and specifically the Kantian idealism of his mentor, George Howison—to build a more perfect world. Indeed, near the end of his career in the 1930s, Keeler wrote two book-length manuscripts, both rejected by publishers, that celebrated the promise of California's experiment in democratic education despite the twin threats of capitalism and professionalism. The first, *Friends Bearing Torches*, celebrated the circle of *fin-de-siècle* scientists, bohemians, and reformers in California—including Howison, John Muir, Joseph LeConte, and poet Ina Coolbrith—that he believed had carried the “torch” of

idealism into the modern world through architecture, education, scientific research, and even law enforcement.⁵ The second, *Bayville Boosters*, was a novel about real estate speculators in Bayville, California—a thinly-veiled version of Berkeley—that put forth Keeler’s vision for sound economic development.⁶ His vehicle for this vision was the hero of the novel, Ralph Gordon, an amateur pianist, investor, and graduate of both the University of California and Harvard Business School who combats the city’s entrenched aristocracy by exposing deceptive development schemes. In both of these manuscripts, Keeler did not so much shun the modern world as build a quixotic vision of the possibilities of philosophical education for making a difference in the world. As Keeler put it, “Could we but read the future? There is but one way to read it and *that is to make it*. That is the secret of my realized air castles.”⁷

This chapter traces Keeler’s life as a case study of how California’s educational discourse played out on a local level in Berkeley. In the wake of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, some writers like Mary Austin reached beyond California, strategically utilizing mass culture industries to strengthen regional education and regional knowledge production. Other public intellectuals like the biologist William Ritter worked within the professional structure of the academy, establishing the University of California’s first off-site research station in 1903 and later organizing a national network of professors to establish the Science Service, a wire service for scientific news. Although Keeler shared Austin’s interest in the relationship of environment and culture, and had been one of Ritter’s closest friends in the 1890s, his work found little resonance beyond California and his influence was largely limited to educational, commercial, and architectural schemes in Berkeley. Nevertheless, his career exemplified how local activists responded to economic and cultural changes, helping consolidate public support for democratic education in California.

Early Years in Berkeley

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Charles Keeler began his studies at the University of California in 1889. He soon developed an interest in the evolution of birds and became active in the California Academy of Sciences while still an undergraduate, even taking on an editorial position with the Academy's new journal, *Zoe*. Although he joined the Zeta Psi Fraternity and lived in its house on Audubon Street (later College Avenue) in Berkeley, he found himself increasingly alienated from his peers.⁸ As he wrote to Louise Bunnell, his future wife, "I am entirely separated from the Fraternity boys, much as I admire them, and merely have a word of greeting when meeting them on the street. The fact is I never was much interested in people of my own age—they must either be much older and more mature, or else children."⁹ He found solace in the discussion clubs that proliferated around Berkeley and San Francisco in the *fin de siècle*. In addition to becoming a founding member of the Sierra Club while still a student in 1892, Keeler organized or joined several other scientific clubs, including the Zoological Society, the Philosophical Union, the Evolution Club, and Berkeley's chapter of the Audubon Society.¹⁰

These clubs put him in touch with a network of older friends, activists, and intellectuals who had lived in Berkeley for decades, including Joseph LeConte, George Howison, John Muir, and the Hittell Family. Keeler grew particularly close to the landscape painter William Keith, who was more than thirty years his senior, spending many hours in his studio in San Francisco after work at the Academy of Sciences. "From Keith," he wrote Louise, "I get the most comfort and feel perfectly happy when with him. He has been very kind to me too, but I don't want to run the risk of ever being in the way."¹¹ Keeler's letters during these years convey astonishment at being included in social activities with Keith, Muir, and others.¹² Such intergenerational sociability was made possible partly because many local discussion clubs explicitly sought to

include students. While still an undergraduate, for example, Keeler was invited to a New Year's Eve party at Keith's home along with LeConte, fellow student Eleanor Briggs, and several other guests of various ages. After several party games like Blind Man's Bluff, the group held "a mock meeting of the Philosophical Union" that included imitations of its regular participants, among them Howison, LeConte, and Keeler himself. The activity suggested that the Union was a reference point that the eclectic group of students, faculty, and others (including Keith) held in common. As Keeler described the party's conclusion, "Then we had egg nog—very strong, and refreshments, and when the bells had rung the new year in we started for home."¹³

For Keeler and others, the discussion clubs were not exclusively social but generated fierce debates over scientific and political issues. As part of the Evolution Club, Keeler recalled a "rabid discussion" with his fellow student William Ritter.¹⁴ Other meetings were less intense but nevertheless offered Keeler a model of informal intellectual exchange that remained a touchstone throughout his career. As he described one meeting to Louise, "It is a rainy cheerless night without and consequently only a few of the old standbys came to the Evolution Club meeting. Nevertheless we had a rather interesting meeting, for they made me attempt to explain evolution from an idealistic standpoint—which gave me a few ideas."¹⁵ Unlike his classes, these clubs gave Keeler a sense of exhilarating engagement with ideas. Over the summer of 1892, Keeler recalled visiting Howison, the University of California's Mills Professor of Philosophy, to discuss "science, philosophy, and politics." To his amazement, Howison eagerly spoke with him and even granted a point about "the sticking point in idealism" that Keeler headily described to Louise as "his confession of ignorance."¹⁶ Even many years later, as he grew disillusioned with the direction of higher education, Keeler looked back on such conversations as representing the authentic sociability that he believed to be damaged by professionalization.

Already during his undergraduate years, however, Keeler pursued paths of scientific practice outside the university. A budding educational entrepreneur, Keeler eagerly joined with two Berkeley professors and a local junior college principal to start a for-profit summer school prior to his senior year at the University of California. Keeler was placed in charge of Zoology classes (the other course offerings were in Math, German, and History) and “the profits” were to be divided between the four men. “Do you think,” he asked Louise, “it would be a pretty good scheme?”¹⁷ Keeler ultimately found himself overwhelmed by the preparation required to lecture in the summer school, falling dramatically behind on his own duties for the California Academy of Sciences.¹⁸ Far from receiving the windfall he had imagined, Keeler ended up spending his own money on photography equipment to prepare 150 original slides for his lectures.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the experience strengthened Keeler’s lecturing ability, which he eventually used to embark on a world tour. Shortly before his graduation in 1893, Keeler stood in for David Starr Jordan, the president of Stanford University, to deliver the closing lecture of the year to the Zoological Society, “The Objects & Methods of Scientific Investigation.”²⁰ He most commonly spoke in his own area of expertise, the evolution of birds, and devoted most of his senior year to researching a book on the topic.

Aside from lecturing and research, Keeler’s time and attention during the summer of 1892 was consumed by his editorship of *Zoe*, a journal published by the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. Keeler helped launch the journal shortly before beginning his teaching duties at the for-profit summer school. Given his ornithological aspirations, Keeler proudly described the journal as intended primarily for specialists, using language that denigrated attempts to engage “the laity” with popular science:

Zoe simply aims to chronicle facts and theories *new* to science and is in no sense intended as an introduction to the study of science. It is intended for workers in

the field and not for the laity; and the moment such a journal steps out of its province and attempts to entertain or interest people, its scientific accuracy begins to be questioned.²¹

The decision to work for the Academy of Sciences dramatically shaped the contours of Keeler's later career. Rather than pursuing graduate study like his friend William Ritter, Keeler hoped to find a leadership position in California that would allow him to influence the direction of science in the region for years to come. To faculty within the emerging disciplines at Stanford and the University of California, however, the Academy of Sciences increasingly appeared conservative and unable to keep pace with modern research.²² Keeler, meanwhile, found that even his close mentors in Berkeley were taken aback by the eclecticism of his work, particularly his interests in philosophy, poetry, and literature.²³ Even the small degree of specialization expected of him at *Zoe* quickly became a source of misery. Within a month of launching the journal, he complained to Louise that despite his desire to take a camping trip to the Farallon Islands off the coast of San Francisco, "Instead I shall go over to the Academy to read proof. And then I must stop my other work to grind for 'Zoe.' I have nothing to write about and no material to work from, so it is a regular nuisance, but must be done. *Zoe* must be filled and when they get in a pinch they expect me to fill it."²⁴ A few days later he added that the journal was sapping time from his book on the evolution of birds: "Were it not for this miserable *Zoe* grind I could have the next 50pp ready within a week now."²⁵

Keeler took solace in the company of Keith, visiting his studio nearly every week when his editorial duties became too monotonous to bear. The physicality of Keith's methods transfixed Keeler, who described the process in detail to Louise: "Keith took an old brush filled it with brown paint and slammed it down right in the midst of the blue sky and then scrubbed it in helter skelter over the entire picture. He next picked up an old rag from the floor and rubbed

part of it off. He assured me he had no idea what he would make of the picture.”²⁶ Keeler was particularly astonished to learn about Keith’s interests in philosophy and other fields beyond simply painting. “I read more proofs,” he wrote in one letter, “and ended up at Keith’s. [...] He tells me he likes books better than pictures!”²⁷ In the same letter, Keeler expressed fear that his own work was “worthless trash”—despite his conviction that there was “a real purpose” behind his motivation to produce both poetry and research.²⁸ With much of Keeler’s time consumed by reading manuscripts for *Zoe*, Keith seemed to offer a whole new way of experiencing the natural world outside the tedious detail of scientific research:

You can’t imagine how much my familiarity with Keith’s pictures has been to me. I seem to see nature now with his eyes, and half the time when the scene is beautiful (as it generally is) I have the delightful sensation of seeming to be walking in the midst of one of his paintings. Nature has become so much more ideal—although nonetheless real for all this.²⁹

Indeed, Keeler believed himself to be uniquely positioned to bring together the fields of art, science, and philosophy in a way that specialists in the emerging disciplines could not. “Here are three acquaintances of mine,” he wrote in one letter, “Howison the philosopher, Keith the artist, and Jordan the scientist. Each excludes the other two, and I feel as if I were in a way—a very small way—behind all three, and could see truth in them all.”³⁰ Despite these inklings of a career beyond ornithology, Keeler devoted most of his time to his studies at Berkeley, his editorial duties for *Zoe*, and his research on the evolution of birds.

On June 21, 1893, shortly after embarking on a trip to the East Coast to celebrate his graduation from the University of California, Keeler received news that would transform his career. At the American Museum of Natural History in New York, he learned that two extremely critical reviews of his first book, *Evolution of the Colors of North American Land Birds* (1893), had been published by *Contemporary Review* and *American Naturalist*. The latter,

in Keeler's opinion, was "a savage attack" that he hoped to respond to in *Zoe*. Although one of the reviews noted that he had great promise as a naturalist as long as he stopped attempting to "speculate so much without facts," Keeler decided by the end of the day that he would abandon the field. "I have uttered my last gasp in that direction," he confessed to Louise, explaining that "that brutal review haunts me to do what I may to take it from my mind."³¹ The shock of the review put Keeler's immediate plans in disarray as he left New York for the second portion of his cross-country journey: a visit to see the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. His letters during the train ride included multiple postscripts detailing his distraught state of mind as he raged over what he believed to be the loss of his professional reputation and debated what to do to rectify the situation. "Coming in to Chicago," he wrote in a final update, "I caught a glimpse of the fair buildings by electric light."³² As it turned out, the World's Fair not only distracted him from the review but provided inspiration for the next step in his career.

Keeler spent a week at the Fair carefully making his way through the exhibits. "I never saw such a crowd before," he wrote to Louise on the fourth day, "It was simply overwhelming (over 300,000 people during the day)."³³ In his letters, his usually meticulous syntax gave way to long lists of his activities during his "overfilled days" that week: the Ferris Wheel, Cairo Street at the Midway Plaisance, Ethnological exhibits, parades, speeches ("Fred Douglas the colored orator and other celebrities were on the platform"), and more.³⁴ Keeler was particularly awestruck with the Art Building and Machinery Building. The challenge of navigating the exhibits inspired both admiration and fear, a combination that Keeler immediately explained as distinctively modern: "It is a work of a month to in any way do justice to the collection and I almost dread the next visit not knowing how to go about it. I confess I was rather tired at the end but so was everyone else who was there, and it was a good wholesome tired feeling, not that

dreadful exhaustion of the past.”³⁵ Despite the scale of the event, Keeler was amazed to come across several California friends—encounters he treated as a supernatural message about the resilience of personal connections in the crowd. One woman in the California Building surprised Keeler by greeting him by name, having recognized him from a meeting of the Evolution Club in Berkeley.³⁶ By the end, Keeler found himself bursting with motivation to pioneer a new poetry that would, in his view, meet the challenges of the modern world. Rather than return to ornithological research, Keeler turned his attention to writing a book of poetry, *A Light Through the Storm* (1894), that was inspired by the notion that science and idealist philosophy could offer a path for navigating the “storms” of the modern world.

Many of the poems—“The New Democracy,” “Progress,” “The New Teleology,” “A Ballad of the City,” and “On Science”—were heavy-handed allegories of education as both a source of injustice and a way of coping with the conditions of modernity. Some sought to merge his research on the evolution of birds with the Kantian idealism of his mentor, George Howison. In “The New Teleology,” for example, Keeler wrote: “Through our lowly beginnings we grasp the full plan, / As the ape chatters idly and teaches the man, / And the man gravely ponders that angels may learn, / For we climb on the states that we conquer and spurn.”³⁷ Other poems reflected Keeler’s bitterness toward academic science, casting the machinery of professionalism as a force that had squandered the democratic promise of education. In “The Age Enchained,” Keeler included a stanza that unmistakably referenced his own disillusionment with ornithology: “Oh the stinging of madness when strivings are thwarted, / And the phrenzy of sadness when hopes are aborted.”³⁸ Later in the poem, he connected his shaming in impersonal academic journals with the failed promise of the Morrill Act to build universities that would serve farmers and industrial workers. Addressing the spirit of science, he wrote, “You have pondered the earth

and the stars ever seeking / For knowledge and truth, while your fair hands are reeking / With carnage and slaughter, with rapine and pillage. / You have murdered the plow-man and snatched from his tillage / The bread he had won from the soil.” He added: “When science is hurled at the heart of a nation, / With cruelty, craft, and the cunning invention / Of tools of destruction—the ceaseless retention / Of hell among men!”³⁹ Despite his stinging critique of science as a tool of capitalism and militarism, Keeler followed this collection two years later with a fifty-page poem, *The Promise of the Ages* (1896), that he dedicated to his former professor, Joseph LeConte. In the Introduction, he explained, “I have attempted, in the following pages, to present the struggles of an earnest mind with some of the modern life-problems”—particularly the “law of evolution,” which he called “the keynote of this latter nineteenth century.” Although he granted the validity of evolution, he explained that the poem “seeks to transcend this with the higher thought of the ultimate reality of the spirit.”⁴⁰

Needless to say, Keeler’s poetry during this period cut decisively against the emerging normative boundaries of scientific research at the University of California. Although he served as Director of the California Academy of Sciences and remained active in public discussion clubs such as the Philosophical Union and Zoological Society, Keeler abandoned his ambitions of becoming a college professor. Unlike his close friend William Ritter, who pursued graduate study at Harvard in biology before returning to a faculty position in Berkeley, Keeler carved an alternative path as an independent scholar, poet, architectural theorist, and community organizer. An example of the possibilities and limits of this path arose in 1899, when Keeler was invited along with Ritter and John Muir to join the Harriman Expedition to Alaska as an ornithologist and poet.⁴¹ The Expedition was organized by railroad magnate Edward Harriman as a sort of floating university, bringing together a range of scientists, photographers, and naturalists for a

two month voyage to Alaska with plans to publish a comprehensive volume of research findings afterwards. Keeler embarked on the trip with high hopes of gathering material for future books and magazine articles. He was assigned to a cabin with John Muir, writing to Louise, “Of course we are a trifle crowded but how great a privilege to be cooped up for two months in a little room with John Muir!”⁴² Another Berkeleyan, Charles Palache, observed that the trip was “like a big informal house party.”⁴³ Keeler was particularly drawn to this aspect of the voyage, hoping that the trip would offer a unique opportunity for intensive intellectual sociability outside the constraints of a single institution.

As the trip progressed, however, Keeler found that the trip was divided along institutional and economic lines. The trip’s participants were selected according to specialized professional networks that had secured Keeler’s participation but also left him feeling overwhelmed and marginalized. “I am actually tired,” he admitted to Louise, “of the constant strain of trying to take things in. I am trying to learn from the scenery, the life and the people about me, including botanists, geologists, marine invertebratologists, ornithologists, and professional story tellers.”⁴⁴ Within the first two weeks of the journey, Keeler began to suspect that the trip would not pay off as he had imagined. On June 16, 1899, he wrote, “I feel more and more as if this Alaska trip would be of little or no benefit to me in my work. I am faithfully recording all that I see but it will be of no value for literary purposes except as a background for stories.”⁴⁵ Specifically, Keeler came to realize that the Expedition involved restraints that neither the University of California nor the California Academy of Sciences had posed to his work. He had not realized in advance that Harriman would claim rights to all research produced by the trip, offering no way for Keeler to recoup the cost of his passage on the journey. As he explained:

We are not supposed to be allowed to publish the results of our observations in magazine articles or newspapers lest it take from the originality of the book or

books they expect to publish, so here I am with my hands tied and nothing to show for these two months. I have promised to write a popular account of the birds of Alaska, and they will probably want another article on the scenery, so when I am to get through paying for my passage is very uncertain.⁴⁶

For members of the Expedition who were already financially secure, whether through literary celebrity or academic employment, these restrictions posed little trouble. Only a few of the participants were hoping to parlay the experience into fame or financial security. These included the photographer Edward S. Curtis, who embarked on the trip in a precarious financial situation but used the connections he made on the journey to meet J.P. Morgan and secure sponsorship for his multi-volume photographic series, *The North American Indian* (1907-1930). By contrast, wealthier participants such as Muir were able to simply enjoy the trip without concern for the cost of passage. Indeed, as Keeler wrote to Louise expressing his fears about the financial ramifications of Harriman's embargo on research produced during the trip, Muir sat alongside him with a cigar cracking jokes and "making fun generally."⁴⁷ Corporate sponsorship, Keeler came to realize, involved structural hurdles to intellectual freedom as severe as the disciplinary restrictions he chafed against at Berkeley. He would spend the rest of his career seeking to control the means of knowledge production through the establishment of ideal spaces and institutions, or people's classrooms, of his own.

The Romance of Rusticity: Spaces of Intellectual Life in Berkeley

Shortly after returning from Alaska, Charles Keeler embarked on a two-year journey to the South Pacific with his wife, Louise Bunnell Keeler. Having learned from his disappointment with the Harriman Expedition, Keeler contracted directly with the *San Francisco Chronicle* to provide a series of articles on his voyage in exchange for trip expenses, with the stipulation that he was free to submit articles to national magazines as well. Indeed, Keeler's contact at the

Chronicle agreed to help facilitate publication in other journals. As Keeler wrote from Tahiti in 1900:

I am sending you my first article—a sketch of the voyage, which I hope will please you and find its way into the *Sunday Chronicle*. A second article for the *Chronicle* on Tahiti will follow by the next boat, at which time I expect also to send a magazine article with Mrs. Keeler's illustrations. I shall send it to the *Century*, with the request that they return it to you if not available. If you care to do so you might send it to Scribners for a second trial and to Harpers for a third.⁴⁸

In a sign of his urgency to raise his profile as a writer and frustration with his inability to use material from the Harriman Expedition, Keeler specified that he did not want to give up on the article until it had been rejected from at least a dozen national magazines. The South Pacific trip also occasioned time for Keeler to reflect on the implications of Harriman's power. "There can be no possible doubt," he wrote on the way home to Berkeley, "that America is rapidly changing from a republic to an oligarchy. Rockefeller, Morgan, Harriman, Yerkes and a few others are not to be content with each ruling a separate industrial field."⁴⁹ Fearing that the United States would find itself dominated by a sort of super-monopoly, a single corporation uniting the monopolies of several different industries, Keeler began to see local activism and an aesthetic of rusticity as the most promising avenues for intellectual independence.

Upon his return to California, Keeler joined the Bohemian Club, a gentlemen's club whose membership consisted largely of the region's elite. Still financially troubled, Keeler remarked upon the Club in his letters almost exclusively in the context of his anxieties about paying bills for meals and membership.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, he spent the summers of 1902 and 1903 camping near the Mount Hamilton and Mount Shasta. A founding member of the Sierra Club from his days as a student at Berkeley, Keeler shared with other environmental activists a view of camping as an escape not only from the excesses of corporate capitalism and city life, but also as a space of white racial purity. In a request for help with campsite duties during the summer of

1903 near Mount Shasta, he wrote, “It would be a great opportunity for a nice college girl who knows how to cook and is willing to work. *No more Chinamen!*”⁵¹ By writing of camping in terms of health and independence, and specifying in this case that he wanted help from a “college girl,” Keeler underscored his emerging understanding of the racial and class boundaries of his work. Even as he rejected the monopolistic power of figures like Harriman as a threat to democracy, he chose to socialize with the members of the Bohemian Club and seek white, college-educated labor for his domestic life.

Keeler had long used the metaphor of the classroom to describe his camping trips, claiming that “direct communion with nature, if one be but in the mood for it, is one of the grandest schools for developing, broadening and ennobling the mind.”⁵² Keeler elaborated on this idea in an article that he wrote during his voyage to the South Pacific and published in *Impressions* magazine in November 1900. In the article, “The Impress of Nature on Art in California,” Keeler argued, “There can be no great art movement which is not rooted in the soil.”⁵³ He went on to make the case that California was uniquely situated for such a movement since, in his words, “Nowhere else on the American continent is the out-of-door world so inviting.”⁵⁴ Far from simply recycling longstanding tropes about the grandeur of the natural world in California, Keeler explicitly connected the future of art in the region to what he believed to be a white masculine inheritance. “We must accept,” he wrote, “gratefully, heartily, and manfully our heritage of letters and art, with all that it implies of skilled workmanship—of craftsmanship, if you choose—and with this historic instrument of expression we must go to nature and sit at her feet as little children.”⁵⁵

This heritage did not refer to classical literature or polite culture, but rather bees, warblers, ferns, waterfalls, and other aspects of what Alexandra Stern has called “California

eugenic landscapes.”⁵⁶ Here Stern refers to the way the environmental movement in California, particularly the struggle to protect the Redwoods, was shot through with hereditarian language like that of Keeler in his *Impressions* article. By using the image of a child to exemplify the ideal vantage point for encountering the natural world in California, Keeler made explicit this eugenic logic, calling for new artistic practices—whether in painting, writing, or architecture—that would be responsive to the conditions of modernity but built on local “heritage” (the hereditarian etymology of the term was no coincidence) rather than conventions drawn from Europe and the cities of the Eastern United States. As Keeler put it, “If we know these things we shall sing them and paint them and build them into our lives and our art, and the world will turn to us for inspiration; but if we do not take the pains to know these things, then will our art be but one last echo of the wave of conventionality, rolling from Paris and London to New York, to be finally lost on the misty reaches of the Pacific.”⁵⁷

During these years, Keeler set to work on a manifesto of architecture, *The Simple Home* (1904), that put his ideas into practice and remains to this day his most widely-read publication. The book was a distillation of ideas that emerged from a decade-long collaboration with the architect Bernard Maybeck during construction of Keeler’s unique house in the North Berkeley hills at Ridge Road and Highland Place. Both the house and the book were highly influential in the region’s Arts and Crafts Movement, bringing the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris to a California context. In particular, Keeler was instrumental in forming the Hillside Club, a group that consisted of men and women interested in managing development in the Berkeley Hills. Keeler would later call the group “an active power in the civic and cultural life of Berkeley.”⁵⁸

As Charles Wollenberg explains:

The club was dedicated to a new kind of urban development that would respect rather than destroy the natural environment. In the North Berkeley hills, club

members were determined to retain the natural topography and produce ‘artistic homes that appear to have grown out of the hillside and to be a part of it.’ They opposed streets laid out on the grid plan, calling instead for winding lanes that followed the contours of the land.⁵⁹

The Hillside Club was a culmination of a long strand of antimodern, middle class activism in Berkeley. As far back as 1892, during Keeler’s junior year at the University of California, he had been involved in protesting grid-based development in Berkeley. As he had written to Louise, “We have had a meeting at Mr. Greene’s to protest against the numerous electric roads which are clamoring for admittance within the classic shades of Berkeley.”⁶⁰ It was during Keeler’s undergraduate years that he also became interested in Ruskin and Morris. Even as he was immersed in ornithology—editing *Zoe* and writing his book on the evolution of birds—he found himself drawn to Ruskin’s call for an embrace of manual labor, rusticity, and craft. “To be sure,” wrote Keeler upon encountering Ruskin’s work, “he didn’t understand modern science—evolution—but one is quite ready to forgive him this on seeing what a beautiful insight he had into the relation of art to life.”⁶¹ Indeed, Keeler put these ideas into practice not only through his own home, but as the “founder of a neighborhood Ruskin study group as well as a Morrisian press christened Sign of the Live Oak.”⁶²

Despite such community organizations, the Arts & Crafts movement in California was far from monolithic. Kenneth Trapp refers to the movement as “a kind of dynamic organism that grew and adapted and mutated into forms that confound any attempt at taxonomy.”⁶³ As Richard Guy Wilson explains, Arts & Crafts enthusiasts advocated “not just a replacement of machines with handicraft but a revolt against an entire system of academic art and what was seen as a false distinction between the elite arts, sculpture and painting, and the so-called lesser arts, the applied and decorative arts.”⁶⁴ Written “from the standpoint of a layman in architecture,” Keeler’s *The Simple Home* (1904) applied this valorization of artisan labor and bodily experience to the built

environment, asserting in its opening pages that “the ideal must be rooted in the soil of the real, the practical, the utilitarian.”⁶⁵ Instead of seeking refuge in the academy, the goal of California artists, according to Keeler, should be “to emphasize the gospel of the simple life, to scatter broadcast the faith in simple beauty, to make prevalent the conviction that we must *live* art before we can create it.” This would open the door, Keeler continued, to appreciation for Arts & Crafts ideas and ideals from “the public, whose faith and support are essential to the permanence of art life in a community.”⁶⁶

The primary targets of Keeler’s ire in *The Simple Home* were readymade ornamentation, factory-produced furniture, and wallpaper. “A large nature may rise above his environment and live in a dream world of his own fashioning,” Keeler allowed,

but most of us are mollusks after all, and are shaped and sized by the walls which we build about us. When we enter a room and see tawdry furniture, sham ornaments and vulgar daubs of pictures displayed, do we not feel convinced that the occupants of the home have a tawdry and vulgar streak in their natures? Or if all is cold and formal in architecture and furnishings, do we not instinctively nerve ourselves to meet the shock of a politely proper reception?⁶⁷

Like other admirers of Ruskin and Morris, Keeler’s call for visible carpentry, simple furniture, and contact with the surrounding environment represented a reaction to modernity and a thirst for a seemingly more authentic way of living. Indeed, Keeler went on to argue that mass production in architecture, furnishing, and even clothing were a sign of the times, particularly the palaces of San Francisco’s Nob Hill. Such a home, wrote Keeler, “is a shoddy house, the makeshift of a shoddy age. It is the natural outgrowth of our prosperous democracy. Machinery has enabled us to manifold shams to a degree heretofore undreamed. . . . We botch our carpentering and trust to putty, paint and paper to cover up the defects.”⁶⁸

By leaving visible the rough edges of homes, decorations, and manners, Keeler called for not only a new architecture but a new approach to democracy. In the homes he envisioned,

“Much of the construction shows, and therefore good workmanship is required and the craft of the carpenter is restored to its old-time dignity.”⁶⁹ In so doing, however, he not only echoed the Arts & Crafts Movement but also the patriarchal view of California put forth by friends such as David Starr Jordan, the president of Stanford University, who famously linked rough manners and simple living with what he believed to be California’s male identity. As Jordan wrote in his book, *California and Californians*, published shortly before *The Simple Home*, “California is essentially a man’s state” and its public opinion was “an out-of-doors public opinion—a man’s view of men.”⁷⁰ Keeler adopted similar patriarchal exceptionalism to cast California as uniquely situated for a revival of robust and authentic architecture, manners, and communities. “Happily,” he wrote, “a change is coming into our lives. Nowhere in the country is it more marked than California.” With the rise of large cities and concentrations of people, Keeler argued, California offered an example for the rest of the world to follow, demonstrating through careful urban planning and the protection of spaces like Yosemite, “the redeeming grace of foliage and flowers.” Keeler went so far as to advocate the planting of trees and plants in slums, believing that “the decoration, with geraniums and other plants and vines, of the residence district of the poor, would, I firmly believe, yield immediate returns in the advancement of culture.”⁷¹

Keeler took as his particular focus the planning of development in the North Berkeley hills. Much of *The Simple Home* was devoted to explaining why his particular architectural prescriptions were drawn from the climate, landscape, and cultural geography of the San Francisco Bay Area. The hills of the East Bay, Keeler explained, opened up possibilities for winding gardens, vistas, windows that would maximize natural lighting, and porches that would shield residents from cold winds for much of the year. Neighborhood-wide attention to planning could avert, in his view, the pernicious consequences of grid-based construction by real estate

agents and investors. “The taint of commercialism,” wrote Keeler, “is over these homes, and all too often the life within them is shallow and artificial.” To avoid this taint, Keeler urged prospective home buyers to contract directly with architects and cooperate with their future neighbors to build homes that complemented one another and would be crafted in response to each family’s particular needs as well as the specific environmental conditions of a given plot of land. Keeler argued that adapting construction to the conditions of a given region was not simply a matter of design, but of materials and economic conditions as well. With “great forest areas unexploited and the modern facilities for converting trees into lumber,” Keeler argued that California was in a period in its history where wood remained the most appropriate building material. Once these wooden walls were constructed, moreover, Keeler believed paint and wallpaper to be abominations that ruined the character of the wood and drew attention away from the craft of carpentry. “Anything,” explained Keeler, “that tends to emphasize the constructive quality of the work enhances its value. No ceiling ornament can equal the charm of visible floor joists and girders, or of the rafters.”⁷²

Throughout *The Simple Home*, Keeler cast his vision as an antidote for commerce and a way of guiding readers into a more authentic embrace of community. He viewed the home as a space of learning and to some extent people’s classroom in which the community could gather and share ideas, building performance spaces into his home and rejecting the practice of using walls and mantels as spaces of display for consumer products and souvenirs acquired around the world.⁷³ Keeler decried “modern materialism” for demanding that “the man must be a slave to business, rushing and jostling with the crowd in the scramble for wealth” rather than having “time for his family.”⁷⁴ He urged readers to “eliminate in so far as possible all factory-made accessories in order that your dwelling may not be typical of American commercial supremacy . . .

. Beware the gloss that covers over a sham!”⁷⁵ He likewise called on readers to avoid purchasing reproductions of paintings created elsewhere, and to instead seek out the work of local artists from the San Francisco Bay Area for wall decorations.

His philosophy in *The Simple Home* became a lens through which he understood the built environment of the San Francisco Bay Area, including the educational spaces of the universities at Berkeley and Stanford. In June 1906, shortly after the Earthquake and Fire, Keeler traveled with John Muir to spend the day at Stanford. Far from his giddiness over embarking on the Harriman Expedition with Muir, Keeler confessed that he “reluctantly gave up the day to him.” Muir, on the other hand, “insisted on paying all expenses and enjoyed it greatly. We got a carriage at Palo Alto and drove about the grounds—called on Jordan but found he had gone to Los Gatos to arrange to go camping near there.” Touring the university grounds, Keeler concluded that poor craftsmanship was to blame for the severe damage that Stanford had suffered. Criticizing Jane Stanford, who had been murdered the previous year, Keeler wrote, “The buildings that went down were miserable shams and the poor old lady had been wasting her millions on houses of cards. It was a dramatic uncovering of shoddy work.”⁷⁶

The following year, in 1907, Louise Bunnell Keeler passed away, leaving Charles as an emotionally devastated single father. Charles blamed his wife’s death on the strain of the Earthquake, explaining to a friend, “Mrs. Keeler worked so hard in helping the people made homeless by the burning of San Francisco that her health gave way under the strain, and for eight months we have been trying to save her.”⁷⁷ After her death, Keeler escaped for a summer in Yosemite before returning to Berkeley to ease his grief by “toiling over a hand-built, organic house” and “incorporating a rock outcropping into the floor plan” that would mimic Yosemite in Berkeley.⁷⁸ As Cheryl Robertson has noted:

Keeler's secluded aerie externalized his intuition that direct experience of California soul-expanding scenery was more effective than the preachings codified in Hillside Club leaflets and *The Simple Home* for converting the general citizenry to unostentatious, naturally artful living. Indeed, tourist forays and camping expeditions in the Golden State's early national parks, forest preserves, beaches, and, especially, alpine resorts did prompt many people to aspire to a more habitual simplicity and rusticity at home.⁷⁹

Although Keeler remained active in the Hillside Club, his attention increasingly shifted outward from Berkeley to cities and publics beyond California. As an officer of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Keeler became a sort of ambassador for Berkeley, sharing his vision for the possibilities of a new type of education around the world.

Regionalist Sensibilities and World Travel

Even as he prepared for his world tour in 1911, Keeler continued to write about what he believed to be the unique promise of intellectual life in Berkeley. In an unpublished manuscript, "California Art," Keeler made the case that partnerships between the University of California and community groups in Berkeley could help launch new approaches to the arts. "The formation of an art society by the teachers of Berkeley," he wrote, "is but one of many signs pointing to the awakening of an appreciation of the true value of art in human culture."⁸⁰ In another manuscript, "Municipal Art in San Francisco," Keeler zeroed in on the concept of "local color" that several other public intellectuals had pushed to escape over the previous decade. Building his chops as a booster, Keeler gradually moved away from his idealism and began to write about rusticity less as a virtue of the simple life and rather as a marketable commodity for attracting tourist dollars to the San Francisco Bay Area. As he put it,

To understand the art possibilities of San Francisco it is necessary first at the outset to get some notion of the city as an individuality—to see what it embodies and typifies, to see what it is made out of, to see how it lies, to discover its latent power. Few American cities are as rich as San Francisco in what the artist terms 'local color.' Few have as picturesque an historic background, and I am tempted

to add, although such assertions are dangerous, that none other has a more inspiring outlook. . . . It is a city of the past as well as of the future. It holds the keys of that Golden Gate which opens to all highways of the Pacific—to the Orient, the South Seas, to South America and Australia. In the very name San Francisco there is poetic suggestion.⁸¹

Here Keeler simply recycled tropes that had been in circulation for decades—particularly the notion of San Francisco as a picturesque gateway to the Pacific. “In this age of restless activity,” he wrote, “of discoveries and inventions, of expansion and growth, it takes an alert and elastic mind to keep abreast of the times. . . . It is perhaps scarce a matter of surprise that our eastern friends are so prone to misunderstand us.”⁸² Although he envisioned his boosterism as a way of bringing the promise of Berkeley and San Francisco to the world, he reflected less and less in his letters about the ideals that he had embraced in his poetry of the 1890s, scrambling instead to find new sources of income to help raise his children.

Aside from *The Simple Home*, most of Keeler’s publications around the turn of the twentieth century were written on behalf of booster organizations. In addition to collaborating on a guidebook for travelers, *To California and Back* (1903), Keeler wrote *Southern California* (1898) for the Santa Fe Passenger Department and *San Francisco and Thereabout* (1902) for the California Promotion Committee. These writings reframed many of the concepts from *The Simple Home* as a promotional message for attracting tourism, investment, and artists. In “The Passing of the Wild and Wooly West,” for example, Keeler wrote,

The superficial observer who passes snap judgment on a people, who takes Kodak impressions for the real thing, almost of necessity gives a distorted and misleading picture. The true gauge of the culture of a people is the home, with all its sacred privacy into which the globe-trotter reporter does not penetrate. And what shall we say of the Californian homes? They are as diverse as the abodes of any democratic people necessarily are, ranging from the flimsiest shanty to the most gorgeous stone palace, but the homes of the middle class people, those of moderate means, of average success in life, are after all the true index.⁸³

Imagining that *The Simple Home* had actually transformed the architectural patterns of the region, Keeler emphasized to potential visitors that the rusticity of homes in the San Francisco Bay Area was a sign of authenticity, not poverty. He noted the widespread “movement toward such homes as would have delighted William Morris and his school.”⁸⁴ The Arts & Crafts movement’s popularity in California offered insight, Keeler argued, into regional practices hidden beneath the surface, particularly the high value placed on democratic education in the region. California, he wrote, was a place “where sons and daughters of farmers work their way through college” and “the influence of the universities permeates the entire school system of the state.”⁸⁵ More than anywhere else in the country, argued Keeler in this unusual pitch to potential visitors, California’s education system was integrated through the University of California’s active role in accrediting schools.

In 1911, Keeler launched on a two year world tour that he hoped to parlay into fame and financial success on the lecture circuit and in radio. With the help of U.S. Embassies around the world, Keeler arranged visits and poetry readings in a long series of sites, including Japan, the Philippines, India, Italy, and England. The trip was not the financial boon that Keeler had hoped for. In a letter to his children, Keeler wrote, “My first recital in Japan was given last night here in the ball room of the Imperial Hotel. It was under the patronage of the American Embassy. . . . Everyone seemed to think the evening a splendid success, although the expense of musicians, advertising, etc., has been so large that I will make little out of it.” In comments typical of his letters home, which strongly emphasized exoticism, Keeler added: “What do you think of your father turning into a Japanese, going to beautiful Japanese inns and dressing in a kimono and eating rice and raw fish and queer soups, and having a little Japanese maid to wait on him?”⁸⁶ For the next decade, Keeler aggressively marketed himself as a world traveler. In 1916, he

presented a recital of poetry to the University of California Summer Session. The event included a series of poems called “A World Wanderer’s Gleanings” that featured poems about Alaska, Mexico, New Zealand, Japan, and Italy, as well as Hinduism, Islam, and a “Sailor Chanty.”⁸⁷ A promotional brochure produced by his agent echoed this list, noting that Keeler was “available for engagements in California, or, by special arrangements, anywhere in the United States,” and could offer poetry “on the many countries and people among whom he has travelled, including China, Japan, the South Sea Islands, the Malays, India and Egypt, to characteristic sailor chanteys and songs of the sea.” The brochure also emphasized Keeler’s involvement with radio, including one leaflet that noted, “Mr. Keeler has had twenty-five of his radio dramas broadcast over the Pacific Coast Station, KGO, of the National Broadcasting Company.”⁸⁸

Radio was a major component of Keeler’s cultural entrepreneurialism, and indeed he wrote dozens of scripts for potential radio programs, most of which were rejected. One of his successfully aired programs, “Around the Horn with Keeler,” was aired in 1930 on the station KPO and drew on Keeler’s travels. During this late period in his life, after a seven year stint with the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, Keeler’s publicity still emphasized his experiences as a traveler. One brochure, “Charles Keeler: Poet, World Traveler, Civic Worker,” included a long list of places visited as well as clubs in San Francisco and Berkeley, among them the Century Club, Camera Club, Sequoia Club, Teachers’ Institute, Academy of Sciences, Hillside Club, and several teaching colleges.⁸⁹ Despite aggressively seeking to engage new communication technologies, the content of his presentations often bemoaned what Keeler believed to be the destructive aspects of modernity. One proposed script rued the very technologies that Keeler utilized, exclaiming: “Always on the go! It’s machinery that’s to blame for it all—and rushing automobiles—airplanes—wheels—motors—the speed, the roar—always for money—gold!

Gold! Oh, it's awful!"⁹⁰ This tension marked Keeler's career as he moved into the 1920s and took control of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce with the express purpose of deemphasizing commerce in favor of promoting the arts and education. In 1920, not long after his appointment, Keeler gave an address to the Berkeley Women's Club that noted his aspiration "to loosen up the conservative academic, and free them from outgrown traditions."⁹¹ In short, by bringing commercial interests to the academy and arts to the business community, Keeler saw himself as a mediating figure who would help Berkeley meet the challenges of the modern world.

A New Boosterism: Charles Keeler's Chamber of Commerce

From 1920 to 1927, Keeler served as the executive director of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. Although he had never run a business, Keeler had been active in nearly every major civic organization in the city for the past three decades. He won the appointment on the strength of his proposal to transform Berkeley into a national center of arts and culture. In 1921, Keeler described the plan as totally novel among such organizations: "The project of the Chamber of Commerce of supporting the art activities of the community and making Berkeley an art center is attracting national interest as it is said to be the first instance that an American Chamber of Commerce has endeavored to support the fine arts as well as the commercial and industrial activities."⁹² In a keynote address to the California City Plan Convention, Keeler urged other representatives to resist approaching boosterism and city planning as fundamentally economic practices, instead setting California apart through education, parks, civic arts promotion, and other such initiatives. With professional city planning, high population density did not have to translate into the loss of common spaces for art, education, and play. California's cities, Keeler argued, needed to find enlightened urban planners and allow them to "teach us that community

theatres, and art galleries and museums and zoological gardens are as essential to the spiritual development of our people as bread and clothing is to their material welfare.”⁹³ Keeler’s efforts received national publicity, including an article in the *Dearborn Independent* on “City Moves to Make Its Artists Self-supporting: Berkeley, California, Through Chamber of Commerce, Acts to Take Art Out of Garret.”⁹⁴

Keeler’s view of the proper role of the Chamber of Commerce put him at odds with many business leaders in the city. In his keynote address, Keeler went as far as to explicitly reject money as a motivating factor in his work. The “supreme object” of enlightened city planning, argued Keeler, “is not mere crowds of people aimlessly milling around, and the God of our world is not Mammon nor the Almighty Dollar.”⁹⁵ Calling out disputes taking place within his own organization, Keeler decried the “tendency among some chambers of commerce to enter into a mad competition for factories.”⁹⁶ Rather than advancing commercial interests, Keeler argued in another document, the Chamber of Commerce should be “a central clearing house and a center for making the city a better place in which to live and work.” Thus instead of helping Berkeley participate in the chase for factories, Keeler sought to create a city as “a work of art—a splendid creation with a design, a plan, a purpose.”⁹⁷ Recalling his own encounter with the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Keeler called for the creation of a zone of factories in the city that would serve as a permanent Industrial Exposition instead of a series of skin-deep buildings designed to crumble within months.⁹⁸ Indeed, Keeler saw the Chamber of Commerce as a potential solution for racial conflict through the promotion and commodification of African American arts and culture. Shot through with confidence in a hereditarian white supremacy that cast black Californians as genetically inferior, Keeler’s proposal contended that the Chamber of Commerce “should help the Afro Americans” develop:

a typical American Negro architecture, with good design, vivid but harmonious colors, and certain flowers of brilliant hues to be made garden features—what an attraction such a village in our city would be! The Negroes themselves would be proud of their achievement. Here might be developed fine singing societies, orchestras and bands where music founded on Plantation Melodies and spirituals would be a feature. Negro playwrights would be encouraged to write and produce characteristic dramas, and poets, painters and craftsmen would be stimulated to express the finest ideals of their race. Beauty and race pride would thus be used to cement and consolidate the race in one locality.⁹⁹

Keeler saw the creation of such heritage districts as a strategy for differentiating Berkeley from other localities during a period where, in his view, nearly all other cities were competing for the same industrial capitalist order. With the University of California as the most important player in Berkeley's economy, it would be foolish, Keeler argued, to resist drawing its intellectual capital into a plan for "building a better city" that would attract artists, intellectuals, and other cultural workers. In this light, therefore, Keeler believed Berkeley's black residents could create a major new tourist attraction—a black arts "village"—that would both reinforce and capitalize on race-based residential segregation as well as the overall plan of turning Berkeley into a national "arts center." Though the plan for a black arts village never came to fruition, Keeler's six years as director of the Chamber of Commerce had modest success, including an Arts and Crafts center and events such as the Berkeley Music Festival, but failed to significantly involve the University of California in local economic development initiatives.

Keeler left the Chamber of Commerce in 1927 under pressure from local businesses to pursue more traditional economic boosterism. As one local history puts it, "It is doubtful that this group knew quite what they were getting themselves into in giving this position to Berkeley's visionary community arts networker."¹⁰⁰ During the mid-1920s, Keeler had shifted much of his energy to the establishment of the Berkeley Cosmic Society, a new religious group that he hoped would bring together his old friends from the 1890s discussion club scene for

conversation about modern spirituality, philosophy, and community education. As part of these efforts, Keeler wrote an unpublished gospel, *The Book of Cosmic Religion*, that consisted of idealistic platitudes and was used as the basis for the group's discussions. On April 5, 1927, Caroline LeConte, Joseph's daughter, wrote to Mary McHenry Keith: "I think you must be having a great grand time with Mr. Keeler and his Cosmic Club. When I was in Berkeley I saw that he was 'founding a new Religion'—I thought however this must have been greatly exaggerated; and his Club is probably for the study of philosophy and the comparison of religions."¹⁰¹ In 1928, Keeler wrote to a friend to express his disappointment that the University of California was unwilling to engage with his project, explaining that "So far the Cosmic Society has not attracted a single member of the University faculty" and that "if it came from afar with a New York or London label, it might be different." He added that Los Angeles might be a more receptive site for a second chapter of the group. As he put it, "All sorts of quack cults and isms flourish there, I am told, but there are also many cultured and progressive people there who ought to be receptive of new ideas."¹⁰² This sense of alienation from the University community in Berkeley had been slowly growing for years despite Keeler's efforts to build town and gown relationships across a wide range of civic initiatives.

By the early 1930s, Keeler's access to publishers, including local houses and magazines, had almost completely disappeared. His unconventional strategy for the Chamber of Commerce had fueled his reputation for eccentricity, even as his boosterism compromised his status among artists and writers like Mary Austin, who considered him a charlatan. As far back as 1913, when the publisher Henry Holt had met Keeler in New York, Holt wrote to Austin seeking information about Keeler's trustworthiness. "I met your California poet Keeler last night," wrote Holt, "and was very pleasantly impressed with him, and it is possible that we may get into some sort of

business relations. With that possibility in view, I want you to tell me, confidentially of course, just how far it will do to rely on him.”¹⁰³ Although Austin’s response was preserved in neither her own papers or Holt’s, his subsequent reply indicates that she responded with criticism. “I am greatly obliged,” wrote Holt, “for your answer about Keeler. I was greatly taken with him, but on thinking him over, and passing him around a little among my people in New York, I got a realization that he was not superhuman, altho [sic.] very decently human.”¹⁰⁴ Despite publishing eight books between 1893 and 1906, Keeler published virtually nothing for the rest of his life, leaving several unpublished book-length manuscripts in his papers.

These manuscripts included *Bayville Boosters*, a novel of over 400 pages based on a fictional, thinly-veiled version of Keeler’s own ideological conflicts at the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. “Bayville,” wrote Keeler, “on the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay . . . is just a dream city, not unlike many a real city of California, and for that matter, the towns of diverse other parts of this great American Union.”¹⁰⁵ The novel’s conflict revolved around competing visions of urban planning and public education, with an idealistic young director of the Bayville Chamber of Commerce, Ralph Gordon, who offers proposals for civic reform that were lifted directly from Keeler’s own speeches and writings. Gordon’s enemies in the Bayville business community include a full cast of unethical real estate agents, corrupt politicians, unsavory salesmen, and reckless financial speculators. The common denominator among Gordon’s foes is a commitment to enlisting Bayville’s resources in the same struggle for low-wage factories that Keeler’s imagined every other locality in the country to be pursuing. The worst of the antagonists is Bud Quigley, a salesman who ultimately unseats Gordon from his position at the Chamber of Commerce. Early in the novel, when Quigley is seeking to rope Gordon into a real estate speculation scheme, Gordon replies: “I’m one of those queer ducks who haven’t any idea

of getting rich quick. I'd rather be of some use in the world than to make a million dollars on the stock market" (5). Gordon's anti-commercial streak leaves him constantly under siege, and considering that Gordon is plainly modeled after Keeler, the parallel suggests that Keeler may have felt the same way about his own role with the actual Berkeley Chamber of Commerce.

In *Bayville Boosters*, Ralph Gordon's idealism is forged through his education at the University of California and Harvard Business College. Rather than seeking a fortune, Gordon remains committed to becoming a community leader in Bayville, even after Quigley tells him, "Your college education has gone to your head" (8). As an avocational pianist from a privileged background, Gordon was written off by his business associates as "a bit of a high brow" despite his "friendly, democratic ways" (12). At the same time, his ability to traverse class boundaries made him one of the few figures in Bayville with connections among both the wealthy dwellers of the Bayville Hills and the working class shop keepers, artisans, and mechanics who lived in the plain along the shore—a social division that exactly echoed that of West Berkeley and the Berkeley Hills. Ralph's love interest is Nina Ingram, a university-educated accountant who later becomes his assistant with the Bayville Chamber of Commerce. Early in the novel, they drive to a lookout with a view of the Bay, noting that "The colossal marvel of electricity had lit the view on a scale beyond the wildest dreams of fancy" (30). But as the conversation turns to their future, Nina rejects Ralph's advances out of consideration for her elderly mother, explaining, "I suppose I'm one of those strange creatures out of place in this modern life—a girl with an old-fashioned conscience" (33). Throughout the novel, Keeler weaves his anti-feminist streak with doubts about commercialism, crowds, and other aspects of modernity, even as he highlighted the injustice of Ingram getting fired from her job solely for being a woman. The deeper logic of the novel cannot fathom Ingram pursuing her own professional projects, cast her work as a necessity

brought on by economic injustice and her eventual enthusiasm for Ralph's reform projects as merely an outlet for her ongoing feelings for him.

Gordon's work to reform Bayville is continually punctuated by uncertainty about modern technology and social norms. In one conversation, Gordon's friends blame the stock market crash of 1929 as a result of technological disruption. "Oh," asks one, "we're living in a terribly fast age, don't you think, Ralph? People make up their minds more suddenly than they used to before they had the radio and air planes and all these new-fangled contraptions" (58). As "one of those California cities that has grown up during the lifetime of its oldest inhabitants," Bayville epitomizes the rapid, unwieldy change that Keeler sought to harness in Berkeley (36). Among the worst consequences of rapid economic development, in Keeler's view, was a fracturing of community as citizens become burrowed moles oblivious to their own neighbors and devoting attention instead to "newspapers, gossips and scandal mongers" (110). For Bud Quigley and Gordon's other enemies, however, the change in Bayville is not rapid enough. As Quigley exclaims, "The trouble with Bayville is that we've got a dead Chamber of Commerce!" His friend John Whitaker agrees: "Now you said something! We'll never get anywhere till the old Chamber wakes up and starts boosting for factories" (74). Their plans cut directly against the ideals that Gordon—and by extension Keeler—envisioned in developing a new sort of anti-commercial boosterism. In an argument with Mr. Perkins, a wealthy investor, Gordon complains about the obliviousness of local business leaders to civic concerns. As he puts it: "This is certainly an age of centralization and chains—chain groceries, chain restaurants, and now chain banks. [But] I've always wanted to get into some sort of civic work—campaigning for Community Chests, or City Planning or Boy Scout Executive work." Echoing Keeler's own speeches on the subject, Gordon argues that such work will ultimately benefit business by

creating more solid social and economic foundations. When Perkins calls such aspirations “trash” and “frills,” Ralph retorts: “I don’t count them as frills. I’m interested in public service. I’d like to do something to make Bayville a better place to live in, instead of just trying to see how much I could squeeze out of it to leave it like a sucked orange” (94).

The bulk of the novel follows Gordon as he attempts to implement this vision—a sort of fantasy of what Keeler envisioned Berkeley could have become had it followed his advice. The novel went so far as to envision the sort of collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce and the University of California that Keeler had pushed for during his tenure as Executive Director. Like Keeler, Gordon is convinced that “an active Chamber can do wonders with a community, if it only awakens the civic consciousness of the citizens” (95). To the dismay of local business leaders, Ralph makes improved fire protection a centerpiece of his efforts after getting “pointers” from “the University and the United States Forestry men about the danger of hill fires.” (309) Likewise Gordon seeks advice from the Political Science Department at Berkeley for help with planning a membership drive (264). Gordon sees the improvements such as fire protection as a long-term investment that will ultimately, in eugenicist language, attract a higher “grade of new citizens” to Bayville. As Gordon puts it:

What is a superior city? It’s a city with a good government, free from graft and selfish politics. It’s a city where health is safeguarded, life and property protected, and fire hazards reduced to a minimum. It’s a city with good schools ample playgrounds for the children. It’s a beautiful city, with parks and boulevards and attractive civic monuments. Surely a shabby, unsanitary, graft-ridden city, with poor schools and inadequate playgrounds would not attract as high a grade of new citizens as one where these defects did not exist (282).

Gordon’s membership drive advanced these ideas as if he were a local political leader rather than director of the Chamber of Commerce, with the result that membership vastly expanded beyond the business community to include “professional men, clergymen, a few school principals, and

even a scattering membership among music teachers, commuters and residents who had no business interest in Bayville” (337). As Gordon explained to one of his critics, “I’m in a position of public trust. The Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of the whole community, and as Secretary I’ve got to stand for those things that will benefit the entire town” (356). Keeler modeled Gordon’s most audacious plan directly on his own proposal for a permanent World’s Fair along the West Berkeley waterfront. In Gordon’s words:

I can picture on our waterfront a perpetual world’s industrial exposition, where happy and contented workers make superior products in buildings of beautiful architecture surrounded by lawns and flower gardens and fountains. I can picture Bayville as becoming, with the support and encouragement of its Chamber of Commerce, a distinguished art center, where painters and poets and sculptors find a congenial and profitable home—a city with an endowed Little Theater and a municipal symphony orchestra and choral society (335).

Keeler envisioned his proposal, in the actual Berkeley rather than the novel, as an opportunity to finally realize the ideals of the cohort of “friends bearing torches”—Joseph LeConte, George Howison, Bernard Maybeck, John Muir, and others—who dominated the intellectual life of Berkeley during Keeler’s youth.¹⁰⁶ Both in his own tenure with the Chamber of Commerce and the fictional world of Bayville, however, such utopian schemes did not have the support of the city’s most important business leaders.

In *Bayville Boosters*, Ralph Gordon’s rivals mock him as a clueless college professor. One tells him: “You talk like one of those theoretical college professors instead of a reasonable man of affairs. Now I want you to simply forget all that sentimental gush and get down to cold facts. . . . That’s what a Chamber of Commerce is for—to bring new industries to a town” (356). In a Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting deciding whether to fire Gordon and replace him with Bud Quigley, one of the members declares, The board members would say: “There’s Gordon getting off some more of his art stuff! Why can’t he get down to business and

forget all those frills. . . . He'll be wanting to send us all to art school next, or teach us to play the piano!" (403). Ultimately the Board votes to fire Gordon, only to realize within hours of the decision that there is a giant fire raging in the Bayville Hills, just as Gordon had predicted. As the fire department resorts to using dynamite to create a firewall, much of the city goes up in flame, and Gordon is vindicated, even if his utopian visions are never implemented. His only solace is in friendship with the few people who supported his dreams. This echoed Keeler's own vision for a renewed intellectual life in Berkeley. In another unpublished manuscript, *The Victorious Life*, Keeler emphasized that only friendship could break through the social isolation that he struggled with near the end of his life. As he put it, "Machines doing the tasks of thousands of workers, stamp out endless facsimiles of things useful and ornamental and high pressure salesmen and alluring advertising stimulate an appetite for more and more in order to keep the wheels of industry turning. . . . In the rush and hurry of modern life, we have little time for cultivating friends."¹⁰⁷

Notes

¹ T.J. Jackson, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 23, 61.

² Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder & Co., 1904), 54.

³ Lears notes that the crafts movement transformed “from a critique of modern culture to a new kind of accommodation,” although none of the figures he examines were as deeply contradictory as Keeler. Lears, No Place of Grace, 64.

⁴ Charles Wollenberg, Berkeley: A City in History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 77.

⁵ Charles Keeler, “Friends Bearing Torches,” unpublished manuscript, ca. 1936, Cartons 5:42 and 6:1, Charles Keeler Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Keeler retained his notes to publishers arguing for the marketability of his manuscript: “Factors Favoring Sale of Friends Bearing Torches,” Carton 5, Folder 39, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁶ Charles Keeler, “Bayville Boosters,” unpublished novel, ca. 1908, Carton 5, Folders 11-13, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. The manuscript includes a note to prospective publishers.

⁷ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 21, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁸ For life in the Zeta Psi house during this period, see Laurie Wilkie, The Lost Boys of Zeta Psi: A Historical Archaeology of Masculinity at a University Fraternity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 55-80.

⁹ Keeler had enough affection for the fraternity to decorate his wedding in Zeta Psi colors, black and gold, as well as the colors of his wife’s sorority, pink and blue. Berkeleyan (Berkeley, Calif.), October 20, 1893.

¹⁰ Other clubs mentioned in Keeler’s letters include the Religion Club (Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 4, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley) and the Bohemian Club (Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 12, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley). For the Zoological Society, see Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, November 17, 1892, Box 1, Folder 7, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. For the Audubon Society, see “Would Abolish Birds on Hats: Audubon Society is Formed by Berkeley Folk Who Love the Winged Tribe,” San Francisco Call, October 17, 1904.

¹¹ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 16, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Keeler “was frequently a guest along with the LeContes in the William Keith home in San Francisco.” Lester Stephens, Joseph LeConte: Gentle Prophet of Evolution (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 256.

¹² In one letter he wrote, “Mr. Muir is very fond of making fun of Keith.” Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 7, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹³ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, January 1, 1893, Box 1, Folder 9, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁴ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, April 10, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. A few months later, he described a possible collaboration with Ritter: “I had a very delightful talk with Mr. Ritter this morning. He wants me to carry on some investigations for which he has the material on the mammalian vertebra, and also to study up the Tunicates with him—microscopically.” Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 11, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁵ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 3, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁶ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 16, 1892, Box 1, Folder 7, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. The episode left Keeler feeling smug for several months thereafter. On a boat ride from San Francisco, for example, Joseph LeConte showed Keeler “an idea which he had written out and which he meant to use at the Philosophical Union.” In Keeler’s assessment, “It was nothing new, and wouldn’t trouble Howison in the least. Poor dear old man—if he only had Howison’s logical insight & philosophical training what a wonder he would be.” Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 18, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Keeler’s dismissive attitude toward LeConte eventually reversed entirely, particularly as Keeler encountered failures and obstacles in his own career. Within two years, his admiration for LeConte had grown so strong that he dedicated his first book of poetry, A Light Through the Storm (San Francisco: W. Doxey, 1894), to his former teacher.

¹⁷ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 14, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁸ As he explained to Louise, “Tomorrow I hope to begin writing again, but it is surprisingly hard to pick up the thread of an involved argument after laying it aside for two month. I have done no writing since commencing the lectures.” Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 22, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁹ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, April 10, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁰ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, January 8, 1893, Box 1, Folder 9, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²¹ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 30, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²² For example, in a letter to David Starr Jordan, the president of Stanford University, William Ritter described the California Academy of Sciences as too conservative for his tastes, despite serving in the Academy's leadership along with Keeler in 1898. See William Ritter to David Starr Jordan, March 17, 1896, Box 1, Folder 11, William Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also "Regular Ticket," 1898, Carton 11, William Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²³ Howison, for example, was "surprised to learn that I am studying anything but science." Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 10, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Keeler's letters during this period suggest that he was depressed despite the frenetic pace of his activities. At night, he "fell to meditating on death, immortality, the taking of animal life, and suicide," sparking a multi-letter thread on the ethics of suicide. Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 26, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley; Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 30, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁴ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 26, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁵ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 29, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. The following month he complained again of the sacrifices demanded by the journal, resigning himself to his schedule by concluding: "Anything to fill Zoe you know." Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 12, 1892, Box 1, Folder 7, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁶ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, November 28, 1892, Box 1, Folder 7, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁷ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 19, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁸ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 19, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

²⁹ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 7, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁰ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 25, 1892, Box 1, Folder 7, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³¹ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 21, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Keeler explained that although he had braced himself for a critical

reception, “This is even worse than I had expected, and while [the reviewer] has unquestionably seized upon the weak points he is in many respects very unjust.”

³² Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 26, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. Keeler passed through Chicago to visit Milwaukee before returning on July 1st to visit the World’s Fair. During this time, Keeler remained preoccupied with the negative review of his book and resolved to take action immediately upon return to California: “As soon as I return I will write a reply to Mr. Allen and think I can refute nearly every one of his detailed criticisms.” Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 1, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³³ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 5, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁴ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 3, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley; Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 4, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley; Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 8, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁵ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 3, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁶ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 2, 1893, Box 1, Folder 10, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

³⁷ Charles Keeler, A Light Through the Storm (San Francisco: W. Doxey, 1894), 79. In addition to Howison’s influence, Lester Stephens notes this collection “contains several poems reflecting LeConte’s scientific teachings.” Lester Stephens, Joseph LeConte: Gentle Prophet of Evolution (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 256.

³⁸ Charles Keeler, A Light Through the Storm (San Francisco: W. Doxey, 1894), 49.

³⁹ Charles Keeler, A Light Through the Storm (San Francisco: W. Doxey, 1894), 55, 57.

⁴⁰ The Promise of the Ages (Berkeley: [s.n.], 1896). See also Charles Keeler, “To Joseph LeConte,” Sierra Club Bulletin 6 (January 1908): 223-224.

⁴¹ See William Goetzmann and Kay Sloan, Looking Far North: The Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899 (New York: Viking, 1982); and Charles Keeler, “Days Among Alaska Birds,” in John Muir, John Burroughs, and George Bird Grinnell, eds., Harriman Alaska Series, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1910), 205-234.

⁴² Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, May 31, 1899, Box 1, Folder 11, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴³ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, May 31, 1899, Box 1, Folder 11, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. The full quotation from Keeler's letter was as follows: "As Charley Palache said it is like a big informal house party."

⁴⁴ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 4, 1899, Box 1, Folder 11, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴⁵ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 16, 1899, Box 1, Folder 11, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴⁶ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 8, 1899, Box 1, Folder 11, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴⁷ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, July 8, 1899, Box 1, Folder 11, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴⁸ Charles Keeler to L.T. Cockroft, November 14, 1900, Box 1, Folder 12, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also Charles Keeler to L.T. Cockroft, December 7, 1900, Box 1, Folder 12, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁴⁹ Charles Keeler to "Father," July 20, 1901, Box 1, Folder 12, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵⁰ In 1902, for example, Keeler wrote, "I am troubled about my bill at the Bohemian Club. It is a small one for two lunches and a dinner—probably \$3 or \$4 at most, but I should not like to have my name posted for non-payment of bills the first month." Charles Keeler to "Mother," May 11, 1902, Box 1, Folder 12, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵¹ Charles Keeler to "Mother," June 22, 1903, Box 1, Folder 12, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley (emphasis in original).

⁵² Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 11, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library Berkeley.

⁵³ Charles Keeler, "The Impress of Nature on Art in California," Impressions 1, no. 9 (November 1900): 171.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Alexandra Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 115-149.

⁵⁷ Charles Keeler, "The Impress of Nature on Art in California," Impressions 1, no. 9 (November 1900): 172.

⁵⁸ Charles Keeler, "Friends Bearing Torches," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1936, Cartons 5, Folder 42, Charles Keeler Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁵⁹ Charles Wollenberg, Berkeley: A City in History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 78. For the Berkeley Club's aesthetic of making "each house appear to be an organic element of the landscape," see David C. Streatfield, "The Arts and Crafts Garden in California," in Kenneth Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 43. For Keeler's role in the early years of the Hillside Club, see "Minutes, 1902-1910," Carton 1, Hillside Club Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also Fred Dempster, A Brief History of the Hillside Club: Its First Quarter Century, 1898-1924 (Berkeley: The Hillside Club, 1973).

⁶⁰ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, June 14, 1892, Box 1, Folder 6, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁶¹ Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, December 27, 1892, Box 1, Folder 8, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁶² Cheryl Robertson, "The Resort to the Rustic: Simple Living and the California Bungalow," in Kenneth Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 93.

⁶³ Kenneth Trapp, "Introduction," in Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 11.

⁶⁴ Richard Guy Wilson, "'Diving Excellence': The Arts and Crafts Life in California," in Kenneth Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 17.

⁶⁵ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), v.

⁶⁶ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), v (emphasis in original).

⁶⁷ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 3-4.

⁶⁸ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 4-5.

⁶⁹ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 5.

⁷⁰ David Starr Jordan, California and the Californians (San Francisco: Whitaker-Ray, 1903), 20.

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- ⁷¹ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 5-8.
- ⁷² Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 17-31. Keeler added: “It is far better to have no ornament than to have it either badly designed or wrongly placed. . . . Ornament should grow out of the construction, and should always be an individual expression adapted to the particular space it is to fill. Thus all machine-made moldings, sawed-out brackets, or other mechanical devices for ornament, may well be rigorously excluded” (32).
- ⁷³ For domestic spaces as sites for the performance of cosmopolitanism in this period, see Kristin L. Hoganson, Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
- ⁷⁴ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 54.
- ⁷⁵ Charles Keeler, The Simple Home (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Co., 1903), 37.
- ⁷⁶ Charles Keeler to Louise Keeler, June 11, 1906, Box 1, Folder 13, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ⁷⁷ Charles Keeler to Mrs. Willis, February 28, 1907, Box 1, Folder 13, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ⁷⁸ Cheryl Robertson, “The Resort to the Rustic: Simple Living and the California Bungalow,” in Kenneth Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 94.
- ⁷⁹ Cheryl Robertson, “The Resort to the Rustic: Simple Living and the California Bungalow,” in Kenneth Trapp, ed., The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 94.
- ⁸⁰ Charles Keeler, “California Art,” ca. 1908, Carton 5, Folder 5, CKP.
- ⁸¹ Charles Keeler, “Municipal Art in San Francisco,” n.d., Carton 5, Folder 5, CKPB.
- ⁸² Charles Keeler, “The Passing of the Wild and Woolly West,” Carton 5, Folder 5, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ⁸³ Charles Keeler, “The Passing of the Wild and Woolly West,” Carton 5, Folder 5, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ⁸⁴ Charles Keeler, “The Passing of the Wild and Woolly West,” Carton 5, Folder 5, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.
- ⁸⁵ Charles Keeler, “The Passing of the Wild and Woolly West,” Carton 5, Folder 5, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁸⁶ Charles Keeler to Leonarde and Eloise Keeler, October 1, 1911, Box 2, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁸⁷ “Mr. Charles Keeler in a Recital of His Own Poems,” Program, University of California Summer Session, July 25, 1916, Box 1, Folder 20, Charles Keeler Additions, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁸⁸ Mrs. George Richardson, Agent, “Charles Keeler in Dramatic Readings of His Own Poems,” Publicity Brochure, Box 1, Folder 20, Charles Keeler Additions, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁸⁹ “Charles Keeler: Poet, World Traveler, Civic Worker,” Publicity Brochure, Box 1, Folder 20, Charles Keeler Additions, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁰ Charles Keeler, “In the Shadows of the Gallows Trees: An Allegorical Playlet,” n.d., Box 1, Folder 7, Charles Keeler Additions, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹¹ Charles Keeler, “A World to Win,” lecture notes, 1920, Carton 7, Folder 28, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹² Charles Keeler, Untitled Statement on Berkeley Chamber of Commerce, ca. 1921, Carton 5, Folder 17, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹³ Charles Keeler, “Building Better Cities: Address delivered at the Banquet, Second Annual California City Plan Convention,” n.d., Carton 5, Folder 19, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁴ Scrapbook, 1923, Carton 11, Charles Keeler Additions, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁵ Charles Keeler, “Building Better Cities: Address delivered at the Banquet, Second Annual California City Plan Convention,” n.d., Carton 5, Folder 19, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁶ Charles Keeler, “Building Better Cities: Address delivered at the Banquet, Second Annual California City Plan Convention,” n.d., Carton 5, Folder 19, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁷ Charles Keeler, “The City of Our Hearts’ Desire,” ca. 1921, Carton 5, Folder 27, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁸ As Keeler explained, “Imagine a city that would set about the creation of an Industrial Exposition as beautiful as one of these world fairs but of enduring character, where manufacturing was carried on in such surroundings.” Charles Keeler, “Building Better Cities: Address delivered at the Banquet, Second Annual California City Plan Convention,” n.d., Carton 5, Folder 19, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁹⁹ Charles Keeler, "Building Better Cities: Address delivered at the Banquet, Second Annual California City Plan Convention," n.d., Carton 5, Folder 19, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁰⁰ Ed Herny, Shelley Rideout, and Katie Wadell, Berkeley Bohemia: Artists and Visionaries of the Early 20th Century (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 43.

¹⁰¹ Caroline LeConte to Mary McHenry Keith, April 5, 1927, Box 10, Keith-McHenry-Pond Family Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁰² Charles Keeler to Lee Easterbrok, December 31, 1928, Box 3, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁰³ Henry Holt to Mary Austin, April 25, 1913, AU 2829, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino.

¹⁰⁴ Henry Holt to Mary Austin, June 17, 1913, AU 2830, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Keeler, Bayville Boosters, unpublished novel, ca. 1908, Carton 5, Folders 11-13, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Keeler, "Friends Bearing Torches," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1936, Cartons 5:42 and 6:1, Charles Keeler Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁰⁷ "The Victorious Life," Carton 7, Folder 22, p. 108, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

Chapter 4

Mary Austin's California: Regionalism, Education, and the Circuits of Culture

It is a brisk day on the beach in Carmel-by-the-Sea, not long after the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906. The photograph catches four writers absorbed in conversation: poet George Sterling, naturalist and critic Mary Austin, novelist Jack London, and journalist James Hopper (*figure 1*). Apparently oblivious to the camera, the four friends are clustered in a semi-circle, with Sterling listening intently on the left as Austin speaks. On the far right, Hopper—an aspiring novelist and former Berkeley football star—looks down at the sand, his distinctive blonde curls falling to the side of his angled hat. London holds a cigarette and grins as the wind blows through his uncombed hair. Behind them, a woman and young boy in formal attire stroll along the window of a building at the edge of the beach, out of earshot from the four artists. All six people are cropped against the left side of this image as if to emphasize the empty sand and grass to the right. Its mystery deepens as the photographer remains unidentified in the print located in the Bancroft Library's Jack London Portrait collection and digitized as part of its 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Digital Collection.

According to Austin—who lived in Carmel from roughly 1905 to 1910 and counted among her correspondents Ezra Pound, H.L. Mencken, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Willa Cather, Ansel Adams, Amy Lowell, Herbert Hoover, Van Wyck Brooks, Constance Rourke, Henry Nash Smith, and W.E.B. Du Bois—such moments epitomized intellectual life in the town's fledgling

literary community. Her writings on Carmel emphasized camaraderie, sensual experience, antimodern imagery, and resistance to publication and publicity. Located 115 miles south of San Francisco, on a peninsula south of Monterey Bay, Carmel was a tiny town in 1900 with few farms and people. It was known mainly as the site of one of the twenty-one missions erected in Alta California in the late eighteenth century under Spanish rule. From 1905 onward, and particularly after 1906, a steady migration of artists made their way to Carmel, largely drawn by its rural character and sweeping seascapes as well as encouragement from Austin and Sterling.



Figure 1: [unidentified], “George Sterling, Mary Austin, Jack London, James Hopper,” Jack London POR 66, 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire Digital Collection, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

As the colony grew, Austin noted that “the lot of us would pound abalone for chowder around the open-air grill at Sterling’s cabin, and talk, ambrosial, unquotable talk.”¹ She added:

[B]y early afternoon, one or another of the painter and writer folk could be seen sauntering by piny trails which had not then suffered the metamorphosis of asphalt, concrete, and carbon monoxide, which go in the world of realtors by the name of improvements.²

Far from embracing the urban rootedness that characterized bohemian enclaves in New York or Paris, bohemianism at Carmel was characterized by mobility, primitivism, and an embrace of the natural environment.³ Much of what “got into the press about Carmel,” according to Austin, had little basis in her experience of the place, and indeed the very language she used to describe its practices—“unquotable talk” that resisted “getting into the press”—underscores the adversarial relationship Austin imagined between Carmel and the journalists who described it.

Many of the press reports that Austin referenced were, in fact, unflattering. One *Los Angeles Times* profile of Carmel—entitled, “Hotbed of Soulful Culture, Vortex of Erotic Erudition: Carmel in California, Where Author and Artist Folk Are Establishing the Most Amazing Colony on Earth”—mockingly stated that Austin’s “principal occupation is wandering among the pines with her hair flowing, and discussing the microcosmic aspect of neoplatonic theurgy.”⁴ The profile added that “there are at least twenty college professors, a club of well-meaning neophytes of the arts and crafts, esoteric Yogi, New Thinkers,” and other groups.⁵ The professors came from both Stanford and Berkeley during the summer, as did the adherents of the Arts and Crafts movement, which thrived in Oakland through the work of Bernard Maybeck, Charles Keeler, and others. Although the reporter parodied their interactions as consisting of “catch-as-catch-can on the dialectic mat,” Austin and her compatriots did envision Carmel as a place not unlike the Yosemite of Joseph LeConte, John Muir, and William Keith, where ideas could be exchanged under the open sky, free from the hierarchies of the university

and the pressures of the culture industries. In a portrait of the Carmel community for *The American Mercury*, Austin evoked values familiar to urban bohemian enclaves—sensuality, appetite, excess—to describe activities unfolding in a decidedly non-urban environment, with the masochistic pleasures of swimming and fishing replacing coffee, drugs, and crowds. Among her friend Sterling’s “greatest pleasures” at Carmel, for example, “were those that whetted his incessant appetite for sensation—the sting of the surf against his body, the dangerous pull of the undertow off the Carmel beaches, or gathering seafood [along] the Mission Cove.”⁶

By eschewing publicity and urban modernity (or so it seemed), and embracing an ethos of environmental bohemianism not unlike that of Charles Keeler and the Hillside Club, Austin and her friends appeared to cast Carmel as a retreat from the pressures of fame and the demands of cosmopolitanism. In fact, however, the Carmel colony’s relationship to mass culture was far more complicated. This complexity can be illustrated by a second photograph (*figure 2*)—this one located in the Arnold Genthe Collection at the Library of Congress. Taken from behind Genthe as he points his camera at Austin, Sterling, London, and Hopper on the beach, the image reveals him to be the photographer of the image discussed above. Genthe was a resident of the Carmel colony who had become widely known for his vivid photographs of the 1906 disaster published in newspapers around the world. Beyond identifying Genthe, the second image provides a captivating glimpse into the practices of self-representation of the literary circle at Carmel. For one, the shadow of the unknown photographer encroaches onto the frame from the bottom, making visible multiple layers of visual representation. Despite the impression of an empty beach in the first image, an even larger group sits on the left side of the frame watching the whole production. This gender-segregated group consists of five women (including Charmian London, Jack’s wife, and Carrie Sterling, George’s wife), two small children, and a



Figure 2: “Arnold Genthe photographing George Sterling, Mary Austin, Jack London and Jimmie Hooper on the beach at Carmel,” Arnold Genthe Collection, LC-G405-0061, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

dog resting in the sand. A large log physically separates Genthe and the group of women from Austin’s circle, underscoring the sense that their conversation is being performed on a sort of stage for several possible publics, both seen and unseen. In so doing, the circle was enacting a well-worn California tradition of putting isolation on display. As the *Overland Monthly* observed in the lead essay of its January 1900 issue, “It is a curious thing, this tendency of Californian writers to turn hermit, now and then.” The essay featured several photographs of “hermit homes”—including those of John Muir, Yone Noguchi, and Edwin Markham—and noted that “there seems to be something in the air of California that makes our writers ‘take to the woods’ from time to time, there to gather strength to meet the world, and give it their best.”⁷

No mention was made of how interviews and photographs in the leading literary journal of the West could constitute a retreat from the world. So too in Carmel, this photograph-within-a-photograph demonstrates that far from resisting publicity, its circle of bohemians was awash in representation. Despite their apparent geographic isolation, most of the writers in this image—Austin, Hopper, Jack and Charmian London, and even Genthe himself—published primarily with the major houses of New York and Boston. Only George Sterling, the poet, insisted on working primarily with San Francisco publishers.

Austin's maneuvering of the circuits of culture underscored her understanding of how mass culture was changing the character of public attention. Keeler had organized his efforts around a model of public engagement largely drawn from his experiences in Berkeley in the 1890s, with the assumption that appeals to citizenship would motivate university authorities to cooperate with the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce and other local groups. Austin, by contrast, understood that the struggle for national reputation and publicity, as mediated by national magazines and mass media, was having a powerful homogenizing effect on regional institutions such as the University of California. As a result her efforts operated on two registers: she sought out publication and lecturing opportunities with mass media outlets while cultivating bohemian colonies in the U.S. West at both Carmel and Santa Fe in explicit opposition to the power of the national mass culture industries—largely based in New York and Boston—that she herself exploited.

Austin's insight into the ongoing intertwined relationship of regional and mass publics offers a compelling addition to the critical literature on publics, public culture, mass media, and regionalism. In particular, this chapter positions Austin's embrace of the bohemian colonies of Carmel and Santa Fe as a blurring of Michael Warner's binary of discursive publics into the

categories of “publics” and “counterpublics.” In Warner’s schema, publics are constituted not through a tally of individuals defined by common social positioning, but rather “by virtue of being addressed.”⁸ This distinction, he argues, is often hidden from view because, in practice, the circulation of texts often flows through pre-existing structures of social relations. Warner’s framework is useful because bohemianism in the San Francisco Bay Area was a variegated ethos involving multiple overlapping social formations, including the colony at Carmel, elitist groups like the Bohemian Club (of which Keeler was a member), and temporary literary collaborations such as the group of mostly women writers (including Austin) who published an anthology, *The Spinners’ Book of Fiction* (1907), that raised money for a colleague injured in the Earthquake while simultaneously, in a subtext of its title, protesting against the exclusivity of the all-male Bohemian Club, which had adopted the motto, “Weaving Spiders Come Not Here.”⁹

Recognizing that institutional and regional affiliations are not determinative of public attention, Warner’s theory of publics opens analytical space for the broader, more nebulous networks addressed by newspaper profiles of the Carmel colony or literary anthologies like *The Spinners’ Book of Fiction*. These publics are composed of strangers; an article by Mary Austin in a national outlet like *Century Magazine*, for example, helped constitute a public even though she had no way of enumerating the individuals who would read her piece. Such impossibility of knowing, argues Warner, “has enormous consequences. It allows us to understand publics as scenes of active participation rather than ascriptive belonging”¹⁰ This point distinguishes Warner’s approach from models of subculture theory tethered to social positioning, wherein the “public” of a local newspaper might be defined as the residents of its region rather than the people who actually read it. However, Warner takes the additional step of distinguishing between “publics” and “counterpublics,” the latter explicitly resisting the practices of middle class

normativity as seemed to be the case with the Carmel colony. While both publics and counterpublics operate on similar principles, Warner highlights the oppositional status of the latter by normalizing the former as a manifestation (in practice) of the bourgeois white male public sphere described by Jürgen Habermas—precisely the model Warner seeks to transcend. Most scholarly accounts of bohemianism likewise focus on the centrality of an oppositional identity that resists the taint of “mainstream” normativity, as epitomized by mass culture. By contrast, Austin saw nothing contradictory between her life at Carmel and her decision to publish in New York. Rather, she envisioned the building of regional culture industries as an activity that could compete with and replace, rather than simply eschew, the homogenizing power of mass culture. In an Gramscian variation of what Raymond Williams called “residual” and “emergent” culture, Austin believed local cultural institutions should not remain clandestine but needed to aggressively engage with the changing contours of mass cultural production and consumption in order to retain their local footing and local appeal.¹¹

After 1910, the original bohemian community at Carmel began to break apart. Of the four friends photographed on the beach, only Sterling would remain permanently in California. Mary Austin increasingly spent time in Europe and New York, and several others committed suicide, including Nora May French in 1907, Carrie Sterling in 1918, and George Sterling in 1926.¹² Although Austin saw her travels as an effort to better understand the workings of cultural power, George Sterling believed she was simply in search of bigger and better publics, not content with the sting of the waves on the California coast. In 1910, Sterling wrote to Austin seeking permission to adapt her novel, *Isidro* (1905), for a performance of the Forest Theater, a community drama group that Austin had helped develop at Carmel.¹³ After Austin wrote back granting permission, Sterling replied with a long, detailed letter reflecting on their diverging

views of publics and publicity. He began by observing, “I suppose you came to New York to put on a play. You have my heartiest wishes for its success, though it is likely to be too good for the public pig of America.”¹⁴ He contrasted the problem of fame in New York with the dwindling population of Carmel, noting that “the main trouble here is that we’ve so small a community to draw on for actors and actresses[.]” He added, “As for any extension of my local and rather tenuous fame, I must own to more than apathy, as I find what I have flatly a nuisance. So real fame, I think, would be torment.” The “pack” of public attention, he explained, is “always waiting, always prepared to leap at the exposed flesh,” and thus he admitted no desire for what he imagined Austin to be seeking in New York. “The days are divine,” he concluded, “No one, nothing, can ever get me away from Carmel. The rest is illusion. But good hunting to *you!*”¹⁵

After Sterling’s suicide in 1926, Austin assessed his work as follows: “He was over-faithful to his locality, publishing at San Francisco almost exclusively, resting upon a local *réclame* which narrowed his public and, perhaps, somewhat the scope of his genius.” At the same time, she added, Sterling was correct that New York often failed to appreciate “what came to it from regions unaffected with its particular cachet of smartness.”¹⁶ Instead of viewing regionalism as a retreat, therefore, Austin saw her task over the 1910s and 1920s as finding a broad national public for her ideas on regionalism.¹⁷ Her goal was not simply to find an audience for the sake of having an audience, as Sterling assumed. She had no “missionary itch,” as she put it, to convince others to follow her in a “monastic shuffle.”¹⁸ Rather, she saw her role as empowering local communities to take ownership of the means of educational and cultural production rather than looking to New York, Europe, or, later, Hollywood for signals about which ideas, feelings, and experiences were worth embracing.¹⁹

Austin is best known for her nature writings, particularly *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), which described the unique landscape and cultures of the sparsely populated Owens Valley, nestled between the Sierra foothills of California and Nevada, where Austin worked as a teacher and farmer in the 1890s. Although at first glance the book hewed closely to the familiar genre of California nature writing, *The Land of Little Rain* was essentially a thumb in the eye of John Muir and other writers who put Yosemite on a pedestal and ignored places like the Owens Valley where majesty was less evident to the tourist's eye. Building on her scientific training, Austin mixed technical lessons with paeans to the resiliency of life in an arid landscape. In this corner of the county, Austin argued, life was visible only through intimate experience. Her account of the "economy of nature" was thus a call to learn through action, to seek out places like the Owens Valley as a sort of outdoor apprenticeship. As Austin put it: "You of the house habit can hardly understand the sense of the hills."²⁰ Austin's approach differed from the Sierra Club, which focused its early efforts on protecting high-visibility destinations like Yosemite and Hetch Hetchy. By contrast, the Owens Valley had no tourist industry to protect its residents from environmental exploitation when its water was diverted for the Los Angeles Aqueduct.²¹

Although *The Land of Little Rain*'s thick descriptions of the flora and fauna were informed by Austin's training in botany and natural history at Blackburn College, Austin spent her career on the margins of professional science. Despite her fame as a writer, academic scientists—particularly men who saw her interest in spirituality as a sign of eccentricity—struggled to situate her within traditional disciplinary boundaries. Cast as a mystic of nature who had inherited the mantle of Muir, Austin was famously described by poet and critic Carl Van Doren as deserving of an invented degree he called the M.A.E, or "Master of American Environment."²² But as Austin wrote to Henry Nash Smith, then a young English instructor, in

1931, “My dear Henry, I am the most meticulous and plodding collector of certainties that you ever knew, I probably know more about botany than most college professors have forgotten. . . . It may be that there is a mystical knowledge also, but for me the whole credibility of mystical knowledge depends upon its coming out at the same place with the other sort. I am what you might call a pragmatic mystic.”²³

The blurring of science, philosophy, and mysticism encapsulated by the term “pragmatic mystic” was at the core of Austin’s vision of a revitalized regionalism that could weather the effects of mass culture. Through numerous letters and publications from the 1910s to the early 1930s, Austin argued that modern public education had alienated most Americans from the environments they inhabited. Unlike the older paradigm of apprenticeship, which attracted and valued “those who learned by doing,” the modern segmentation of knowledge into grades, disciplines, and university citadels meant that schools had “become detached from the organic center of American life.” With the term “organic center,” Austin was referring to her regionalist concept of culture—drawn largely from anthropology—that naturalized the relationship of norms and environments. Along these lines, Austin’s solution for reforming the educational system was “to relocate the school in the midst of the vital activities of the community.” As she put it, “The school, the court, the theater are all specialized annexes to the market, where we prepare for successful exchange, adjust difficulties arising from technicalities of exchange, and recuperate from its fatigues.” Although Austin still envisioned a role for the schoolhouse, she contended that “the really important things” could be “learned in the places where they were naturally done, from the persons who did them.”²⁴

The root of the mutual alienation of campus and community could be traced, in Austin’s view, to the lingering status of the monastery as an archetype of noble learning. This meant the

unspoken model for American public education was a place “apart from the community life” where lessons were “taught by people who had already severed their connection with the world of practical affairs.”²⁵ Although modern public education had embraced secularism, it retained its monastic distance from the practices of community life—including, ironically, the practices of religious experience. Austin thus came to believe that public schools should teach “motions” of subjectivity (such as prayer), believing that the connection of school and community could only be reestablished with what she called “training for the subconscious.”²⁶ In Austin’s view, the encouragement of what she believed to be the universal human capacity for spirituality did not constitute state-sponsored religion, and in fact would free the modern classroom from the vestiges of medieval dogma. Most institutions of higher education, she argued, were “temples of Imitation” that had failed to understand the central role of experience in American thought.²⁷

This chapter situates Austin’s complex ideas on education reform, regionalism, and civic engagement in the context of her evolving persona as a public intellectual and celebrity. Indeed, Austin’s role as an apostle of pragmatism—or as she put it, a “pragmatic mystic”—has been little acknowledged by historians of pragmatism who have emphasized such thinkers as William James, John Dewey, and Charles Sanders Peirce, and their contributions to the disciplines of psychology, philosophy, economics, and education.²⁸ Austin bridged these traditional applications of pragmatism with unconventional avenues of thought such as hallucinations and the paranormal, which scholars from R. Laurence Moore to Francesca Bordogna have examined in relation to William James.²⁹ Austin’s career suggests that this hidden strand of pragmatist thought had particular resonance in California among intellectuals (like Austin and Keeler) who were skeptical of the academic status economy and the constraints it imposed on the practices, publics, and places of legitimate intellectual exchange.

This chapter is structured around four places that Austin inhabited over the course of her career—Illinois, California, New York, and New Mexico—and examines how Austin’s ideas on regionalism and public culture evolved in response to each. Far from implying that Austin’s work was determined by environment, I argue that her changing strategies of social and political intervention reflected a deepening understanding of the circuits that wove together the various places, publics, and practices among which she moved. Although Muir and Keeler were also transplants from the Midwest, Austin’s story underscores most explicitly the circuits of culture that linked California’s public intellectuals to the nation and the world. Through her own migratory experiences, Austin came to believe that specific places and public cultures were works in progress composed of fluid memberships and sustained by educational and spiritual practices more or less “attuned” to the environment, as she argued in *The American Rhythm* (1923), discussed below.

Although Austin was closely associated with the seemingly escapist art colonies in Carmel-by-the-Sea and later Santa Fe, she considered herself an educational reformer and developed several schemes for bringing American universities more closely in touch with their surrounding communities.³⁰ She recognized that one of the great difficulties of her vision was to overturn Arnoldian models of culture that framed education in universalist terms as “something added to the life of the region rather than the flower and fruit of that region’s life activity.” As Austin explained in *The New Student*, “The idea of a university as a center of regional culture is more revolutionary than any of its proponents realize. Always in the United States the university has seen itself as the lonely outpost of opposition to regionalism, holding the fort for culture as a unifying principle, a universal standard to be established, to be, if necessary, imposed upon all regions equally.” In this regard Austin likened the university to “a culture factory” set up to

flatten the distinctive qualities of any given regional culture. This model of education moved political and cultural agency away from the local to the national by treating New York and ultimately Europe as the places where meaningful intellectual activity originated. By this logic, Austin argued, places like California and New Mexico were relegated to the status of peripheral outposts, even though she considered New York to be just as provincial in its own way. Based on her experiences living in Illinois, California, New York, and New Mexico, Austin argued that regional universities must rethink their relationship to the communities they served. In this respect Austin's approach to regionalism echoed Lewis Mumford, who believed, as Casey Blake puts it, that "full citizenship in one's culture—by way of an education steeped in local experience—evoked loyalty to a process of civic reinvention through symbolic form, not passivity and conformity."³¹ Austin saw in universities the potential for this process to serve as a conduit for transforming individual and region alike. "What the university can do," she argued, "is to make of itself a dynamic reservoir of the sort of information that the inhabitant can use in converting his region into a rich and responsive background for his natural capacity."³²

Beginnings in Illinois

Born in 1868, Mary Austin (then Mary Hunter) attended Blackburn College, a small regional college located in her hometown of Carlinville, Illinois. Austin surprised her family by studying science rather than literature, with coursework in geology, biology, and botany. In her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, Austin portrayed her time at Blackburn as valuable largely because it was far less "regimented" than other universities, giving her the freedom to pursue unconventional directions in her thinking.³³ During this time, Austin formed a secret society known as N.M.S. with eight other women as a support network for one another's secret career

plans. Austin's plan, she later revealed, was "to teach, preferably natural science, and then 'to write novels and other books.'"³⁴ Austin excelled in her studies and spoke at the commencement for the class of 1887 during her junior year. As described in *The Blackburnian*, the college newspaper, Austin spoke on "The American Element in Literature," arguing against the notion "that we have no American literature" through a discussion of Hawthorne, Emerson, and Longfellow.³⁵ Anticipating her 1923 study of folk culture and regional literature, *The American Rhythm*, Austin's talk suggests that, much like Ritter, she was already developing some of the major themes of her work as a public intellectual well before leaving the Midwest for California.

In later years, Austin came to regard her childhood in Illinois as both repressive and liberating. She singled out two institutions in particular for their role in her intellectual growth: the Methodist church and the Chautauqua movement. Although she embraced Methodism with great outward enthusiasm, she chafed against what she perceived to be its formulaic approach to moral questions, allowing no room for "a born pragmatist" like herself.³⁶ As she wrote to her friend, the botanist Daniel Trembly MacDougal, "Beginning in my childhood, the repression of everything which my family considered 'queer,' which really was anything that was natural to me, has been abrupt and cruel."³⁷ In her autobiography, Austin identified as "a pragmatist in religion," arguing in the third person that:

something more should come out of mystical experience than the mere ecstatic notice of its taking place . . . All her life it had been necessary for Mary not only to go to the circus, but to bring something back, a count of the zebra's stripes, the clown's jokes, tricks of the bareback rider which she could practice at home on the old mare, without which pragmatic residue you didn't really feel that you had been to the circus.³⁸

This yearning for "pragmatic residue" led to clashes with her family and peers as she sought spiritual practices grounded in outward experience.

Austin found solace in a range of vernacular cultural practices popular in Carlinville, including the Chautauqua, the Debating Society, the Literary Circle, and the Lyceum. “Among the opportunities afforded by the Lyceum,” explained Austin, “was the ‘lecture course’ on popular science, consisting of four to six lectures delivered week by week for the term of which the lecturer remained a resident of the community or perhaps divided himself between two or more adjacent towns.”³⁹ Austin’s grandfather regularly hired itinerant tutors for his granddaughter from “the tribe of ‘Perfessers’ who circulated through mid-America offering tidbits of cultural technique, elocution, voice-training, conversation, penmanship, character-reading, and the principles of success.” Austin recalled these lessons with fondness despite her suspicion that many of these tutors were charlatans.⁴⁰ Indeed, Austin herself derived a large portion of her income in later years from the lecture circuit, spreading the message that regional culture was worth cultivating, and that Americans did not need to travel to New York or London to find “the real thing” in culture.

Austin was particularly influenced by the Chautauqua movement, which she alternately described as “a really important instrument” and “an extraordinarily effective system of adult education.”⁴¹ Carlinville’s Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (or C.L.S.C) met at the house next door to Austin’s childhood home, and she long remembered a Chautauqua geology book called “Old Red Sandstone” as the first book she purchased for herself with her own money. The C.L.S.C. served for Austin as an early model of what I call a “people’s classroom,” an informal intellectual practice rooted in existing social networks that Austin sought to replicate many times over the years, whether at Carmel-by-the-Sea or in her proposed programs for educational reform. The Chautauqua, Lyceum, and other such practices in the 1850s-1880s shared “an emphasis on moral and intellectual self-improvement to be gained through attending

public performances and thinking and talking about them afterward.”⁴² Austin’s refusal to discard these practices as naive therapeutic ideology was part of the reason why Austin did not narrate her autobiography in the familiar pattern of escape from rural roots to the city, but rather devoted the later years of her life to revitalizing vernacular intellectual culture as a basis for educational reform.

At the same time, Austin saw the Chautauqua as a double-edged sword, one that promoted local agency in intellectual life but also commodified pre-packaged units of “culture” and courses of study for mass consumption. In time, Austin came to see the Chautauqua, though not its accompanying practices of collaborative learning, as a pernicious part of a clash for the soul of Santa Fe, where she eventually settled.⁴³ As Austin argued in one essay:

The institution known as the Chautauqua Circuit is a pure American product, the outstanding characterization of our naive belief and our superb faith that culture can, like other appurtenances of democracy, proceed by majorities. . . . Just as anybody today who can without actual damage to himself pull a lever, punch a button, or uncover his arm to a serum syringe thinks of himself as participation in the age of science, so the million faithful attendants at study clubs, at Circles and Lecture programs have come to fee proprietary interest in the prevailing ‘culture’ of their age.⁴⁴

Austin’s argument anticipated foundational texts in cultural history by Janice Radway, T.J. Jackson Lears, and Richard Ohmann—a line of scholarship that identified the homogenizing power of national branding, mass media, and corporate capitalism in the reception of ideas and entertainment.⁴⁵ As Austin saw it, far from helping to sustain indigenous intellectual life, the Chautauqua movement effectively flattened regional particularities. Indeed, argued Austin, “the driving out of a resident community of creative workers of established reputation by a Chautauqua summer colony would inevitably seem to many people a great cultural gain.”⁴⁶ This insight came many years later; as a young student, however, Austin found the study groups and

discussion clubs in Carlinville to be a powerful form of liberation from an unthinking embrace of Methodism.

California

*“Why, the land forces it upon one. I am a Californian, not that I was born here, but to be a Californian is a state of mind, and I am in that state of mind.”*⁴⁷

-Mary Austin

Shortly after graduating from Blackburn College in 1888, Austin moved to California. A notice in *The Blackburnian* indicated that the trip was meant to last two years, but as it turned out Austin did not return to visit Carlinville for over four decades.⁴⁸ Austin experienced her first years in California as deeply isolating, particularly after marrying Stafford Wallace Austin in 1891 and moving to the Owens Valley. Describing the experience in a trade journal, *The Bookseller and Stationer*, Austin wrote that for many years after she went west, she “never met a literary person” and had little recourse in reading since “there were no libraries in the desert, and she was too poor to buy books.”⁴⁹ This period was also, however, one of profound creativity as Austin compiled her observations of the Owens Valley and Sierra foothills, culminating in *The Land of Little Rain* in 1903.⁵⁰ She saw herself as very much in conversation with John Muir, explicitly turning away from his abstractions and romanticism to ground her observations in a clear-eyed description of geological and cultural phenomena. “I know something of what went on in Muir,” she wrote, “for him, quite simply, the spirits of the wild were angels, who bore him on their wings through perilous places.” This “pietistic” approach to nature, she concluded, had the effect of distancing the reader from the places Muir described, offering mere appreciation in place of knowledge and new forms of habitation.⁵¹

On intermittent trips to San Francisco and Berkeley prior to 1903, Austin did meet some of the region’s intellectuals, including Xavier Martinez, John Muir (who she described as having

“the face of a Scotchman who is also a mystic”), and poet Ina Coolbrith.⁵² It was on one of these visits, in 1898, that Austin attended a “popular lecture” by William James in Oakland two weeks after his address to the Philosophical Union of the University of California.⁵³ The lecture, “Psychology and Relaxation,” had a profound and immediate impact on Austin. As she described it, James used the lecture to recommend the “the relaxation of the rather strained surface tensions which was the preferred intellectual mode of the time, in order that the whole personality might be flooded by the deep life that welled up from below the threshold of selfness”—a unity of conscious and subconscious being that Austin referred to as “I-Mary.” Austin described the experience as an awakening: it was her first glimpse of the possibility that a mass audience might be receptive to her particular way of understanding experience. As she explained in her autobiography:

For Mary, this first hearing of her intimate experience stated as normal and explicit, even recommended, carried her in a kind of daze of illumination in and about several Oakland blocks, to bring up at last at the hotel where, according to the newspapers, Professor James was to be found, and where, incredibly, he received her.⁵⁴

In their long conversation, James and Austin discussed metaphors for the movements in and out of consciousness, and James proved highly interested in Austin’s views on prayer as “not merely an emotional reaction but a creative motion.” James agreed, according to Austin, with her notion that “ancestral experience could rise up *through* you, and be repossessed in that fashion”—the core premise of her twin 1923 works on genius and regional culture, *The American Rhythm* and *Everyman’s Genius*. Austin encountered skepticism over the years whenever she recounted this story, but the conversation was still vivid in her mind thirty years later. Indeed, she considered it a turning point in her life, inspiring her search for integrative modes of education that cultivated “a continuing experience of wholeness” in students, teachers, and publics. “I went away from

William James that summer dusk,” Austin wrote, “assured for the first time in my life that the true Middle of my search was in myself.”⁵⁵

Austin spent most of the next five years in the town of Independence in the Owens Valley, where she worked on *The Land of Little Rain* and placed several pieces in magazines such as *Youth's Companion* and *Atlantic Monthly*. She felt “the need for writers’ society,” but did not fit in particularly well among Charles Fletcher Lummis’s circle of writers in Los Angeles, though several of its members became lasting friends.⁵⁶ She found an intellectual home instead in Monterey and San Francisco, in the house of historian Theodore Hittell, where Joseph LeConte had gathered often with Muir, Charles Keeler, and William Keith for several decades before his death in 1901. Austin, who first visited a few short months after LeConte’s death, described the Hittell residence as “a house of distinction, the center of an intimate circle of writers and painters of San Francisco: Ina Coolbrith; Charles Warren Stoddard; John Muir; William Keith; Carlos Troyer; Edwin Markham. Mary was drawn to it, became a friend of the family.”⁵⁷ She spent much time as well at Coppas in San Francisco, a restaurant and bohemian haunt where she met poet George Sterling, *Argonaut* editor Henry Lafler, artist Xavier Martinez, and journalist James Hopper, all of whom became dear friends and active members of the literary circle at Carmel-by-the-Sea between 1905 and 1910.⁵⁸

The publication of *The Land of Little Rain* in 1903 brought instant acclaim for Austin among readers in California and across the United States.⁵⁹ A review in the *St. Paul Dispatch* stated that, “What John Muir has done for the western slopes of the Sierras, with their solemn forests and their mysterious silences, Mrs. Austin goes in a more tender and intimate fashion for the eastern slopes.”⁶⁰ *Public Opinion* likewise asserted that, ‘The Land of Little Rain’ is one of the very few books that we should not hesitate to recommend in the strongest possible terms to

the most discriminating judgment.”⁶¹ The *San Francisco Call* was effusive as well, noting that Austin’s description of the Owens Valley “uncovers the poetry which lies behind burnt scarp and panting desert. The bold, unwinking desert stars, the timorous little puffball of a field mouse are alike made to take their place in the picture Mary Austin paints of the land she loves.”⁶² The book caught the attention of painter William Keith, who had only recently met Austin through the Hittells. Keith wrote to Austin to share his admiration for the book and put her in touch with Edward R. Taylor, the physician and poet who later became mayor of San Francisco. Taylor greatly admired the book and asked Keith to help arrange a meeting with Austin.⁶³ Indeed, Keith compared Austin favorably to his close friend Muir, noting that Austin did not succumb to the romantic excesses of Muir and instead kept an eye on the thing itself. As Keith put it, *The Land of Little Rain* was “a glorious book. She’s ahead of Muir in some things. . . . Muir knows a lot and can write beautifully, but as you read him you’re constantly thinking of Muir, and what a fine writer he is, and not so much of the things he describes. But Mary Austin writes, and you feel and see everything just as she sees it and never think of her at all.”⁶⁴

Despite the generally positive reception of *The Land of Little Rain*, Austin grew highly disappointed with her publisher, Houghton Mifflin, for failing to market the book among the publics that mattered most to Austin: the rural residents of the Owens Valley. Austin saw the book as a product of a particular time and place, and wanted its reception to be shaped by the region in which it was produced. After Houghton Mifflin informed her that they were struggling “to arouse the interest of Californians” in her work, Austin fired back by questioning the urban-centered focus of its marketing strategy. As she put it in a letter to the publisher:

There are hundreds of thousands of people in the west who never see a book store. There are only two that I know of in Nevada, and there are considerable many people there. You can’t sell books to people unless you get at them where they live, and you have to tell them what is in a book before they will buy it without

seeing. I do not understand why we can not strike out a method which will fit the case; I am quite willing to bear my share of the experiment, but it will require a man who knows the west well enough to know that *The Land of Little Rain* is not about Southern California and that miners and sheepmen do not frequent book stores.⁶⁵

She ultimately severed her connection with Houghton Mifflin, noting that “those of us who draw our incomes from the East have found it difficult” to cope with the rising cost of living in California in the years following the Earthquake of 1906.⁶⁶ This break coincided with a shift in Austin’s attention toward the literary community at Carmel-by-the-Sea, where Austin was instrumental in developing a model of local intellectual sociability, or what Michael Warner has called a “counterpublic,” that defined its ethos of environmental bohemianism in contrast to urban cosmopolitanism and the national culture industries that catered to it. Epitomized by her dispute with Houghton Mifflin, Austin’s efforts to develop an alternative cultural economy that would be legible to “miners and sheepmen” continued to inform her later work.⁶⁷

Although Austin and George Sterling were often credited with hastening the relocation of several artists and writers to Carmel after 1904, the growth of the town had much to do with the efforts of the Carmel Development Company to lure artists as part of a niche marketing strategy.⁶⁸ The core of the group consisted of Austin, Sterling, Jack London, and James Hopper, as well as Charmian London, Carrie Sterling, Henry Lafler, Xavier Martinez, Nora May French (who died in 1907), Charles Warren Stoddard, Henry Leon Wilson, Herman Whitaker, Arnold Genthe, Ambrose Bierce, and Charles Rollo Peters.⁶⁹ Many split time between Carmel and the Piedmont hills outside Berkeley, where the Sterlings, Martinez, London, and Charles Keeler all had homes.⁷⁰ According to Austin, the pursuit of pain, pleasure, food, talk, and sex at Carmel was as intense as anything she witnessed in “the Latin Quarter of Paris” or in her “two years in Greenwich Village.”⁷¹ Austin was not alone in comparing the community at Carmel to other

bohemian enclaves around the world. One New York writer published a profile of Carmel (under the pseudonym “The Literary Pilgrim”) in which she described encountering James Hopper in Manhattan while working “in the service of various editors, Sunday and profane, in New York, Boston . . . and other such centers of literature on the lesser coast of this republic.”⁷² Hopper—suffering from a case of severe “Carmelitis,” or extreme enthusiasm for Carmel’s virtues—spoke as an evangelist of bohemian life in California, urging the author to perform a “pilgrimage to Carmel” on her upcoming trip to San Francisco to meet Austin, Sterling, and other members of the community. Although Austin was in Paris at the time, the author found several former New Yorkers in Carmel, including Upton Sinclair and editor Michael Williams, who was typing on the beach with “gossip to spare” about Carmel’s intrigues. Sterling, on the other hand, resisted her entreaties for information about the colony, and the author concluded that he knew little “of handing out scraps of gossip to the public for the purpose of stimulating its appetite for books.”⁷³

In contrast to Sterling, Austin was highly attuned to problems of publics and publicity. Her regionalism was never escapist, but rather something she articulated against a background of practical considerations preventing easy resolution of the tensions between mass and local culture. Aware of the San Francisco Bay Area’s distance—both geographic and reputational—from New York, Austin wrote that “one must account a little to explain why there gathered such a company at Carmel, at the furthest geographical remove from the distributing center for creative work.” She concluded that Carmel’s appeal to California bohemians lay “most in the reality of the simplicity attained, a simplicity factually adjusted to the quest of food and fuel and housing as it can never be in any ‘quarter’ of city life.”⁷⁴ In Austin’s telling, life at Carmel meant, on the one hand, the pursuit of pleasure, self-inflicted poverty, conversation, and

creativity—thus placing it squarely in the lineage of Henry Murger, who became “the most influential mapper” of bohemianism with his sketches of Paris, *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*, in the 1840s.⁷⁵ But whereas most bohemian enclaves since Murger’s time had been intimately tied to the city, Carmel’s scene also involved a very different emphasis on a pragmatic “suitability” between the body and the environment in defiance of social and cultural pressures to accept the jarring dissonances of life in the city. This idea, drawn from her time at Carmel, remained the core of Austin’s program for educational and cultural reform long after she left California for New York and New Mexico. As late as the 1930s, Austin looked back to Carmel of the first decade of the twentieth century as a place where a unique community of intellectuals had been able to develop ideas through a synergistic relationship to the land.

In fact, Carmel was part of a circuit of bohemian conviviality linking San Francisco, Berkeley, Yosemite, and the Monterey Peninsula. Shortly after visiting Carmel for an early visit, in 1904, Austin discussed it over dinner with George Sterling, James Hopper, Henry Lafler, and Xavier Martinez at Coppas in San Francisco, which despite its urban location she referred to as “a preferred resort” for “such students of the creative arts who adventured so gloriously along the coasts of Bohemia.”⁷⁶ The *San Francisco Call* emphasized Carmel’s links to the city in a pattern of seasonal migration, reporting on August 5, 1906, that an “Art Club has been formed at Carmel-by-the-Sea that includes in its membership many of the colony of San Francisco painters who spend the summer in that locality.”⁷⁷ A few months later, in a feature entitled “Artists Return Bearing Trophies of Summer Hours in Country Haunts,” the paper reported that “the artists are returning to the city, bringing with them a little of the big outdoors, of trees and summer skies and fields rich with summer bloom which their brushes have fastened to canvas or paper during their flitting about in search of paintable action.”⁷⁸ Likewise many of the artists in

San Francisco and Carmel, including Martinez, spent time in Oakland and Berkeley, often teaching classes.

This circulation of artists and writers around the San Francisco Bay Area created demand for regional institutions that could act as community centers. Thus when the Hotel Del Monte gallery opened just outside Carmel on April 20, 1907, as a dedicated space for exhibitions by California artists, the subjects “were drawn from Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, Yosemite, the American Southwest, and the Monterey region.”⁷⁹ In a review of the gallery in the *Argonaut*, critic Anna Pratt Simpson noted that Xavier Martinez’s paintings of Piedmont were made possible by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, which shook him “out of his old studio on Montgomery Street” in San Francisco and into the East Bay countryside, where he painted works that would subsequently be displayed in the new gallery on the Monterey Peninsula.⁸⁰

According to his wife, Elsie Whitaker Martinez, who recorded an oral history in 1964, Xavier moved all around the San Francisco Bay Area, teaching art courses in Berkeley, Carmel, Monterey, and San Francisco during the first two decades of the twentieth century, including some at the Hotel Del Monte gallery.⁸¹

Far from being unique to Martinez’s story, teaching was a key element of the circuit linking the intellectual communities of San Francisco, Berkeley, and the Monterey Peninsula. Several accounts of Carmel in the period 1905-1912 mention a “Professors’ Row” on Dolores Street.⁸² In *Earth Horizon*, Austin noted that, “Professor-folk came from the two universities, contributing a pleasant note of scholarship, though Vernon Kellogg was the only one who was ever completely accepted in the Sterling circle.”⁸³ Michael Williams likewise wrote in *Sunset Magazine* that “College presidents and professors and their families and people of culture and refinement reside there for a part of the year, or visit it for longer or shorter periods; while the

constant stream of travelers and sojourners passing to and from the Hotel Del Monte keeps it in continual touch with the great world outside.”⁸⁴ The tension between Professors’ Row and the bohemians in Carmel was a source of productive dialogue for Austin, who remained deeply interested in the relationship between regional cultural production and university reform. In addition to her long correspondence with Kellogg, Austin grew acquainted with David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University, who bought a residence at Carmel and gave several lectures at the University of California.⁸⁵

Austin explored the tension between the professors and bohemians in *Outland*, a novel written as both a novel and a play in 1909-1910 and published a decade later.⁸⁶ *Outland* traces the story of Herman, “a University Professor who believes in nothing outside his laboratory,” who is transformed by a visit to “the sea coast of California,” where Mona, a woman he is courting, has taken up residence in a cottage in a thinly-veiled version of Carmel.⁸⁷ Mona, a pragmatist by nature, rejects Herman’s advances due to his idealist view of education as something detached from actual places and experiences. “With all his understanding,” explains Mona, “Herman was fully possessed of that Academic notion that literature can be produced by taking pains instead of having them.”⁸⁸ The plot of the novel turns on Herman and Mona’s discovery of the Outliers, a group modeled after stereotypical Native Americans of California, in a hidden magical land in the forest. Herman sees them as ripe for a Sociological experiment, noting that “the University might establish a sort of protectorate” to teach them civilization, an idea that disgusts Mona.⁸⁹ Deeper experience with the Outliers, however, brings Herman to appreciate “that there may be things in the world that are not to be found in laboratories.”⁹⁰ In the closing pages of the novel, Herman reflects on how the experience has changed him. Their memories blurred upon leaving the Outliers, Mona asks how long they have been gone, and

Herman replies: “‘A long time, I think. I was a professor of Sociology then.’ / ‘And what are you now?’ / ‘Something more, I hope.’”⁹¹ These lines underscore Austin’s view that places like Carmel, and later Santa Fe, could revitalize American education. Tellingly, the *Outliers* themselves remain shrouded in mystery, infusing Herman and Mona’s understanding of knowledge with a deeper connection to the land but not partaking of educational discourse themselves without white mediators.

Building on work like *Outland*, Austin herself gave several lectures around California during her years at Carmel, many of which focused on the relationship of education and place. In 1911, for example, she spoke in Los Angeles to the Friday Morning Club at the Women’s Club House on “Nature Study—True and Sham.” The *Los Angeles Evening Express* reported:

Misapplication of the term ‘Nature Study,’ Mrs. Austin said, has placed it in bad repute with many who nonetheless appreciate the advantage of coming close to the heart of Nature, and learning what its language means. ‘Nature Awareness’ is the better expression. It is the state of the mind open to suggestions of the universe, and capable of learning from the open book which God has written for those who can read.⁹²

Austin went on to discuss this concept in relation to John Muir, who she saw as pioneering the notion of the wilderness as a public classroom, or “open book.” In another address to the same club, “Influence of the Frontier on Literature,” Austin argued that California writers did not need to look to New York for literary inspiration, but should let their topics emerge organically from California itself.⁹³

New York

“*But I am not going to turn into a New York Intellectual without making a fight for something better, no matter how queer. For queerness, this will do for a start, anyway.*”⁹⁴

-Mary Austin

During the 1910s and 1920s, Austin made several sojourns to New York, which she dismissed as “a mere aggregation of commonplaceness” and refused to call her home, identifying instead with the American West.⁹⁵ “I confess,” wrote Austin, “that every letter from California only increases my distaste for New York and for cities in general.”⁹⁶ Yet it was in New York where Austin’s ideas on regional culture in California achieved fruition through a series of publications that moved from the descriptive, naturalistic sketches of her early career to complex works of literary, social, and educational theory, particularly *The American Rhythm* (1923) and *Everyman’s Genius* (1923). Her novel of the city, *No. 26 Jayne Street* (1920), has in recent years received more critical attention than any of her writings other than *The Land of Little Rain* (1903). If Austin is still not known as a “New York Intellectual,” she nevertheless cannot be understood as a public intellectual without serious consideration of the connections she forged between publics, modes of production, and social circles in California and New York.

In one 1920 essay, “New York: Dictator of American Criticism,” Austin noted that although there had been “a steady output of books about American writing and American thinking” over the past decade, close examination of “the contents of such books proves that the greater number of them are about what a small New York group thinks ought to be written and thought.”⁹⁷ Rather than acting as a straightforward booster for California or New Mexico in terms of cultural production, Austin treated New York’s aspirations to global significance as an element of its own regional culture, no better or worse than others except insofar as it stunted the growth of other creative centers. The city, wrote Austin in her autobiography, was “bemused by its own complexity” and “too much intrigued with its own reactions.”⁹⁸ This step of decoupling massification from other measures of cultural success, without turning inward and rejecting audience size altogether, was central to Austin’s commitment to regionalism. She saw New

York, with all its publishers and critics, as a unique cultural milieu that could inform but need not determine the norms and practices of the rest of the country. In particular, she saw the thirst for attention from critics in New York as a failure to imagine how forms of transmission and circulation might be as integral to regional public culture (and as subject to regional innovation) as images, texts, and other cultural products.

One consequence of the particular concentration of publishers and critics in New York was that, as Austin saw it, innovations from the rural West were written out of popular literary genealogies. For example, argued Austin, poetic innovations attributed by New York critics to Amy Lowell after 1912 were being discussed “as early as 1904” by Austin and others “in the English Club at Stanford University.”⁹⁹ Likewise “practically every experiment” attributed to the Provincetown Players in New York could be found, argued Austin, “in the annals of the Little Country Theater of North Dakota.”¹⁰⁰ Austin’s publicity material for one of her lecture tours—a major source of her income in the 1920s and early 1930s—included an interview that asserted New York’s dominance of the national culture industries to be nearly obsolete:

Mrs. Austin says that the modern great city is like a fat man, and rapidly reaches the point at which its size is an encumbrance rather than an advantage. She says that New York does not really produce creative genius but merely gathers it in from the country at large. As soon as the genius of the country discovers that it does not need New York, but can get along just as well at Tucson or Santa Fe or Denver, New York will become a mere aggregation of commonplaceness.¹⁰¹

In Austin’s view, one strategy for encouraging regional public culture outside New York was to establish a federal Department of Art and Letters. In response to a request from U.S. Secretary of Interior Franklin Lane in 1919 for her thoughts on such an agency, Austin vigorously made the case for its feasibility. The key, Austin emphasized, was that the Department must recognize that the community arts “are self originating movements” that are “thoroughly democratic, and

must be handled in a democratic manner.”¹⁰² Rather than getting distracted with “awarding medals and prizes and ribbons to wear in the coat,” she urged the agency’s purposes to be:

For the Government itself to become aware of native art.
To spread the appreciation of native art in its schools and press.
To take steps to preserve the sources of native art.
To correlate these American movements.
To establish routes over which native art may travel from the producer to the consumer.¹⁰³

Austin’s lengthy letter explaining these points was among her most comprehensive surveys of community arts movements in the U.S. West and Southwest, with extensive discussion of the connection between cultural activity and civic engagement.

The community theater movement, argued Austin, “has had no help from the ‘highbrow’ or professional stage but is a self-sustaining adventure which has spread all over the country, and is recognized in Europe.” Among her main examples was Carmel’s Forest Theater, which she had co-founded during her time in California. This group, she wrote, was “one of the earliest and best examples” of self-originating small town theater. Despite Carmel’s tiny size, with no railroad or large building, the citizens of the town provided a small amphitheater and money for seating and stage equipment. “At the end of ten years,” wrote Austin, “the theater is well equipped and has become the center of the community life for memorial exercises, public occasions, lectures, political meetings and concerts as well as plays.” The blurring of cultural, educational, and political activity was an integral aspect of the people’s classroom—or space of democratic knowledge production—that the bohemian community at Carmel sought to develop on the Monterey Peninsula in response to the pressures of modern mass culture. All stemmed from a belief that residents of a locality had the power to take control of the means of cultural production despite the gravitational pull of culture industries based in New York and, increasingly, Hollywood. As Austin put it, the Forest Theater had “served a double purpose of

entertaining and unifying the community and raising the average of California's theatrical product."¹⁰⁴

Austin also pointed to the example of the Little Country Theater of North Dakota. Calling it "one of the most remarkable ventures in the world," Austin explained that the group was a collaboration between professors at the State College at Fargo and local farmers. Alfred Arvold, an English professor, trained students in how to produce plays on a very low budget by drawing on the community's existing resources and talents, including the "old legends and songs and folk dramas" of the predominantly Scandinavian and Icelandic farm population. "These entertainments," wrote Austin, "were held at school houses, vacant barns and warehouses though in the course of time a number of rural communities came to appreciate the value of these entertainments to such an extent that they built, out of their own pockets, crossroad Community Centers." A key innovation, she argued, was the practice of having farmers bring their own lanterns to collectively provide stage lighting, thereby making everyone in the audience feel like they were making a direct contribution to the success of the play. The rest of her letter traced similar movements in popular music and other performance arts, including urban Little Theaters in New York, Detroit, and other cities across the United States.¹⁰⁵

In anticipation of Austin's work throughout the 1920s on the origins of American culture, her letter to Lane emphasized Native American music, stories, and legends as alternatives to European sources of cultural production. In her view, the "two chief sources" for regional innovations were "the natural experience of the people" as exemplified by the Little Country Theater in Fargo, and, second, "the great treasures of Indian art which, after all were developed out of living on American soil." By leaning heavily on environmental explanations, Austin envisioned herself to be taking a radically democratic approach to popular education and cultural

change. “It will never be possible,” Austin’s letter concluded, “in a democracy like the United States to establish a department of Arts and Letters from the top. It must originate among the people.”¹⁰⁶ Although Lane did not follow up with any serious effort to implement Austin’s ideas, she was increasingly being recognized by the New York literary establishment as a leading public intellectual, a situation that dramatically expanded her access to national magazines and presses as platforms for her ideas on regional public culture.

On January 2, 1922, the National Arts Club in New York hosted a dinner in honor of Austin that introduced many powerful figures to her ideas on regionalism. She claimed to view the event less as a celebration of her work than a reflection of the growing interest in identifying, populating, and emplacing the category of American culture. As Austin wrote to her friend and confidant, Daniel Trembly MacDougal, an Arizona botanist who had spent considerable time in the literary colony at Carmel-by-the-Sea, “The dinner progresses amazingly. . . . [I]f I didn’t know that much of it proceeds from the widely felt desire to organize around *something* definitely American and creditable, I should feel uneasy. All by myself I couldn’t live up to it. As a symbol of the growing self consciousness of American culture I can manage to survive.”¹⁰⁷ At the event, which was attended by several New York literary luminaries, Austin read a paper, “American Literature As An Expression of the American Experience,” which she edited and expanded into *The American Rhythm* in 1923.¹⁰⁸

Austin saw this paper as the most important innovation of her career, offering a master theory for explaining the relationship of experience, place, education, and regional culture. She saw “rhythm” as an organizing device resembling genes, but functioning more flexibly across generations to synchronize experience and environment. This allowed her to explain cultural inheritance and regional identity in a way that eschewed mainstream eugenics but nevertheless

put forward a race-based approach to the linkage of culture and environment. In a line of reasoning that grew more explicitly anti-Semitic over the course of the 1920s, Austin argued that the experience of dislocation severed the harmony of race and land borne by organic “rhythms” of cultural expression across multiple generations, creating a unique problem for migratory nations like the United States and diasporic identities like that of many American Jews. As Austin put it to MacDougal:

I am quite certain now—though I haven’t breathed it to anybody else, but I have looked over the edge of things and seen that this is so, that rhythm is our mode of progression through the space-time dimension, of which, if there is such a dimension, we must have experience even though we have no more understanding of it than we had of electricity which we experienced for thousands of years before we recognized it, isolated and measured it.”¹⁰⁹

Austin complained after the dinner that the speakers had demonstrated neither true engagement with her work nor appreciation for the gravity of her concept of an “American rhythm.” None of those who spoke, she confessed, “revealed any intimate acquaintance with my books” and “two of the speakers seemed to be uncertain just what books I had written . . . I am afraid that is very much the case everywhere.”¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Austin received glowing responses from many in attendance, including Columbia University critic Carl Van Doren, who congratulated her and wrote, “I do not exaggerate when I say that your speech seemed to me a masterpiece, one of the very best literary speeches I ever heard.”¹¹¹

The crux of Austin’s argument was that fiction draws its popularity from the extent to which it reflects “the patterns of our experience.”¹¹² As she saw it, these deeper patterns, or rhythms, had their origin in cultural inheritances far deeper than the surface contents of stories. Echoing psychologist Carl Jung’s notion of collective unconscious, Austin noted, “The furniture of the story, the talk, the background, the incidents may all be modern but the plot may be one that has been in the back of our minds since we huddled together in the primitive cave and heard

our father tell about how he slipped away from the sabre-toothed tiger.”¹¹³ Austin argued that the trope of the hunt was the representative American story, drawn from Native Americans (who in Austin’s schema were the source of any true American rhythm) and employed by Edgar Allen Poe, James Fennimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and even the British writer Arthur Conan Doyle, whose “Sherlock Holmes pattern,” argued Austin, “is the pattern of the hunt” and thus quintessentially American despite Doyle’s nationality.¹¹⁴ Austin went on to explain that the concept of “Goingness,” closely tethered to the hunt, was the most obvious characteristic of Americanism, like a river.¹¹⁵

In the twelve months following her lecture at the National Arts Club, Austin traveled across the United States giving variations of the lecture from California to Texas. In August 1922, she returned to Carmel for several public presentations that explicitly traced her views on regionalism to her experiences in California. According to the *Carmel Pine Cone*, Austin kept the audience “spellbound” with her lecture on “the American Pattern in Literature.”¹¹⁶ Another reviewer, Ann Burroughs, wrote:

Carmel was extremely fortunate last Thursday night in hearing the substance of two or three of the lectures of Mary Austin which have already interested large audiences in England and America. Mrs. Austin devoted the major portion of her lecture to an exposition of her theory of patterns—the theory that literature forms itself into patterns which are a counterpart of the patterns of man’s way of living. It was a gratifying thing that there were so many eager Carmel audiences that Arts and Crafts Hall was strained beyond a comfortable capacity.¹¹⁷

Taking the imagery of a public classroom even more literally, Burroughs added that she wished she “might have been one to sit about a seminar table with Mrs. Austin for an unlimited discussion of this pattern theory.” The bulk of the lecture was devoted to explaining Austin’s view of the relationship between culture and environment. Austin emphasized her view that places like Carmel need not look to New York for the means of cultural production, but instead

ought to embrace the unique elements of the San Francisco Bay Area. As Burroughs summarized the point, “The most essential fact of life, says Mrs. Austin, is our feeling for the land where we were born.”¹¹⁸ Only a month earlier, Austin gave a series of lectures to University of California summer session students, making similar points and adding, “America would probably surpass Europe in the expression of literature and drama were the people themselves to control instead of leaving the art to a few intellectuals and highbrows.”¹¹⁹

When *The American Rhythm* was released the following year, in 1923, Austin gave detailed comments to *The Bookseller and Stationer*, a publishing trade journal, for how she would market the book and what she imagined its publics to be. She wrote, “I am so intensely interested in all things American that I should have little difficulty in finding a point of contact with most other Americans.” Austin proceeded through a range of marketing strategies, from Women’s Clubs to youth groups, before concluding that her approach to selling the book “to a total stranger” would be “to the page which gives the rhythmic form of the Gettysburg Address and ask them what they thought of the idea that the rhythm of Lincoln’s speeches went back to his rail-splitting days and the long stride of the woodland path.”¹²⁰ Alongside the appeal to readers interested in the origins of American culture, Austin also envisioned *The American Rhythm* as a work of Native American literature due to its translations of dozens of stories that Austin claimed to have drawn from indigenous peoples she encountered in California and New Mexico but did not attribute to any specific individuals or tribes. The *Berkeley Gazette* noted that Austin had explained in an interview “that college professors are writing her from all parts of the country, inquiring about the Amerind literature, and that their only source outside of people like herself is in the Bureau of Ethnology.”¹²¹

Austin's correspondence on *The American Rhythm*, before and after its publication, focused heavily on its positioning of Native American religious stories as the root of "authentic" American culture. Her friend Henry Canby, a professor at Yale University and editor of the *Literary Review* of the *New York Evening Post*, wrote in 1920, "I am wondering . . . whether the question of just what the essential qualities of an indigenous American literature are does not underlie the whole problem."¹²² In a public disagreement with Walter Lippmann over the work of D.H. Lawrence, Austin vigorously defended her view that writers ought to look to Native American religion for inspiration. Lippmann had criticized Lawrence's assertion that, as Austin summarized it, "Americans would do better to study that life pattern as it still exists among American peoples, than to spend so much time copying Europe. I see nothing derogatory to the United States in this, and I said so."¹²³ Her defense of Lawrence led to an editorial in *The Forum* that cast Austin as an anti-American propagandist, a charge Austin laughed off as originating in the same insecurities that inspired "Ku Klux Klans and what not rather pitiful organizations" and led to "brutish exhibitions of the worst side of American character."¹²⁴

Austin's embrace of Native American religious concepts and penchant for "playing Indian" became a staple of criticism of her work in New York, including one review of *No. 26 Jayne Street* (1920), her novel of the city, that used an anecdote about a visit by Austin to the Museum of Natural History in New York to mock her background in California.¹²⁵ The reviewer gave the impression that Austin was mentally disturbed as a result of "years of solitude and silent meditation in the desert" of Southern California. According to the review, "She was at one time given a pass permitting her to enter the Museum at any hour of the day or night and she used to go there at midnight and, standing among the Indian relics, fall into a trance that placed her in a mystic communion with the Great Spirit and the souls of the dead."¹²⁶ This supposedly alarmed

the guards, who saw Austin remove items from their cases and thought she was planning to steal them, when in fact she was attempting to pray with the objects. The review—typical of the way Austin was viewed among New York critics—referred to her actions as a “strange atavism,” or evolutionary throwback, that could be attributed to the “fundamental fact” of her California background. The crux of the review was that *No. 26 Jayne Street* failed where *The Land of Little Rain* did not because “the milieu of the desert” was graspable by Austin in a way that “a society as kaleidoscopic” as New York was not.¹²⁷

Despite this marginalizing tendency on the part of many reviewers, Austin received much favorable press as well as some apologies for critical reviews from such figures as Van Wyck Brooks.¹²⁸ One review of *No. 26 Jayne Street*, for example, cast it as Austin intended the novel to be read—as a broad critique of U.S. empire and middle-class normativity. The protagonist of the novel, Neith Schuyler, leaves home in a rejection of class status, falling in with a cohort of bohemians, intellectuals, and radicals in New York. In a well-worn trajectory of bohemian sociability, including that of Austin’s own narratives of Carmel, Schuyler seeks to liberate herself from class privilege in order to experience life more intensely and think more deeply and honestly about the world as it is. According to a favorable review by Wilson Follett, the “fundamental idea of the book” was that “democracy is on trial in every human being’s life and love and that the sinister possessive instincts of imperialism can make headway in international affairs because most of us are victims to them in our private passions.”¹²⁹ Only from the vantage point of bohemian cosmopolitanism is Schuyler able to distance herself from the destructive passions of nationalism that fueled the country’s entry in the First World War.

Austin elaborated on these ideas in an unpublished manuscript, “Democracy and Criticism,” now in her personal papers at the Huntington Library in California. “Criticism as a

function,” wrote Austin, “developed solely in European society, on the basis of a stratified social system in which it was assumed that all classes were striving toward the top.”¹³⁰ As imported into the United States, argued Austin, this model reproduced class stratification onto an array of other hierarchies, including geography, gender, religion, and culture, that concentrated the most celebrated and visible avant-garde in New York. Considering the close connections of critics and publishers, this situation had a tangible impact on aspiring public intellectuals in places like California, Illinois, and New Mexico. “The various modes and environments of American life,” explained Austin, “would produce their own forms, but these forms are crippled and inhibited by stupid criticism and by the lack of intelligent recognition.”¹³¹ On the other hand, the “true gift” of a democratic public culture would be a “freedom and variety in expression and that calls for a much higher type, a better informed type of criticism than is called for by a stratified society based upon historical continuity.”¹³² This included not simply traditional criticism in journals and newspapers, but whole new mediums of expression and public engagement, from radio to motion pictures to heretofore unimagined forms. Far from believing “that the great literary artist has no place in the field of photodrama,” explained Austin in 1921, “I am looking forward to it as a powerful aid in accelerating the rate at which a great literary artist may become known and enjoyed during his life.”¹³³

New Mexico

In 1924, Austin moved to Santa Fe, where she maintained a home, Casa Querida, for the rest of her life.¹³⁴ A highly visible public intellectual by this point, Austin became active in local politics and served as a booster for Santa Fe as a regional literary and artistic community of transplanted migrants not unlike Carmel-by-the-Sea or indeed, in Austin’s view, Greenwich

Village. The close parallels of her writings on California and Santa Fe demonstrate the extent to which Austin envisioned her push for local control of cultural production—borne of her experiences in *fin-de-siècle* and early-twentieth-century California—as a transmissible model for revolutionizing public education and public culture far beyond the San Francisco Bay Area. Together with several other artists, writers, and activists—including Mabel Dodge Luhan, Witter Bynner, and John Collier—Austin worked to make Santa Fe known as a center for regional culture. In an essay for *The New Republic* in 1926, Austin described Santa Fe as “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua,” drawing a distinction between the “creative type of mind” and the “Chautauqua-minded.”¹³⁵ She classed herself with the “group of creative workers” who opposed the readymade Chautauqua model of popular education, which she had come to believe was something that drained the creative spirit from a community despite her own formative experiences with the C.L.S.C. during her youth in Carlinville, Illinois. Although the move represented a fuller development of her ideas on public culture, Austin became increasingly insensitive or indifferent to the class dimensions of her argument, particularly the fact that the Chautauqua movement held great appeal to many people who otherwise did not have access to education. Her critique of Chautauqua closely paralleled her argument against William Ritter’s Science Service as a top-down endeavor driven by elite scientists for a national audience rather than an encouragement of vernacular science as practiced at the grassroots level. In both cases, Austin failed to grapple with the reasons why both Chautauqua and the Science Service were so wildly successful at generating popular demand.

Austin’s rejection of the Chautauqua movement stemmed from her experiences in California and New York, which had led her to draw a distinction between two approaches to regionalism. “There are,” Austin explained, “two types of community culture, one in which the

community works by individuals to produce definite achievement on a cultural plane, and the other in which the community exists chiefly to hear about what has been produced.”¹³⁶ In her view, the Chautauqua movement, the Science Service, and most regional universities embraced the latter model without recognizing the benefits of planting roots in individual communities. She mocked people bent on “imposing their Chautauqua-mindedness upon Santa Fe” for their failure to recognize that the extent to which Santa Fe, in Austin’s view, was already quite successful at fostering collaborations between educators, cultural workers, professionals, and other residents. There was nothing incompatible, Austin argued, between the “creative life” and the “ordinary life”—and not only for artists but for “druggists and hardware merchants, doctors and lawyers.”¹³⁷ Indeed, noted Austin, a significant contingent of Santa Fe professionals “were promptly found to be possessed of the heresy that maintaining a creative atmosphere is sometimes more important than ‘bringing money into the town.’”¹³⁸

Instead of attempting to replicate the cultural industries of New York, therefore, Austin argued that existing community-based cultural production should determine the development of new institutions rather than vice versa. In this approach, explained Austin, “The region will have universities because it has culture—the roots of culture at least—rather than acquire culture through having a university.”¹³⁹ Without such roots, the university is reduced to being “a purveyor of information” rather than a site of active participation in the development of regional culture. If grounded in the community, the university could move into a new, mediating relationship with the knowledge created by, rather than dispensed to, the people of a given region. As Austin explained:

The kind of information which a regional culture cannot do without, is information about its own region; and the kind of learning which enlarges regional cultures and extends them into world . . . is the intuitional relating of the region to the people inhabiting it.¹⁴⁰

In Austin's view, the impetus for such a model had to come from students and community members themselves. However, not unlike the University of California and its aggressive hiring of the LeConte brothers, Gilman, and other East Coast faculty during its first decade in the late 1860s and early 1870s, new regional universities tended to recruit faculty and administrators from existing institutions rather than locally, thereby impeding the transformation of institutional mission that Austin envisioned. Instead of operating primarily through universities, therefore, Austin (like Keeler before her) turned to other local groups, including the Chamber of Commerce, as vehicles for supporting regional cultural production from within.

Austin's utilization of local business leaders to support her goals as a public intellectual hinged on her understanding of the potency of regional status anxiety. In 1932, for example, she advised a young Henry Nash Smith to obtain financial support from the Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce for the journal that he was editing at the time, *Southwest Review*, by manipulating the business community's perceptions of the journal's importance to the cultural reputation of Texas:

What you must do is to put a ring in the nose of your Chamber of Commerce and lead it around with a string, the way we do here [in Santa Fe]. The best way to begin that is to have someone of your group . . . write something about Dallas for an Eastern paper, giving an outside view, which is, of course, that the *Southwest Review* is almost the only thing in Texas which entitles Texas to rank with other Southwestern states on a cultural basis. Chambers of Commerce are more sensitive to that sort of thing than to anything else.¹⁴¹

At the same time, Austin made the case that regional culture could be profitable for those willing to invest in it. She argued in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* that a properly organized fiesta could spark enough demand in the Southwest heritage industry to produce millionaires. Far from being the domain of "a few queer ducks," explained Austin, art and culture in Santa Fe had potential to generate significant profits. "We must realize," she wrote, "that here at Santa Fe we produce art

interest as other localities produce coal or cattle, and that art-interest is a much rarer commodity than either coal or cattle.”¹⁴²

In her dealings with the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce, Austin pushed to set up a Publicity Council using the same sort of tactics she had suggested to Smith a few months earlier. Although the real purpose of the Council would be to give Austin and her compatriots a foothold for steering money to the arts, Austin framed her pitch to the Chamber in terms of how it would boost potential investment in the city. “There should be a group of people,” she explained, “all of whom should have some experience in dealing with the public, [...] who could be consulted in any emergency, and who would meet, perhaps once a year to consider what might best be done for making the community favorably known.”¹⁴³ This committee, Austin noted, could be mobilized for upcoming visits to the West Coast by George William Russel, an Irish critic who wrote under the name AE, and Albert Einstein, who “might be persuaded to stop off here for a day or two on his return.” Playing Santa Fe against Taos, Austin told the Chamber that if it was not amenable to her plans, “there is still time for me to wire Mr. Russel that the arrangement is off, in which case he will probably go directly to Taos.”¹⁴⁴

Even as Austin focused on building a new regional base in Santa Fe, however, she continued to engage with broader national and international issues as well. In 1930, just as she was lobbying the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce, Ezra Pound wrote to Austin for help with what he called “the deadness of the universities re/ a mental life.”¹⁴⁵ Pound was concerned about the ineffectiveness of universities in dealing with militarism and the underlying “CAUSES of war,” and he hoped Austin would use her fame to draw attention to the problem. “Do you think,” wrote Pound, “it wd. be possible for someone like yourself, who has the ear of the public to indicate that there is in America ‘no college president of any intellectual preeminence,’ no

person in high academic position using that position to stimulate the intellectual life of the country.”¹⁴⁶ Such rumblings led Austin to write to President Herbert Hoover, an old friend from her days in California, offering her “services” in mobilizing support from other intellectuals for his economic recovery efforts. “What I am beginning to notice,” wrote Austin, “is that my particular tribe, the intellectuals, are barking up your trail, and are very much in need of a diversion.”¹⁴⁷ Austin’s efforts to influence everything from the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce to the President of the United States underscores her friend Michael Williams’ observation that Austin had “never been content simply to be a writer, and to leave to her books alone the task of communicating her influence.”¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, Austin’s idiosyncratic politics fostered considerable discontent among old friends and communities who expected her to be an ally. Even in New Mexico, she was strongly associated with California and received a steady stream of requests for lectures and collaborations. Ansel Adams, for example, asked her to write a foreword for a book about Yosemite due to her connections to the region. As Adams put it in a letter to Austin, “you are the only one today of great position in letters that can write of the Sierra.”¹⁴⁹ In 1928, Elsie Watterson of the Owens Valley wrote to Austin for renewed help with the struggle of Inyo County residents against the Los Angeles City Water Board for claims related to the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. Austin and her ex-husband had been involved in the early years of the struggle, and Watterson argued that Austin had a responsibility to use her fame to contribute to the fight. “I earnestly hope,” wrote Watterson, “you will find it possible . . . to help us now when we so greatly need your help.”¹⁵⁰ Despite Watterson’s pleas, Austin filed away the letter without acting on it. As one reviewer later explained, Austin had “rejected the American master

passion of being widely known and of pleasing—with a brusqueness that often hurts and an independence that often antagonizes.”¹⁵¹

Austin’s growing impatience with the trappings of celebrity seems to have extended from political to social life as well. In her later years, Austin developed a distaste for socializing with the hosts of her many public lectures around the country. After Austin’s complaints about the issue in 1933, her agent, Louis Alber, offered his assurance that he would reduce the number of unwanted encounters on her next tour:

With regard to being ‘entertained’ we can reduce that to a minimum and we have methods for doing it. We regard this as part of our job to protect lecturers from the many ‘courtesies’ showered upon them by local, well meaning people. Occasionally lectures are given in connection with a dinner and that can’t very well be avoided, but there are very few of these.”¹⁵²

With such “protections” in place, Austin maintained a strenuous schedule of lectures until a few months before her death in 1934.¹⁵³ She became particularly engaged in the development of national organizations for the academic study of folklore and folk culture—a key step, she believed, in the implementation of her ideas about regional higher education.

Over the early 1930s, Austin developed a friendship with Benjamin Botkin, a young English professor at the University of Oklahoma, accepting his invitation to join the advisory board of his journal, *Folk→Say*, and offering advice about how to develop a network of public intellectuals interested in folk culture.¹⁵⁴ A few months after Austin joined the advisory board, Botkin asked her to contribute to a symposium designed as a step toward such a network. The symposium was organized around the question of “What is the folk and what can it contribute to American language and literature?” Botkin asked Austin and each of the other editors to speak for their own region in order get a sense of the range of definitions of folk culture, from “average American citizenry in the towns” to what he called “the esoteric dialect of the more exotic folk-

groups.”¹⁵⁵ Botkin reiterated his goals a few months later, explaining, “I am hoping to get a broad survey of the sources, means, and ends of folk interpretation in America.”¹⁵⁶ The efforts of Botkin, Austin, and their collaborators came to fruition in the National Folk Festival of 1934. The objective of the Festival, as explained in its program, was “to bring together from many regions of the United States exhibits of the various folk arts which are the richest heritage of our people.”¹⁵⁷ Among the final letters Austin received before her death were updates from Botkin, Constance Rourke, and others involved in the planning of the Festival.

Rourke was the author of *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (1931), a book on folk comedy that drew extensively on Austin’s *American Rhythm*, originally published in 1923 but re-issued with much fanfare in 1930.¹⁵⁸ Believing that folk culture should not simply be discussed in the abstract, Rourke worked “tirelessly” to secure the participation of people not usually included in academic conferences.¹⁵⁹ The National Director of the Festival, Sarah Gertrude Knott, informed Austin that “Constance Rourke is bringing thirty lumberjacks from Michigan” and that other participants would be solicited by groups ranging from Yale University to Hampton Institute to the Chamber of Commerce of Asheville, North Carolina.¹⁶⁰ The lumberjacks seem to have become a particular obsession for both Rourke and Austin. Shortly before the Festival, Knott wrote again to Austin inviting her to speak on the topic, “Breaking in the American Public and Creating the Idea of American Folk Drama,” and informing her that on “Wednesday we shall have the Lumberjacks from Grand Rapids, Mich.”¹⁶¹ Rourke herself wrote to Austin with further details and revealing a strategy much like the one Austin had suggested to Henry Nash Smith (and used herself in Santa Fe) for dealing with Chambers of Commerce:

Now as to our Lumberjacks. Apparently finances are in sight. . . . I have talked with Mr. Hugh Gray, manager of the Michigan Tourist and Resort Association here, stressing the idea that while there could of course be no promotion of this

Association or its work in the Festival, the whole scheme of putting on the Lumberjacks, with proper program notes, publicity, etc., would give a very attractive idea of Michigan, novel, fresh, interesting.¹⁶²

The idea of merging commerce and folk culture was anathema to many academic specialists who viewed capitalism as wholly incompatible with authentic cultural production. Austin, Smith, and Rourke, by contrast, had all experienced the challenges of navigating the entrenched avenues of study sanctioned by universities and were eager to try new ways of recognizing and fostering local vernaculars.

In 1930, for example, Austin's *American Rhythm* was attacked by poet Arthur Ficke, who wrote to her that, "I do not believe a word of it," explaining that, "if nature affects civilized man to anything like the extent you believe, then similar climates will produce similar poetic rhythms all over the world, quite irrespective of mere nationality."¹⁶³ Ficke argued that Austin had failed to offer even the most basic documentation for the existence of an American rhythm, relying too much on intuition and assertion. In response, Austin argued that the obligations of a "creative thinker" are "higher" than the prosaic work of "stodgy and meticulous demonstration for the uninitiated."¹⁶⁴ Likening Ficke's conservative expectations of scholarly writing to an outmoded patriarchy, Austin explained that, in composing the book, "I felt that I couldn't be faithful to my primary obligation if I must go dragging after me all the fructifying sources, as a queen bee trails the entrails of her mate." Ficke, she added, should "blame Harvard" for his lack of awareness of the broader context of folklore and folk culture that her book took for granted.¹⁶⁵ Moving to Ficke's own poetry, Austin criticized his "intellectual refusals" to engage with "knowledges lying contiguous to the field of poetic activity."¹⁶⁶ By resisting the impulse to shut herself "into too narrow a field, both of information and refreshment," Austin retained the freedom to make broad interdisciplinary claims of the sort that Ficke criticized. "I feel very much freer than you

do,” wrote Austin, “to wander pleasantly through all the known fields of research which interest me without any reference to what other people may find there.”¹⁶⁷

This perspective on regional knowledge production was part of brought Austin to the attention of Henry Nash Smith, a young instructor of English at Southern Methodist University and editor of *Southwest Review*. Over six years and dozens of letters, Austin served as an intellectual mentor for Smith—debating ideas, providing references, and encouraging him to think outside the boundaries of the modern academic disciplines.¹⁶⁸ As early as 1928, in a manifesto on “Culture” published in *Southwest Review*, Smith had grown skeptical of the Arnoldian impulses behind the burgeoning cultural institutions of Dallas. In his view, these “citadels of sweetness and light” represented a “superficial striving” for European culture.¹⁶⁹ From the posturing of campus bohemians to earnest public lectures on *Beowulf*, Smith believed the social life of Dallas was failing to recognize the region for what it was:

a queer milieu patched together from the shreds of the musical ideas of New York song-writers, the artistic and ethical conceptions of California moving-picture producers, the mechanical triumphs of Detroit automotive engineers, the journalism of national syndicate-writers, and the skill of professional athletes.¹⁷⁰

Smith went on to make the case for a more holistic, clear-eyed approach to the study of regional culture, an approach that he discussed extensively over the course of his friendship with Austin. In 1931, Smith published an essay on Austin in *New Mexico Quarterly*, where he argued: “She dwells in no ivory tower, but at the meeting of all the highways of modern life.”¹⁷¹

Where others pushed Smith in a more traditional direction, Austin served as a powerful example of freedom from the disciplinary and institutional constraints of the academic world. In a 1931 letter to the Amerika-Institut in Berlin, Smith inquired about the prospects of pursuing interdisciplinary graduate work: “Would an attempt to work out the influence of anthropology on modern literary criticisms have any chance of being accepted as a doctoral dissertation at a

German university?”¹⁷² In their response, the Institute rejected Smith’s idea, suggesting that he seek a “more practical” combination of subjects.¹⁷³ Smith mentioned the same idea in a 1932 letter to Botkin, but quickly backed off the idea despite Botkin’s positive feedback, explaining: “I really think that my wild idea of writing something about anthropology and literary criticism was a wild idea, mainly because I do not know anything about anthropology.”¹⁷⁴ As a friend of and collaborator with both Austin and Smith, Botkin, too, saw traditional disciplinary boundaries as inadequate for the study of regional culture. Indeed, Botkin saw his work as a blend of history and poetry, explaining to Smith that “if at the present I seem to be riding two horses at once it is because they are inseparable and also because I have no precedent for what I am trying to do and have to feel my way.”¹⁷⁵ In this respect, Austin was an inspiration for both men. As Smith put it, she found ways to bridge the domains of “botany, geology, archaeology, the psychology of genius, history, anthropology, literary history, sociology, prose fiction, regional culture, religion, and verse for children.”¹⁷⁶

It was in this context that Smith wrote to Austin about a dispute with Southern Methodist University over a preface he had written for William Faulkner’s *Miss Zilphia Gant*, a short story published by the Book Club of Texas in 1932 in a limited edition of 300 copies.¹⁷⁷ The tale of a sheltered woman—Zilphia Gant—and her violent, gender-bending mother, Faulkner’s story included an explosive scene in which Zilphia compares herself to Mary, mother of Jesus, as she yearns to procreate without a man through masturbation. In these years before making a name for himself as a literary critic and historian, Smith gladly accepted the invitation of the Book Club to travel to Oxford, Mississippi, to interview Faulkner and obtain the author’s permission to publish the story. According to an account of the visit in the *Dallas Morning News* on February 14, 1932, Smith found Faulkner to be a “quiet, courteous man” who was fascinated by the young

professor's journey on a tri-motored American Airways cabin plane and "seemed prouder of the hand-hammered locks on the doors than of anything he has written."¹⁷⁸

Given the Book Club's exclusivity and usual emphasis on typography rather than new literature, the publication might have received little attention had it not been for John O. Beaty, the chairman of SMU's English Department. Shocked by the involvement of a faculty member in the publication of the story, Beaty urged the president of the university, Charles Selecman, to fire Smith immediately. Beaty sought support for his position in a letter to dozens of pastors around Dallas. "A situation has arisen," he wrote, "which threatens to destroy all the Christian usefulness of Southern Methodist University" and "make it a center for the propaganda of obscenity and degeneracy."¹⁷⁹ In private explanations of his vendetta, Beaty condemned the book's "homosexual implications" and was particularly disturbed by Faulkner's use of the word "philoprogenitive," an archaic term from the literature of phrenology meaning "love of offspring" or "prolific."¹⁸⁰

Persuaded by Beaty's charges, Selecman wrote to Smith, who was in Europe at the time, requesting his resignation. Smith refused. The standoff led to an unexpected outpouring of support for Smith, particularly from members of the Book Club of Texas who perceived the episode as an attack on their own reputations. As one man explained to Smith's colleague, John McGinnis: "It looks to me that the charge against Henry Smith is silly, but when the President of the University is after him it makes it serious even if there is no sense in it."¹⁸¹ To quell the outrage, Selecman backed off his request, but the damage had been done. After nearly six more acrimonious years in Dallas, Smith left the university to begin his doctoral work in Harvard's newly-created Program in American Civilization. He went on to become a pioneer in the field of American Studies, an interdisciplinary movement that sought to bridge history and literature and

make academic work more accessible to the general public. After helping establish *American Quarterly*, which later became the flagship journal of the American Studies Association, at the University of Minnesota in the late 1940s, Smith accepted a position in the English Department at the University of California at Berkeley, where he remained for the rest of his career.¹⁸²

Throughout the dispute, Smith relied on Austin as a confidant, discussing the episode more candidly with her than with anyone else. Despite his acute frustration with “the whole question of ecclesiastical control over the University,” their letters covered everything from his surprise at the popularity of American movies in Europe to the mysteries of religious experience. With characteristic irreverence, Austin dismissed her friend’s critics as unworthy of his talents:

I have just gotten around to Miss Zilphia Gant, and I am saying pouf-pouf! to your Faculty. I cannot imagine what they have in their minds. . . . I am at least convinced that you have a positive flair for literary criticism and that you ought to be in a better place than S.M.U. More power to you.¹⁸³

As it happened, the controversy coincided with the publication of Austin’s autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, which included lengthy descriptions of her childhood encounter with Methodism and later turn toward mysticism without dogma. On November 4, 1932, Smith wrote to Austin expressing his enthusiasm for the book. Since his own education had been “confined to that academic atmosphere” which accepted scientific materialism as axiomatic, he found it “little short of astonishing” that Austin’s account so strongly attracted his attention, offering spiritual insight without the dogmas that “cloud and conceal and distort ordinary accounts of religious experience.”¹⁸⁴ Linking the autobiography with the dispute over *Miss Zilphia Gant*, Smith speculated that “being an American” was a “mystical undertaking” unmoored from inherited traditions, and that the problem with ecclesiastical control of the university boiled down to its inability to step outside dogmas to engage honestly with American experience, as Faulkner did. In Smith’s view, the problem was amplified by the alliance of religious authorities with

“conservative elements” of the community, namely, “the business men who give the money and who regard every departure from the accepted canons of economics, good taste, style of dress, architecture, or even music as a threat to a status quo of which religion and the careful structure of the church are only minor parts.”¹⁸⁵

In this respect, Smith’s notions of the relationship of money and culture greatly differed from Austin, who had come to believe that commercial interests could be manipulated to serve the purposes of “creative workers.” Austin pushed Smith on this front, urging him to try to free the *Southwest Review* from university control by going straight to the very business community he was criticizing: “I hope that you can get separate control for the Review; unacademic control will be much better for it, and ought not to be too difficult in so rich a state as Texas.”¹⁸⁶ Smith, in turn, found Austin to be a valuable discussion partner for his evolving ideas on regionalism and culture, including his interest in the borderlands of the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico. In one exchange about José Vasconcelos’ *Indología*, Smith explained that, “the book stimulated me by its contention that the real America lies in Latin-America, and that the United States have played their part in history by contributing machines and techniques.”¹⁸⁷ Smith was particularly drawn to Austin’s ideas on spirituality, despite what he described as his total absence of religious experience, “I have never had anything approaching an intuition or premonition. I have never experienced knowing-at-a-distance; and I even believe I am devoid of hunches.”¹⁸⁸ He attributed to Austin his growing interest in avenues of intellectual activity outside the academy, an interest that he later channeled into American Studies. As he explained to Austin, “It may interest you to know that more and more I find my thinking dominated by several ideas which came to me through your work. You have rescued me from academicism: I could so easily have been lost!”¹⁸⁹

Smith's appreciation for Austin's support echoed her own homage to William James, who she credited in *Earth Horizon* with affirming her interest in spiritual wholeness and creative prayer as legitimate objects of intellectual attention. Austin recognized in her young friend a similar unconventionality and breadth of imagination as James. But despite building ties to younger scholars like Botkin, Rourke, and Smith, she remained pessimistic about whether her ideas on religious experience, regional culture, and educational reform would take hold beyond Santa Fe. In a lecture at Carmel in 1922, she explained, in a reviewer's words, that "because a writer's vision and understanding comes not through his brain but through his heart, the modern intellectuals, thus deprived of a child's heart, have naught within them from which to draw for the enrichment of their literary products."¹⁹⁰ A decade later, in her exchange with Smith, she argued that his aversion to religious experience was a generational problem resulting from problems in the educational system. As a result, she explained to Smith:

I feel that it is highly important that this capacity should be restored, and that skill in [spiritual insight] should be inculcated as part of our education. If you stop to think about it, you will realize that all of the mental motions inculcated by our modern system of education are objective; that we have nothing whatever by way of training for the subconscious.¹⁹¹

In addition to engaging more deeply with religion, Austin argued that the country needed a new framework for public intellectuals to collaborate with local communities. The fiasco of World War One, she believed, should remain a cautionary tale of academic detachment from the realities of culture, politics, commerce, and war. Austin saw the failure of intellectuals in the United States to meaningfully impede the march to war as a sign that a real revolution in public culture would be driven by public education—whether new forms of adult education, as William Ritter proposed, or new forms of community-based, spiritually-informed knowledge production, as Austin anticipated. To learn to live in peace, both Ritter and Austin believed, people needed

the tools to question authority—whether religious, political, or cultural authority—and become agents in the creation of their own beloved communities. “For growth and not combat,” Austin explained, “is the major process of life.”¹⁹²

Notes

Portions of this chapter were delivered to the Western History Association annual meeting on October 7, 2012, under the title “‘Training for the Subconscious’: Mary Austin and the Boundaries of Religious Education.”

¹ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 299. She repeated the phrase, “ambrosial, unquotable talk” in Mary Austin, “George Sterling at Carmel,” American Mercury (Mary 1927): 66.

² Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 301.

³ For bohemian rootedness in the city, see Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking, 1986), Christine Stansell, American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), Rebecca Zurier, Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), and Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders: A History of Bohemianism in America (New York: Covici, 1933). To be sure, these studies do not present bohemianism as entirely fixed in place; both Stansell and Zurier describe the migrations to New York that helped constitute its artist and literary communities. For diasporic models of bohemian cosmopolitanism, see Brent Edwards, The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁴ Willard Huntington Wright, “Hotbed of Soulful Culture, Vortex of Erotic Erudition: Carmel in California, Where Author and Artist Folk Are Establishing the Most Amazing Colony on Earth,” Los Angeles Times, May 22, 1910, reprinted in Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Nancy J. Peters, Literary San Francisco: A Pictorial History from its Beginnings to the Present Day (San Francisco: City Lights, 1980), 120.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mary Austin, “George Sterling at Carmel,” American Mercury (Mary 1927): 66. Making the connection to other modes of bohemian sociability explicit, Austin added that even though she had “tasted life in the Latin Quarter of Paris” and “lived two years in Greenwich Village” in the 1910s, “none of these experiences keeps so fresh a savor as the eight or ten years at Carmel when George Sterling was easily the most arresting figure” (67).

⁷ Adeline Knapp, “Some Hermit Homes of California Writers,” Overland Monthly 35, no. 205 (January 1900): 3.

⁸ Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 67.

⁹ Gertrude Atherton, et. al., The Spinners’ Book of Fiction (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1907). Even though the Bohemian Club was a bastion of wealth and privilege,

bearing little resemblance to the bohemianism of Henri Murger, its motto was meant to show “enmity for the dull plodder whose sole ambition in life is money-getting.” See Robert Fletcher, The Annals of the Bohemian Club (San Francisco: Bohemian Club, 1898), 36.

¹⁰ Warner, Publics and Counterpublics, 89.

¹¹ Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), and “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” Problems in Materialism and Culture (London: Verso, 1980).

¹² Ferlinghetti and Peters, Literary San Francisco, 107. However, Scott Shields notes that even after leaving, “Austin maintained her home in Carmel until 1924.” Scott A. Shields, Artists at Continent’s End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1875-1907 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 318.

¹³ Michael Williams attributed the idea of the Forest Theater largely to Austin, writing of Carmel, “When Mary Austin dwelt there she constantly dreamed of a theater among the pines, and so did many others.” Michael Williams, “Forest Theater in the Shadow of Junipero Serra’s Mission,” Sunset Magazine, 29 (Summer 1912): 322.

¹⁴ George Sterling to Mary Austin, September 1, 1910, AU 4758, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Mary Austin, “George Sterling at Carmel,” American Mercury (Mary 1927): 72.

¹⁷ As the publicity material for her national lecture tours noted, “One of Mrs. Austin’s favorite subjects of prophecy is the development of local culture.” See “Mary Austin Abroad,” publicity material from interviews, n.d., AU 341, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁸ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 217.

¹⁹ Austin’s resistance to evangelizing, seeking instead to empower local communities, echoes Ann Powers’ observation that “bohemia’s essence” lies in people and practices “out of plain sight,” and particularly “the visions they forge and the communities they form” rather than “superstar displays of colorful character” like those of George Sterling. See Ann Powers, Weird Like Us: My Bohemian America (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 28.

²⁰ Mary Austin, The Land of Little Rain (New York: Modern Library Classics, 2003 ed.), 24, 77. Austin drew the term “house habit” from Muir’s Our National Parks, published two years earlier in 1901. John Muir, Our National Parks (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), in Nature Writings (New York: Library of America, 1997), 787-788.

²¹ Construction on the Los Angeles Aqueduct—which devastated the remaining farms in the Owens Valley by diverting their water—began in 1908, and led to decades of conflict. See William Kahrl, Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), and John Walton, Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

²² “Who is Mary Austin? Most Intelligent Woman in America Says Cambridge Scholar,” clipping, n.d., Box 125, Folder 7, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

²³ Mary Austin to Henry Nash Smith, June 5, 1931, MSS C-H 48, Box 1, Mary Hunter Austin Collection of Letters and Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

²⁴ Mary Hunter Austin, “How an American Novelist Views School Problem,” n.d., Box 126, Folder 5, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

²⁵ As Austin explained, “after the increasing complication of modern life made it necessary to shut the school away from the market place, we began to forget the intrinsic relation of the two until, with a few hundred years of the monastic idea added, the school became a kind of pocket in the social fabric, with a very narrow mouth.” Ibid.

²⁶ Mary Austin to Henry Nash Smith, November 28, 1932, Mary Hunter Austin Collection of Letters and Papers, MSS C-H 48, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

²⁷ Mary Austin, The American Rhythm (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1923), 7.

²⁸ See, for example, Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972-1980 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Paul Jerome Croce, Science and Religion in the Era of William James: Eclipse of Certainty, 1820-1880 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Louis Menand, The Metaphysical Club: A Story of American Ideas (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001); James Livingston, Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 1850-1940 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); James T. Kloppenberg, “Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?” The Journal of American History 83, No. 1 (June 1996): 100-138; Robert D. Richardson, William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2006); Ross Posnock, The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); John Patrick Diggins, The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Giles Gunn, Thinking Across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect, and the New Pragmatism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Melvin Rogers, The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and Joshua Miller, Democratic Temperament: The Legacy of William James (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

²⁹ See, for example, Francesca Bordogna, William James at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Science, and the Geography of Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), and R. Laurence Moore, In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

³⁰ Austin maintained active ties to both the University of California and Stanford University, giving guest lectures at the former and participating in the English Club of the latter. On her role in the English Club, see Mary Austin, “New York: Dictator of American Criticism” (1920), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 60.

³¹ Casey Nelson Blake, Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank, and Lewis Mumford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 293.

³² All quotations in this paragraph from Mary Austin, “A College With Roots,” The New Student (Nov. 1928): 13. Austin illustrated her point with the following example: “Often when I go into a school in an unfamiliar region to lecture, and I begin to inquire of the English Department, under whose auspices I am most likely to appear, what there is in his neighborhood or state that a growing spirit can feed upon, I find that he does not know, or if he does, is ordinarily more interested in informing me that he reads Mencken and knows what to think of Eugene O’Neill.”

³³ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 169.

³⁴ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 175.

³⁵ Notes on Austin’s presentation at Blackburn College, The Blackburnian, June 1887, Folder 3, Box 122, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

³⁶ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 57.

³⁷ Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, January 2, 1922, Box 59, AU 1144, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

³⁸ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 126.

³⁹ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 35.

⁴⁰ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 134.

⁴¹ Mary Austin, “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua” (1926), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 105; Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 102.

⁴² Angela Ray, The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 45.

⁴³ Austin’s explained her complaint with the form, not the underlying spirit, of the movement by noting that “the Chautauqua type of cultural endeavor has proceeded from the very sources from which true culture is conventionally supposed to be derived”—or in other words, “a culture rooted in the living processes of community life.” Mary Austin, “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua” (1926), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 106.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁵ See Richard Ohmann, Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century (London: Verso, 1996), T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930,” in Richard Wightman Fox and Lears, eds., The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), and Janice A. Radway, A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). See also Sarah Igo, The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), and James Cook, Lawrence Glickman, and Michael O’Malley, eds., The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁷ “Brilliant Author Amid the Angels,” Los Angeles, ca. 1903, unidentified newspaper.

⁴⁸ The Blackburnian, June 1888, Folder 3, Box 122, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁴⁹ Mary Austin, “How I Would Sell My Book, ‘Rhythm’” The Bookseller and Stationer, May 1, 1923, Box 128, Folder 7, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁵⁰ It was during these years, wrote Austin, that she “gathered that intensely particularized knowledge of the Western scene which is garnered in her books.” Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 208.

⁵¹ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 188.

⁵² Mary Austin, "California Notes" (ca. 1931), Box 122, Folder 1, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁵³ James's lecture, held in San Francisco on September 12, 1898, two weeks after his Berkeley address, was entitled "Psychology and Relaxation" (although Austin remembered it as "Relaxation" in her autobiography). The lecture is called a "popular lecture" to which "the public is cordially invited" in "Western School News," Western Journal of Education vol. 3 (September 1898): 19.

⁵⁴ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 282.

⁵⁵ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 283.

⁵⁶ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 292.

⁵⁷ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 297.

⁵⁸ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 297. See also Linda Leigh Pail, Cottages by the Sea: The Handmade Homes of Carmel, America's First Artist Community (New York: Universe, 2000).

⁵⁹ Austin noted that the publication of The Land of Little Rain had allowed her to meet "the elect," including William Keith and John Muir. Austin, Earth Horizon, 298.

⁶⁰ "Pen Sketches of the Desert," St. Paul Dispatch, ca. 1903.

⁶¹ Review of "The Land of Little Rain," Public Opinion, ca. 1903.

⁶² Review of "The Land of Little Rain," San Francisco Call, ca. 1903.

⁶³ William Keith to Mary Austin, ca. 1904, Box 91, AU 3316, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁶⁴ "William Keith: An Appreciation," Impressions Quarterly, n.d, pp. 74-75, Box 136, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁶⁵ Mary Austin to Houghton Mifflin Co., July 16, 1907, Box 58, AU 1110, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁶⁶ Mary Austin to Houghton Mifflin Co., September 30, 1907, Box 58, AU 1113, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁶⁷ Michael Warner, Publics and Counterpublics (New York: Zone Books, 2005).

⁶⁸ Carmel Development Company to Mary Austin, April 2, 1926, Box 70, AU 1919, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library. One historian notes that the developers “attempted to lure creative bohemians to their new community, Carmel-by-the-Sea, believing that they would generate interest in the settlement and thus the sale of lots. The bohemians did not disappoint, and although they themselves did not always intend their eccentric and artistic posturings as advertisement, they proved effective in publicizing the region.” Scott A. Shields, Artists at Continent’s End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1875-1907 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 85. According to Carey McWilliams, the settlement at Carmel “was the inspiration of Mary Austin, contrary to the legend which always named George Sterling. . . . While visiting in San Francisco [in 1902], Mrs. Austin gave an interview of one of the newspapers, in the course of which she spoke with enthusiasm of the Carmel side of the peninsula. As a result of this interview, Frank Powers, who owned most of the property, called on her and suggested that the place be developed as an art colony.” Carey McWilliams, “A Letter from Carmel,” Saturday Review of Literature, January 4, 1930, Box 128, Folder 7, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library. McWilliams adds that Carmel served as Austin’s primary residence from 1905 through the rest of the decade. Austin herself cited the year 1904 as the date of her first visit to Carmel. See Mary Austin, “George Sterling at Carmel,” American Mercury (Mary 1927): 65.

⁶⁹ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 298-301. Carey McWilliams listed the core group as consisting of Austin, Sterling, Hopper, French, Lafler, London, and Stoddard. Carey McWilliams, “A Letter from Carmel,” Saturday Review of Literature, January 4, 1930, Box 128, Folder 7, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library. Austin, Sterling, London, and Hopper are pictured together in “Can San Francisco Become America’s Literary Center?,” unidentified clipping, ca. 1911, Box 136, Scrapbook 3, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library. Austin repeatedly cited Sterling, London, and Hopper as her closest friends at Carmel. In 1912, Michael Williams listed the core group as “George Sterling, Mary Austin, Jack London, James Hopper, and others.” Michael Williams, “Forest Theater in the Shadow of Junipero Serra’s Mission,” Sunset Magazine, 29 (Summer 1912): 321.

⁷⁰ The Piedmont circle is described in depth in Elsie Whitaker Martinez, Oral History, San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁷¹ Mary Austin, “George Sterling at Carmel,” American Mercury (Mary 1927): 67.

⁷² The Literary Pilgrim, “The Literary Craftsmen of Carmel,” San Francisco Call (January 17, 1909).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Mary Austin, “George Sterling at Carmel,” American Mercury (Mary 1927): 67.

⁷⁵ Jerrold Seigel, Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930 (New York: Viking, 1986), 3. For an extended discussion of Murger's sensibility, see Seigel, 38-58.

⁷⁶ Mary Austin, "George Sterling at Carmel," American Mercury (May 1927): 65.

⁷⁷ Will Sparks, "Studio Building for Artists Proposed for San Francisco," San Francisco Call, August 5, 1906.

⁷⁸ Hanna Astrup Larsen, "Artists Return Bearing Trophies of Summer Hours in Country Haunts," San Francisco Call, September 30, 1907.

⁷⁹ Scott A. Shields, Artists at Continent's End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1875-1907 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 208. See also Anna Pratt Simpson, "The Del Monte Gallery," The Argonaut, April 27, 1907, which notes that the gallery was meant to fill the role that William Keith's studio had in San Francisco before it was destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

⁸⁰ Anna Pratt Simpson, "The Del Monte Gallery," The Argonaut, April 27, 1907.

⁸¹ Elsie Whitaker Martinez, Oral History, pp. 104, 105, 110, 198, San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁸² See, for example, Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 301, Elsie Whitaker Martinez, Oral History, p. 112, San Francisco Bay Area Writers and Artists, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, and Mary Austin, "George Sterling at Carmel," American Mercury (May 1927): 71. The presence of professors at Carmel is also noted in Reuben J. Ellis, "Introduction," Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 10.

⁸³ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 301.

⁸⁴ Michael Williams, "Forest Theater in the Shadow of Junipero Serra's Mission," Sunset Magazine, 29 (Summer 1912): 321-322.

⁸⁵ David Starr Jordan to Mary Austin, March 6, 1907, Box 90, AU 3306, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁸⁶ Although the novel was not published until 1919, Austin circulated a manuscript as early as 1910, when George Sterling wrote to her, "I've read *Outland* again, reveling in its beauty."

George Sterling to Mary Austin, September 1, 1910, AU 4758, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁸⁷ Summary of Mary Austin, "Outland" (dramatic script), ca. 1919, Box 122, Folder 2, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁸⁸ Mary Austin, Outland (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 12.

⁸⁹ Mary Austin, Outland (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 153-5.

⁹⁰ Summary of Mary Austin, "Outland" (dramatic script), ca. 1919, Box 122, Folder 2, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁹¹ Mary Austin, Outland (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 305.

⁹² "Spoke On Nature Study—Interesting Lecture by Mrs. Mary Austin—Well-Known Author Appears Before the Members of the Friday Morning Club Today," Los Angeles Evening Express, ca. 1911, Box 136, Scrapbook 3, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁹³ "Influence of the Frontier on Literature—The Author Talked Entertainingly on a Subject That Will Furnish Much Food For Thought," unidentified clipping, Box 136, Scrapbook 3, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library. See also "Can San Francisco Become America's Literary Center?," n.d., October 1910, Box 136, Scrapbook 3, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁹⁴ Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, January 2, 1922, Box 59, AU 1144, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁹⁵ "Mary Austin Abroad," publicity material from interviews, n.d., AU 341, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁹⁶ Mary Austin to Dr. Stivers, April 11, 1911, Box 60, AU 1246, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

⁹⁷ Mary Austin, "New York: Dictator of American Criticism" (1920), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 56.

⁹⁸ Mary Austin, Earth Horizon (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991 ed., 1932 orig.), 349.

⁹⁹ Mary Austin, "New York: Dictator of American Criticism" (1920), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 60.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Austin, "New York: Dictator of American Criticism" (1920), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 60.

¹⁰¹ "Mary Austin Abroad," publicity material from interviews, n.d., AU 341, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰² Mary Austin to Franklin K. Lane, January 16, 1919, Box 58, AU 1126, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰³ Mary Austin to Franklin K. Lane, January 16, 1919, Box 58, AU 1126, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰⁴ All quotations in this paragraph from Mary Austin to Franklin K. Lane, January 16, 1919, Box 58, AU 1126, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰⁵ All quotations in this paragraph from Mary Austin to Franklin K. Lane, January 16, 1919, Box 58, AU 1126, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰⁶ All quotations in this paragraph from Mary Austin to Franklin K. Lane, January 16, 1919, Box 58, AU 1126, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰⁷ Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, December 31, 1921, Box 59, AU 1143, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰⁸ Program, "A Dinner in Honor of Mary Austin," 1922, Box 123, Folder 8, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, January 11, 1922, Box 59, AU 1146, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹¹⁰ Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, January 9, 1922, Box 59, AU 1145, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹¹¹ Carl Van Doren to Mary Austin, January 9, 1922, Box 116, AU 5021, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹¹² Mary Austin, "American Literature as an Expression of American Experience," January 2, 1922, Lecture at National Arts Club, AU 8, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

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- ¹¹⁵ Mary Austin, "The American Pattern," ca. 1922, AU 8, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- ¹¹⁶ James Worthington, "American Patterns Skillfully Woven in Austin Lecture," Carmel Pine Cone, August 17, 1922.
- ¹¹⁷ Ann Burroughs, "Mary Austin's Ideas of American Patterns," Carmel Pine Cone (1922).
- ¹¹⁸ Ann Burroughs, "Mary Austin's Ideas of American Patterns," Carmel Pine Cone (1922).
- ¹¹⁹ "High Brows Hurt Literature in U.S., Says Mary Austin," San Francisco Examiner, July 19, 1922.
- ¹²⁰ Mary Austin, "How I Would Sell My Book, 'Rhythm'" The Bookseller and Stationer, May 1, 1923, Box 128, Folder 7, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.
- ¹²¹ "Mary Austin Lauds Culture of U.S. Indians," Berkeley Gazette, July 21, 1922.
- ¹²² Henry S. Canby to Mary Austin, July 30, 1920, Box 69, AU 1841, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.
- ¹²³ Mary Austin to The Forum, ca. 1924, Box 58, AU 1097, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid.
- ¹²⁵ Review of "No. 26 Jayne Street," The Freeman (June 9, 1920), 311. See also Philip J. Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
- ¹²⁶ Review of "No. 26 Jayne Street," The Freeman (June 9, 1920), 311.
- ¹²⁷ Review of "No. 26 Jayne Street," The Freeman (June 9, 1920), 311.
- ¹²⁸ Van Wyck Brooks to Mary Austin, June 24, 1920, Box 66, AU 1667, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.
- ¹²⁹ Wilson Follett, "A True Prophet of Feminism: The Masterly Art and High Ethical Earnestness of Mary Austin's Book About Her Sex," unidentified clipping.
- ¹³⁰ Mary Austin, "Democracy and Criticism," unpublished manuscript, n.d., AU 115, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- ¹³¹ "Democracy and Criticism," unpublished manuscript, n.d., AU 115, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹³² “Democracy and Criticism,” unpublished manuscript, n.d., AU 115, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Austin further explored the relationship of criticism and public culture in another unpublished manuscript, Mary Austin, “Differences among American bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and workers,” n.d., AU 117, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹³³ Mary Austin to “Dear Sirs,” May 6, 1921, Box 58, AU 1089, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹³⁴ Benjamin Albert Botkin to Mary Austin, July 18, 1931, Box 65, AU 1629, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹³⁵ Mary Austin, “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua,” The New Republic (July 7, 1926), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996). See also “Battle Rages in Santa Fe Over Culture—Old Residents Say Town Good Enough for Them,” Syracuse Journal (Syracuse, NY), n.d., Box 136, Mary Austin Papers, which notes that the town’s “highbrows are mad,” including Mary Austin and Witter Byner.

¹³⁶ Mary Austin, “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua,” The New Republic (July 7, 1926), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 108.

¹³⁷ Mary Austin, “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua,” The New Republic (July 7, 1926), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 108.

¹³⁸ Mary Austin, “The Town That Doesn’t Want a Chautauqua,” The New Republic (July 7, 1926), in Ellis, ed., Beyond Borders: The Selected Essays of Mary Austin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 106.

¹³⁹ Mary Austin, “A College With Roots,” The New Student (November 1928): 13.

¹⁴⁰ Mary Austin, “A College With Roots,” The New Student (November 1928): 13.

¹⁴¹ Mary Austin to Henry Nash Smith, June 11, 1930, MSS C-H 48, Box 1, Mary Hunter Austin Collection of Letters and Papers, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

¹⁴² Mary Austin, “Art-Interest Profitable: Makes Millionaires in Theater and Movie Business; Includes All Things That Make Santa Fe Interesting and Must Be Basis of Fiesta,” Santa Fe New Mexican, ca. 1930, Box 126, Folder 5, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁴³ Mary Austin to John David Dettuff, November 25, 1930, Box 58, AU 1090, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ezra Pound to Mary Austin, April 13, 1930, Box 106, AU 4372, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Mary Austin to Herbert Hoover, October 31, 1930, Box 58, AU 1106, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁴⁸ Clipping, Michael Williams, "Mary Austin Remembers," Commonweal, January 25, 1933, included in Una Jeffers to Mary Austin, February 15, 1933, Box 90, AU 3268, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁴⁹ Ansel Adams to Mary Austin, May 1, 1930, Box 53, AU 870, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵⁰ Elsie Watterson to Mary Austin, April 4, 1928, Box 118, AU 5166, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵¹ Benjamin Albert Botkin, Review of Earth Horizon, in Daily Oklahoman, December 4, 1932. Enclosed in Botkin to Mary Austin, December 16, 1932, Box 65, AU 1633, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵² Louis Alber to Mary Austin, December 21, 1932, Box 55, AU 931, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵³ See, for example, "Lecture By Mary Austin: Native Art in the Southwest," Advertising Flyer, Los Angeles City Principals' Club, October 24, 1933, and "Mary Austin of New Mexico: Author and Lecturer," Advertising Brochure, Open Forum Speakers Bureau, Box 128, Folder 7, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin A. Botkin to Mary Austin, June 18, 1929, Box 65, AU 1621, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵⁵ Benjamin A. Botkin to Mary Austin, September 16, 1929, Box 65, AU 1623, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵⁶ Benjamin A. Botkin to Mary Austin, December 27, 1929, Box 65, AU 1628, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin A. Botkin to Mary Austin, April 3, 1934, Box 65, AU 1634, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁵⁸ For a review of the second edition, see "American Rhythm," Review, California Graphic (Los Angeles), March 1, 1930.

¹⁵⁹ Jean Thomas to Mary Austin, February 10, 1934, Box 103, AU 4117, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁶⁰ Sarah Gertrude Knott to Mary Austin, February 27, 1934, Box 103, AU 4120, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁶¹ National Folk Festival to Mary Austin, April 3, 1934, Box 103, AU 4122, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁶² Constance Rourke to Mary Austin, ca. February 1934, Box 108, AU 4469, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁶³ Arthur Ficke to Mary Austin, March 11, 1930, Box 77, AU 2387, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁶⁴ Mary Austin to Arthur Ficke, March 27, 1930, Box 58, AU 1096, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ The full correspondence included roughly 48 letters, from 1928 to 1933.

¹⁶⁹ Henry Nash Smith, "Culture," Southwest Review vol. 13, no. 2 (Winter 1928): 249, 250.

¹⁷⁰ Henry Nash Smith, "Culture," Southwest Review vol. 13, no. 2 (Winter 1928): 253-4.

¹⁷¹ Henry Nash Smith, "The Feel of Purposeful Earth: Mary Austin's Prophecy," New Mexico Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1931): 23.

¹⁷² Henry Nash Smith to Amerika-Institut, Berlin, December 29, 1931, Vault Files, Southwest Review Records, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

¹⁷³ Amerika-Institut to Henry Nash Smith, January 29, 1932, Vault Files, Southwest Review Records, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

¹⁷⁴ Henry Nash Smith to Benjamin A. Botkin, January 14, 1932, Box 4, Folder 54, and Smith to Botkin, March 8, 1932, Box 22, Folder 6, Southwest Review Records, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

¹⁷⁵ Benjamin A. Botkin to Henry Nash Smith, October 19, 1929, Box 35, Folder 11, Southwest Review Records, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

¹⁷⁶ Henry Nash Smith, "The Feel of Purposeful Earth: Mary Austin's Prophecy," New Mexico Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1931): 24.

¹⁷⁷ Henry Nash Smith, "Introduction," in William Faulkner, Miss Zilphia Gant (Dallas: Book Club of Texas, 1932).

¹⁷⁸ Dallas Morning News, February 14, 1932. Reprinted in James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate, eds., Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962 (New York, 1968), 28-32.

¹⁷⁹ John O. Beaty to Pastors, mimeographed letter, December 1, 1932, Unprocessed Subject Folder: Miss Zilphia Gant, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. The incident is recounted in Stanley Marcus, Minding the Store: A Memoir (London, 1974), 327, and David Farmer, Stanley Marcus: A Life with Books (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1993), 15-19.

¹⁸⁰ Henry Nash Smith to Marshall Terry, December 1, 1976, Folder: Henry Nash Smith, Marshall Terry Papers, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. Smith had little tolerance for such bigotry and repeatedly criticized the targeting of gay professors for removal. As he wrote to his friend and former colleague, Lon Tinkle: "Oh, we are being very pure these days. Having eliminated homosexuality from our midst we have now only the problem of eliminating Malice, Greed, Fraud, Slander, Envy, and Anger, and of course these are relatively trivial matters by the side of the question of whether Margo Jones ever kissed a co-ed." Henry Nash Smith to Lon Tinkle, May 28, 1945, Lon Tinkle Papers, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

¹⁸¹ E.G. Gillett to John McGinnis, October 4, 1932, Box 2, Folder 18, John McGinnis Papers, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. See also Jay B. Hubbell to John McGinnis, October 20, 1932, Box 2, Folder 22, John McGinnis Papers, DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

¹⁸² In a 1948 letter, Smith mentioned "the new American Quarterly that we are establishing here at Minnesota." Henry Nash Smith to Leo Marx, November 6, 1948, Box 3, Folder 15, Henry Nash Smith Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁸³ Mary Hunter Austin to Henry Nash Smith, November 30, 1932, MSS C-H 48, Box 1, Mary Hunter Austin Collection of Letters and Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁸⁴ Henry Nash Smith to Mary Hunter Austin, November 4, 1932, Box 112, AU 4716, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁸⁵ Henry Nash Smith to Mary Hunter Austin, November 4, 1932, Box 112, AU 4716, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁸⁶ Mary Hunter Austin to Henry Nash Smith, October 6, 1932, Mary Hunter Austin Collection of Letters and Papers, MSS C-H 48, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁸⁷ Henry Nash Smith to Mary Austin, September 28, 1933, Box 112, AU 4722, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁸⁸ Henry Nash Smith to Mary Hunter Austin, November 4, 1932, Box 112, AU 4716, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

¹⁸⁹ Henry Nash Smith to Mary Hunter Austin, April 18, 1933, AU 4717, Box 112, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library. In the same letter, he went on to say, "I think it was you also who sent me to John Dewey: I read him slowly, a few pages at a time."

¹⁹⁰ Ann Burroughs, "Mary Austin's Ideas of American Patterns," Carmel Pine Cone (1922).

¹⁹¹ Mary Hunter Austin to Henry Nash Smith, November 28, 1932, Mary Hunter Austin Collection of Letters and Papers, MSS C-H 48, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

¹⁹² Mary Austin, "Religion and Modern Conduct," n.d., AU 481, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library.

Chapter 5

Science for the Masses: William Ritter and the Science Service

In 1920, the California biologist William Ritter embarked on an ambitious campaign of letter writing. From his office in La Jolla, where he served as founding director of the University of California's biological research station, Ritter contacted dozens of scientists, social scientists, and popular writers to solicit support for the Science Service—his latest collaborative venture with the newspaper magnate Edward W. Scripps.¹ The idea of the scheme was to establish a wire service for the purpose of improving the quality of scientific information in newspapers and other media. As Ritter described it to Scripps, “In my mind our new enterprise assumes more definite form every day as a seedling institution of popular education quite without a counterpart in its conception, and quite beyond what can yet be calculated in its latent power for good. The media already in plain sight through which the Service might work are interesting indeed.”² He went on to list daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, pamphlets, and conferences as potential media to exploit.³ The project would acquire content from leading scientists but be independently operated by experienced journalists who would keep the venture on a solid financial footing. To remain self-sustaining and credible in the eyes of participating newspapers, the Science Service would charge subscription fees and seek contributors with both specialized training in the sciences and track records of popular writing.⁴

In letters and speeches during the early years of the venture, Ritter portrayed the Science Service as above all a new network of scientists—a corps of volunteers willing to enlist in a collective effort for the public good. He explicitly challenged the paradigm of higher education as a guild devoted to original research and the defense of polite culture, seeking instead to fully embrace the possibilities of modern mass media. The goal of building such a network inspired the choice of Edwin E. Slosson, a journalist, as the first director of the Science Service.⁵ Among Slosson’s main tasks was to organize the Service in such a manner that would balance the commercial and non-commercial interests of its various constituencies—readers, newspapers, and contributors. Whereas Scripps emphasized reaching the largest possible audience by packaging scientific information into the most attractive form possible, others, particularly Ritter’s network of scientists, saw it more as a form of adult education, providing tools for readers to better evaluate scientific claims. For example, the psychologist Joseph Jastrow of the University of Wisconsin argued in a letter to Ritter that “people should understand not only conclusions but the processes of proof upon which they rest.”⁶ Slosson was in a unique position to successfully pull off this balancing act. A former chemistry professor at the University of Wyoming and literary editor of *The Independent*, a New York magazine, Slosson could move with ease through the worlds of both higher education and journalism. Indeed, a decade earlier Slosson had written a series of sketches on universities in the United States, *Great American Universities* (1910), that left him with a large network of contacts in the academy.⁷

Under the leadership of Slosson, Ritter, and Scripps, the Science Service quickly built a network of contributors on the premise that scientists could band together to change the world through the power of mass media.⁸ By this logic, scientists held the knowledge for curing the world’s ills, and were simply in need of a vehicle for sharing their findings beyond narrow

geographical and professional boundaries. In Slosson's words, "The most radical ideas of our day are not so apt to be found in the queer little insurrectionary, heretical and propaganda sheets that we occasionally see but in the technical journals and proceedings of learned societies. The papers read before the annual meetings of the scientific societies, and for the most part unnoticed by the press, contain more dynamite than was ever discovered in any anarchist's bomb-shop."⁹ As the Science Service's directors would soon discover, however, the challenges of working with contributors, evaluating stories, and translating scientific jargon for a mass audience proved far more difficult than anticipated. In particular, the problem of making specialized research accessible raised thorny questions around what counted as science and why it was being offered for public consumption. Despite the scruples of its contributors, the stylistic norms of mass entertainment remained in the background of planning meetings for the Science Service as both a moral hazard and a sort of magnetic inevitability for adult education on the scale that Scripps, Ritter, and Slosson envisioned.¹⁰ This Janus-faced quality led the Science Service to challenge the efficacy of scientific education in the United States while simultaneously relying on universities for the content with which to develop such a critique.

In addition to disrupting the traditional avenues of scientific knowledge production, the Science Service embraced a very different economic model than the universities from which most of its contributors hailed. The project put democratic idealists like Ritter on a collision course with the managerial ethos of Scripps, who was in the business of selling newspapers and expected the new initiative to be economically sound. In establishing the Science Service as a corporation, Scripps emphasized what he believed to be the participatory and emancipatory nature of running the enterprise as a business. He was concerned that public schools had become factories of specialized knowledge that had ceded power to corrupt politicians and armies by

undermining the ability of “the millions” to cooperate in the project of governance.¹¹ At the same time, Scripps was not a scientist and needed some entry point into the professional networks of American universities. As Michael Smith has noted in his survey of California science, “Scripps found his interpreter in Ritter. With the growing emphasis on research at the turn of the century, many Eastern scientists disdained the popularization of science. Ritter thought both were essential.”¹² In this light, the Science Service was not simply a way of attractively packaging knowledge in order to make it desirable to laypeople as a commodity, but also a strategy for empowering citizens to responsibly navigate the modern world—a world structured by capitalism, for better or worse. Taken for granted by both Scripps in particular was an understanding of education as the delivery of expertise from the academy to a wider public along the lines of what Paolo Freire has called the “banking model” of education, in which knowledge is “deposited” into the minds of the passive student.¹³

From Ritter’s perspective, the Science Service was a chance to implement his career-long interest in reforming higher education. For several decades, Ritter had criticized the intellectual and social fragmentation that was encouraged, in his view, by an educational system that rewarded specialized expertise at the expense of general knowledge, thereby undermining democratic control of public higher education. Near the end of his life, in the 1930s, he went so far as to explicitly embrace amateurism in response to years of criticism from other biologists. He was convinced that his work had “tended to shunt me, in the estimation of my professional colleagues, into the class not only of crack-brains but weak crack-brains. Several late occurrences to which I could point indicate that I am losing caste with my professional kind.”¹⁴ Ritter came to see these slights as a badge of honor, rejecting the traditional model of solitary authorship and describing his final book, *The California Woodpecker and I* (1938), as “chiefly an

amateur's book, by amateurs for amateurs." Ritter noted that "an amateur, Mr. Frank Leach," had contributed the insight of "unadulterated communism among the birds," and that colleagues such as Joseph Grinnell exemplified what Ritter called "amateurized professionalism." As for himself, he identified as, in his words, an "amateurized professional in zoology and nothing else. I am no professional in anthropology, or psychology, or indeed in any of the ologies that show up in various parts of the work."¹⁵

It was during these years, the 1930s, that Ritter was most lampooned, not only by his peers but the staff of the Science Service. Several of his post-retirement letters, for example, were filed away in the Science Service records in a folder of "Ritterania," including one letter of Ritter's labeled an "Epistle to the Scrippsians."¹⁶ Indeed, Ritter's embrace of amateurism went so far as to imagine that woodpeckers themselves might be part of his public, not simply as passive objects of study, but as actors in his professional network. He cast *The California Woodpecker and I* as a comparative study of himself and the bird, offering lessons about their "common heritage" as "living things." Ritter explained that his "evidence" of the woodpecker's personhood could be found not only in the book, but "is available in the chance everyone has of going into the hills and valleys and into the museums and laboratories and seeing for himself how much of what I have said about the birds is true."¹⁷ On one level, this was the logical conclusion of his ideas on organicism, or the interrelatedness of all parts of a given ecosystem.¹⁸ It was also, however, an invitation to readers to take matters into their own hands and create knowledge for themselves through engagement with the California landscape. Indeed, Ritter described one aim of the Science Service to be the exerting of "a ruralizing influence on the public by . . . raising the intellectual and emotional interest in the common things of nature."¹⁹ Essentially, Ritter was suggesting that the tools of modern mass media could be used to awaken

residents of cities to their place in a shared natural environment instead of getting seduced by the machinery of nationalism, industrial capitalism, and militarism.

Ritter's idealism created a great deal of conflict with Scripps. Although the Science Service was a non-profit corporation, Scripps insisted on operating it as a market-based enterprise. Scripps shared Ritter's civic goal of improving the world through scientific education, but strongly emphasized payment from customers and payment for contributors as "fundamental principles" of the project, believing that the Service could not survive by relying on volunteers or giving away its content for free. As Scripps put it, "It is not intended that the association shall be run for profit to anyone; it is only intended that fair compensation shall be paid to those who take an active part in making the institution an instrument of great public service. But no one—and least of all the editor or publisher of a paper—values anything that costs nothing."²⁰ Unlike many of the project's contributing writers, Scripps believed jargon was the primary cause of the breakdown in communication between newspapers and the academy in the reporting of scientific news. Playing up his working class roots, Scripps harshly criticized Ritter for suggesting that the Science Service pitch its stories at a more sophisticated level than the pulp fiction Scripps published in his newspapers:

If you want to study man and learn as much about men as you have learned about woodpeckers and squirrels, you must, in the same way as you have pursued the latter study, leave your laboratory and get out into the open. . . . If you are going to teach knowledge and wisdom to the people you must first learn that which you are at present densely ignorant of, and that is the real nature of the mass of humanity.²¹

Scripps concluded his letter to Ritter by attaching a copy of a magazine, "Captain Billy's Whiz Bang," and asking Ritter to "observe it as carefully as you would observe the activities of a harvester ant." Scripps's ire stemmed from his belief that the Science Service must operate as a mass culture industry, aggressively casting its stories in language that would sell newspapers.

Ritter, on the other hand, saw quality as the more important virtue—his ideas of quality based on top-down academic expertise in these years before his embrace of amateurism.²² Neither Scripps nor Ritter, during this early period of the Science Service, saw the reading public as a worthy source of knowledge in its own right.

The relationship between Ritter and Scripps remained amicable despite the ferocity of their disagreement. Upon reading their exchange, Slosson wrote to Ritter, “Your correspondence with Mr. Scripps is amazing. What good tempers you two gentlemen have. One would expect an exchange of such letters to be followed by ‘pistols and coffee for two.’”²³ The collaboration remained intact because both men held deep respect for the talents of the other and believed that their complementary backgrounds would help the venture succeed. As Scripps was developing a business model, therefore, Ritter focused on building a national network of support for the project, tapping into the intellectual capital of professional scholars in order to give the wire service legitimacy in the eyes of readers as well as potential contributors.²⁴ In the closing months of 1919, Ritter made a tour of the United States—fifteen cities and many more institutions—soliciting support and feedback on the project, which at that point he was calling “A Press Bureau of General Science” and the “Society for the Dissemination of Science.”²⁵ As he wrote to Adelaide Brown, a public health researcher: “I am to make a swing through the country shortly . . . [t]he main object of this being to consult with as many scientific and press people as possible, with a view to finding how the land lays relative to such a project.”²⁶ The tour elicited much feedback from Ritter’s contacts around the country. One of the first people Ritter approached about the scheme was journalist Walter Lippmann, who would soon publish his influential tract on the problem of accuracy in news, *Public Opinion*.²⁷ “I am tremendously interested,” wrote Lippmann, “in the material sent me in regard to the proposed American

Society for the Dissemination of Science, and I should be very glad indeed to talk over the matter with your representative.”²⁸ Likewise William Humphreys, a physicist, wrote to Ritter in 1920:

I have read with great interest Mr. Scripps’ suggestions for the popularization of science, for giving to everyone, in language that all intelligent people can understand, the fascinating stories of ourselves and the universe in which we live. And he is right in insisting that these stories be not only clearly and interestingly told, but above all as scrupulously accurate as it is humanly possible to make them.²⁹

Other scholars were less receptive to the scheme. Herbert Spencer Jennings, a geneticist from Johns Hopkins University, wrote: “I am myself reluctant to see men in the course of active productive research deflected from this into publicity work.”³⁰ Similarly, Ellsworth Huntington, a Yale geographer, expressed support for the general idea of the Science Service but cautioned against it becoming “too much a money-making scheme.”³¹

Despite the early success of Ritter’s networking efforts, the perception of the Science Service as a less-than-serious commercial enterprise took a toll on Ritter’s professional standing. The criticism stemmed largely from Ritter’s efforts to simultaneously utilize and bypass existing academic institutions to advance his vision of educational reform. Instead of rejecting academic specialization altogether, or calling for a return to natural history and its naïve promise of unity, Ritter sought administrative solutions that would encourage conversations across disciplines, publics, and nations. He pushed for incremental institutional change only to find that even such moderate initiatives crossed the line into commerce and made him, in his words, a “crack-brain” in the eyes of his colleagues. Thus even though the Science Service drew content in large part from a carefully constructed network of scientists, it nevertheless entailed reputational costs for its contributors. This paradox suggests that status in the university had become as much about embracing specific technologies of professionalism as advancing knowledge in the abstract. Even as Ritter devoted his life to scientific research, he grew preoccupied with strategies for

avoiding the facile conflation of knowledge and professionalism, expertise and the university. His career produced a web of institutions, coalitions, and acronyms that transformed the popular consumption of science, at once laying the groundwork for present-day public scholarship initiatives and unwittingly pioneering a new nexus in the relationship of what Christopher Newfield has called “ivy and industry.”³²

In time the Science Service itself became more collaborative, sponsoring science contests and ultimately renaming itself the Society for Science & the Public, with a mission of fostering “public engagement in scientific research and education.”³³ Ritter himself became something of an evangelist for amateurism, bringing his ideas to realms of parallel knowledge production outside science. In a 1933 address to the Laymen’s League of the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley, Ritter called on clergy to recognize and engage with the talents of the laity, explaining that “the task now before world culture falls to laymen in religion as well as to professionals in religion. For here only can there be found those competent in science, in philosophy, and in education to deal with such aspects of religion as involve special problems in these realms.”³⁴ He also became more politically active in various causes, donating to Franz Boas’s campaign to seek asylum for anti-Nazi refugees.³⁵ By the advent of the Second World War, Ritter found himself dramatically at odds with his home institution of the University of California. Ritter had gambled his career on bringing about peace through adult education—making public the findings of research institutions in order to make non-specialist readers aware of the promise and perils of modern science—only to witness the University of California transforming into a major hub of the military industrial complex, providing much of the secret atomic weapons research that would set the course of geopolitics for decades.

This chapter will examine the Science Service in the context of Ritter's early years at the University of California, particularly his participation in *fin-de-siècle* discussion clubs and long philanthropic partnership with E.W. Scripps. After examining the creation and early history of the Science Service, I will address how Ritter's commitment to the concept of "organicism" and interest in the arts led him to question the political stakes of his own field of biology and the laboratory method in which he was trained. In conversation with friends and colleagues such as Charles Keeler, Mary Austin, and John Muir, and over the course of several decades, Ritter argued for new modes of research—namely the study of specimens in context—that became the basis of the University of California's marine biological research station in La Jolla, later the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Despite representing a commitment to "pure research," as opposed to teaching, the research station served as a sort of early testing ground for the Science Service, particularly as Ritter struggled to identify and reach out to the station's stakeholders in La Jolla and across the country. Finally, by linking his work with other Berkeley intellectuals of the era, the chapter will examine how Ritter's racialized vision of the public sphere led him to dabble in eugenics before turning against it in the 1920s. From his earliest years at Berkeley to his embrace of "amateurized professionalism," the problem of what, exactly, constituted the public remained a problem that vexed Ritter throughout his career. It was through Scripps that Ritter came to see the press, not the university, as the most potent vehicle for bringing about an educational revolution. As Scripps asserted, without any of Ritter's circumspection and with little respect for the agency of readers, "It is only through the press—mainly the daily press—of the country that the vast majority of the people of this country receive any information or education at all. It is therefore only through the press that the public can be quickly and well instructed on matters of its greatest interest."³⁶

Establishing the Science Service

The name for the Science Service was carefully chosen among several other suggested possibilities, including “The Press Bureau of Sciences,” “The American Society for the Dissemination of Science,” and “The Press Bureau of General Science”³⁷ Along with their early collaborators, Ritter and Scripps chose “Science Service” to emphasize its status as a public service.³⁸ As Ritter put it, “The general aims of the project would be to disseminate authentic information concerning scientific achievements and their relation to human welfare, and to beget in the public generally more of the scientific attitude than now exists.”³⁹ In keeping with Ritter’s hopes for redirecting the nation’s wartime fervor toward peaceful ends, militaristic language was deployed in several early letters to describe the enlistment of scientists in the endeavor. Slosson, for example, described the participating scientists as a “Corps of Contributors,” explaining, “The whole success of the enterprise depends ultimately upon getting a body of eager and able writers in all fields of investigation.”⁴⁰

Scripps likewise emphasized the paramount importance of recruiting professional scientists. Despite his view that articles should imitate the style of pulp fiction, he believed the Service should be “composed exclusively of men of science, either research workers or teachers.”⁴¹ As Slosson put it, “There is no reason whatever why a person actively engaged in scientific reading or research should not also acquire the knack of popular presentation. It would not be a waste of time but would do him good if, after reading a monograph, he would put the main points of it into popular language in 500 words.”⁴² The challenge of translating research into a more legible vernacular proved much more difficult than Slosson envisioned in the early days of the project, as did recruitment. Given the ties of the project to California and specifically Carmel-by-the-Sea, including trustee Daniel MacDougal, Slosson wrote to several members of

the enclave about participating. Although Mary Austin eventually contributed, he received rejections from writers like Beverly Clark, who wrote, “If you have never been to Carmel, you cannot realize to what extent I am isolated for these purposes. . . . The nearest good library is at Stanford University, half a day’s trip away. So you see that the only chance I have to pick up items of scientific interest suitable for Science Service is that something of that kind will develop here at Carmel.”⁴³ Other writers responded that they did not have time to contribute, or did not trust the project’s political or financial motives.

Howard Wheeler, the business manager of the Science Service, had to overcome similar suspicion in marketing to newspapers and syndicates. As Wheeler put it in his 1921 Report to the Trustees of the Science Service:

We have had to convince editors that we have absolutely no axe to grind, save to create a more general public understanding of and sympathy with the scientist and his work; that we are fostering no propaganda of any sort and that we are attempting only to give an intelligent, understandable and readable survey of important developments in the field of scientific research that have come to our notice during the week.”⁴⁴

Anticipating such hurdles, Slosson had doubts about the ambitious timeline envisioned by Scripps and Ritter for putting the project’s business plan into motion. Shortly after joining the project, he confided to Ritter: “In our conversation with Mr. Scripps, as you remember, he laid great stress upon the immediate organization of a syndicate service that would make the Science News Service self-supporting almost from the start. This job seemed easy to him because he is a genius in that line, but it does not seem easy to me because I have had no experience in that field.”⁴⁵ Slosson preferred instead to launch the project “in a modest way” to build a network of contributors and test the market for various packaging formats before investing too much time and energy in a single model.⁴⁶ Knowing that Scripps was willing to ride out any financial difficulties in the early stages of the project, Ritter was more confident, trusting the “working

machinery” of the project to run with suitable efficiency to build a foundation for lasting success.⁴⁷

The central product of the Science Service was the *Science News Bulletin*, a weekly compendium of articles that it sold to newspapers across the United States—from the Berkeley *Gazette* to the *New York Evening Post*—and abroad, including the *Bermuda Press*.⁴⁸ Drawing on articles solicited from the Science Service’s network of contributors, the *Bulletin* was compiled by Managing Editor Watson Davis and edited by Slosson. In its earliest days, the business plan of the Science Service was to send free copies of the weekly *Bulletin* to approximately 125 newspapers every month. After receiving four free issues, newspapers could pay a fee to continue receiving the *Bulletin* and running its materials.⁴⁹ After the first few months of this approach were met with “satisfactory success” and revenues of \$28.00 a week, Ritter tentatively informed Scripps, “So far so good.”⁵⁰ As it built a customer base, the Science Service also distributed material through syndicates such as the Scripps-owned Newspaper Enterprise Association of Cleveland, Ohio, which reached over 800 newspapers. Although this step gave the Science Service quick and easy publicity on a mass scale, the leadership of the Science Service saw it as a temporary measure that was decidedly secondary to the task of slowly finding individual editors to subscribe to the *Science News Bulletin*.⁵¹ This conservative business plan reflected Ritter’s larger goal of building an independent and sustainable distribution network rather than simply piggy-backing on existing wire services or syndicates, including those owned by Scripps. The Science Service, he decided from the outset, had to become an independent culture industry in order to maintain the integrity of its scientific content.

In addition to distributing the *Bulletin*, the Science Service also sought to carve a niche for itself in providing reliable reporting on scientific meetings and conferences. For example, it

sent abstracts of papers from a conference of the National Science Academy to roughly 600 newspapers—far surpassing the reach of the *Bulletin*—and distributed additional notes to every major press association and hundreds of reporters.⁵² Likewise Wheeler noted that the Science Service had begun accepting material from “scientific institutions which have engaged us to handle their publicity. We have completed our first undertaking as publicity agents.”⁵³ The involvement with professional meetings of scientific organizations did not simply reflect the idea that such meeting contained “more dynamite” than an “anarchist’s bomb-shop,” but rather the dual goals of the Science Service to both inform the public and support original research. Ritter believed these goals were inextricable, arguing that science and democracy would sustain one another. At the 1920 meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Seattle, Ritter was elected president and the Science Service helped publicize the event, leading to two editorials in the local press. *Science* magazine opined that this attention “augurs well for the future of scientific investigation” by indicating “that the public is becoming more generally interested in the progress of science.”⁵⁴

By assuming a mediating role, the Science Service was also in the business of policing the boundaries of what counted as legitimate science. Space in the weekly *Bulletin* was limited, and every decision to include an item meant excluding other options. According to Slosson, this task was among the most crucial to the success of the project:

In fact the success of democratic government as well as the prosperity of the individual may be said to depend upon the ability of the people to distinguish between real science and fake, between the genuine expert and the pretender. The education of children in schools and of a few in colleges is not sufficient for this. It must be carried into maturity through such channels as the newspaper and the motion pictures.⁵⁵

To distinguish between “real science and fake,” the editorial staff compiled several documents providing guidelines on taboo subjects. For example, Watson Davis distributed a memorandum,

“Stories To Be Careful Of,” that listed categories of stories that required additional scrutiny by “competent specialists” before inclusion in the *Bulletin*. These included discoveries based on secret methods, “sweeping claims of any sort,” universal cures or germ killers, numerology and astrology, and a range of “supernatural stuff” from telepathy to spirit manifestations to “long range weather forecasts.”⁵⁶ The Science Service also established political guidelines that strongly emphasized intellectual independence. In a 1921 announcement of its launch, Edwin Slosson asserted that the Science Service “will not be under the control of any clique, class or commercial interest. It will serve all the sciences. It will supply all the news syndicates. It will not indulge in propaganda, unless it be propaganda to urge the value of research and usefulness of science.”⁵⁷

Despite its claims to independence, the Science Service was very much under the control of a particular clique—white male scientists—and heavily invested in eugenic thinking as a vehicle for social reform. Selective breeding was among the major concrete actions that Slosson hoped to inspire through popular science and adult education. Indeed, when Slosson observed that scientific proceedings contained “more dynamite than was ever discovered in any anarchist’s bomb shop,” he supported his argument with the example of Gregor Mendel’s early research on genetics, which Slosson argued was “much more revolutionary” than Karl Marx’s political economy in determining the future of the United States.⁵⁸ The difference, argued Slosson, lay in what he perceived to be the failure of scientists to market their ideas, including their ideas on eugenics. “The socialist press,” wrote Slosson, “sells its propaganda pamphlets, including much serious and some scientific literature, cheap by the millions. If scientists had the aggressive spirit of the socialists they might do as much to convert the world to their way of thinking.”⁵⁹ Slosson’s admiration for effective propaganda reflected the slow shift in the public orientation of

the American professoriate since the 1860s, moving away from populist readings of the Morrill Act which emphasized education as a vocational tool and vehicle of republican governance, and instead casting science as a way of manipulating, disciplining, and converting the *demos*. Far from viewing universities as institutions controlled by and accountable to the public, the early debates around the formation of the Science Service positioned lay readers as alienated from the scientific knowledge being created by universities and thus unable to make sound decisions about educational and other forms of social reform. Although Ritter, for one, opposed forced sterilization, he built the Science Service as a network reflecting the collective identity of its contributors, the vast majority of whom were white men who embraced, at minimum, what Alexandra Stern has called the “softer eugenics” of progressive hereditarian discourses, including the privileging of some species (such as the redwood tree) over others in California environmentalism.⁶⁰

As an unabashed supporter of aggressive sterilization policies, Slosson believed that eugenics needed to transcend the political realm and adopt a religious fervor, predicting in 1922: “Eugenics will remain a barren branch of science until it gets behind it a religious impulse[.]”⁶¹ He made the same connection with regard to the popularization of science in general. He rued the fact that, in his view, “scientific men seem to have lost their fighting spirit. They no longer feel themselves crusaders.” Contemporary scientists, he continued, wrongly believed that “the mass of the people” had accepted the “scientific spirit” in politics and culture. As a result they lacked the passion that had inspired Edward Youmans and Henry Holt to found *Popular Science Monthly* in the 1870s.⁶² This complacency resulted from the professionalization of the academy and the resulting lack of engagement with the press. “As seen through the medium of the popular press,” noted Slosson, “the scientist is apt to appear as an enemy of society inventing

infernal machines, or as a curious half-crazy creature talking a jargon of his own and absorbed in pursuit of futilities. The ordinary newspaper article on science is as incomprehensible to the scientist and the layman as it is to the reporter who wrote it.”⁶³ The Science Service was intended to overcome this mutual intelligibility, not through a reciprocal dialogue but rather through a sort of racial hygiene that combatted “feeble-mindedness” through education, or what Ritter called, in a letter to Scripps, the “uphill business” of increasing “the intelligence of the rank and file in the *kind of science* which you and I have for several years regarded as most important.”⁶⁴ The “kind of science” Ritter and Scripps advocated was research that might seem impractical at first glance—namely the “pure research” being carried out at the Scripps Institution for Biological Research in La Jolla—but that carried underlying practical benefits because of what Ritter believed to be the interconnectedness of all knowledge production in an organic whole. At the core of Ritter and Scripps’ hope for the Science Service was the belief that a more widespread appreciation for advances in seemingly disparate fields would broaden and deepen public support for scientific research in general.

A Thirty-Year-Old Undergraduate: Early Years in Berkeley

To understand the roots of Ritter’s approach to the Science Service, one must look to the early years of his career, when he arrived in Berkeley as a thirty-year-old undergraduate in 1886 to study with one of the university’s most popular professor, Joseph LeConte, the author of a geology textbook that had inspired Ritter during his earlier stints as a student at Oshkosh Normal School in Wisconsin.⁶⁵ Ritter’s experience with growing up on a farm had a profound influence on his commitment to adult education, as it gave him an intimate familiarity with the problem of educational access. His struggle to find a way to pay for his education was a constant theme of

his correspondence with his uncle, Nelson Ritter. Prior to enrolling in Oshkosh Normal School for the first time, in 1879, Ritter wrote to his uncle:

If I don't complete a four years' course of study . . . it will not be on account of a lack of determination on my part. I am as sensible as any one that such an undertaking requires means, and also valuable time because of its being taken from the prime of life. I am, also, sensible that my means, and consequently, my time is very limited.⁶⁶

As it turned out, Ritter had to drop out of Oshkosh for several years for financial reasons, taking teaching positions in two small Wisconsin towns, Oconto and Columbus, to cover his expenses.

“As I went to the end of my financial rope,” Ritter explained to his uncle, “I found it necessary to leave Oshkosh for the purpose of replenishing the treasury,” though he noted that his misfortune was no worse “than the majority of the human race” and that he enjoyed his position in the tiny “lumbering town” of Oconto, where he taught both elementary and high school classes.⁶⁷

While in Oconto, Ritter also discovered his passion for the natural sciences, reading *Popular Science Monthly* in his spare time and writing to his uncle that “the little knowledge gained in this direction has created a great interest and convinced me that in this line *the great* advances of the future must be made. . . . even in society and religion.”⁶⁸ When he eventually returned to Oshkosh to obtain his teaching degree, he decided to use his own difficulty with gaining access to education as an object of study, writing his thesis on the need for “education, in the fullest sense of the term, of the largest possible proportion of our population.”⁶⁹ Inspired by LeConte's geology textbook to continue his education at the University of California, Ritter took a teaching position in Fresno, California, to raise money to enroll in the university in 1886. He patched together prerequisites through courses at Cooper Medical College, where he met his future wife, Mary Bennett, a doctor, in 1886. In her autobiography, *More Than Gold In California*, published in 1933, Mary Bennett Ritter noted the unusual status of her husband, who

worked as a tutor to pay for his education and was nearly a decade older than most of his undergraduate classmates.⁷⁰

Ritter quickly bonded with his chosen mentor, Joseph LeConte, who was receptive to his interests in educational reform and the social role of science. In Ritter's recollection, LeConte was passionate about the notion that academic life should have a purpose beyond the walls of the university—even if these purposes were far from innocent, considering LeConte's proclivities for eugenicist thinking and racial hierarchies. Years later, Ritter pointed to his mentor's role in encouraging his impulse to look beyond the academy to the social and civic contexts of his work. As Ritter explained to a University of California alumni banquet in 1913:

my vocational interest, biological science, must get for me much of its significance from what lies beyond biology, technically understood. The most enduring memories I have of my first great teacher in biology, Dr. Joe, come from the occasional hours I used to spend alone with him in his little study in South Hall, talking on all sorts of subjects.⁷¹

Indeed, Ritter repeatedly cited LeConte's role in validating and encouraging his burgeoning interest in popular science. As Ritter recalled in a letter to LeConte's widow in 1901, he relished “the occasional hour, or two hours, that I used to spend with him alone in his room in South Hall discussing topics of science, or education, or philosophy.”⁷²

Such conversations found their way into Ritter's coursework at Berkeley, as reflected in undergraduate essays on education that Ritter preserved in his personal papers for decades, even after he was an established professor. In one of these essays written in 1888, Ritter argued against scholars in the liberal arts who were suspicious of “crassly” instrumental approaches to education. He instead made the case that educators should enlarge their view of the word “practical” to include the liberal arts. As he put it:

The commercial world has gained so exclusive possession of this term . . . that the attempt to extend its significance seems almost to be an invasion of rights. But since we are to consider how knowledge is related to life . . . ‘practical’ is the word preeminently fit to be used, for the way of acting, of practicing, is our only means of knowing life.”⁷³

Over the next decade, one of the ways in which Ritter put this idea into practice was through discussion clubs. He saw discussion clubs as opportunities for bridging intellectual divisions and involving community members in the activities of the university, and indeed wrote to William James about his growing sense that he was “a Pragmatist unadulterated” due to his focus on the public role of ideas.⁷⁴ Ritter’s papers suggest that he joined several clubs during the 1890s, including the Evolution Club, the California Academy of Sciences (of which he served as president), and the Philosophical Union, where James came to speak in 1898.⁷⁵ James’s notion that the worth of philosophical concepts had more to do with their success in the world than epistemological reasoning had a major influence in Ritter’s understanding of the civic role of science, from his biological interest in holistic “worlds” to his notion of “philosophical biology” as the study of the practice and history of science.⁷⁶

Ritter was attracted to discussion clubs partly because they offered conversations and friendships across different fields of study. That Ritter greatly valued such opportunities can be seen in his letters urging friends outside the field of biology to attend his presentations. In one letter to the philosopher George Howison, Ritter apologized for the obscurity of a recent lecture he had given to the Berkeley Club and asked Howison to nevertheless attend an upcoming meeting of the Cosmos Club, where he planned to read an entirely new version of the paper that would clarify the main points of his argument. Although he warned that, despite the revisions, the paper was “going to be long, somewhat technical, and therefore tiresome,” he assured him that it would be an improvement over his Berkeley Club effort. “Unless I am insane,” Ritter

wrote, “other really working minds occupied in other domains of thought are bound to be deeply interested in what we biologists are up to. But outsiders will be able to find out only by enduring considerable discussion of tiresome details. So I have ventured to specially ask you to hear this paper Monday evening.”⁷⁷ Elsewhere as well, Ritter repeatedly cast about for effective ways of explaining his work in biology to non-specialists, at one point developing a series of summer courses at Berkeley that he called “Biology for Humanists.” Tellingly, he believed these courses would be “better and more useful” than his usual teaching in biology.⁷⁸

Ritter’s participation in clubs was not limited to academic matters, but included political advocacy and spiritual fellowship as well. One unpublished manuscript, which he called, “A Twenty-Minute Profession of Religion by an Evolutional Naturalist,” included a note at top: “Read to a small club of Scientists formed for the purpose of discussing anything and everything except science.”⁷⁹ Another article in the *San Francisco Call* in 1904 describes the role of Ritter and Keeler in together establishing the Berkeley Audubon Society for the purpose of abolishing birds on hats in the city of Berkeley. According to the *Call*, Ritter gave a presentation to the inaugural meeting outlining literature procured from the American Ornithological Union on “the economic value of birds, the evils wrought by hunters and the incentive bird-killers receive from women who wear bird plumage in their hats.”⁸⁰ Ritter’s political activities consumed much of his time and attention at every step of his career, even when seemingly focused on research. From the Ornithological Union to the Science Service, Ritter embraced and advanced a variation of pragmatism that was less philosophical than political. Never forgetting his own struggles to obtain an education, Ritter believed that scholarship carried out in a social and political vacuum was fundamentally irresponsible.⁸¹

After completing his studies at the University of California in 1889, Ritter won a scholarship from the San Francisco Harvard Club to pursue graduate work at Harvard University.⁸² While in Cambridge, according to letters to his uncle, Ritter was “occupied entirely with biological studies—comparative anatomy and histology and embryology.”⁸³ During this time, Ritter spent a summer working for Agassiz’s biological field station in Newport, Rhode Island—an experience that, over the next two decades, inspired him to develop a parallel marine biological research station for the University of California in La Jolla, California. As for the social life of Newport, Ritter had little appetite for the town’s community of millionaires. Reflecting on his own background growing up and teaching in rural Wisconsin, Ritter explained to his uncle that hobnobbing in Newport with the “Vanderbilts etc” made him uncomfortable and was far less appealing than “the social atmosphere of, say, a Wisconsin lumbering camp or a California mining town.”⁸⁴

What did resonate with Ritter, both in Newport and Cambridge, was the importance of actually visiting a place in order to understand it—a theme that recurred in later writings criticizing the study of specimens in laboratories far removed from the places in which they were gathered. In this respect, Ritter was particularly taken by an obscure historical text that seemed unusually attuned to the possibility of an educated experience of place, Samuel Adams Drake’s *Historic Fields and Mansions of Middlesex* (1873).⁸⁵ Ritter devoted large portions of two letters to his uncle extolling the book and urging him to read it in preparation for a visit to Cambridge. He felt strongly enough about the book to contact book stores and the publisher in search of a copy to lend his uncle, asking him to read it “in connection with visits to the places.” He added: “I have an old Wisconsin friend here, a historian, who knows all about these things, and we will take him with us to tell us what we do not already know, and we will see all the places in the

vicinity.”⁸⁶ This understanding of the historian as tour guide and historical expertise as field work dovetailed with Ritter’s own emerging identity as a biologist interested in museums and field work.

After completing his graduate studies, Ritter returned to Berkeley to accept a teaching position in the Department of Zoology and complete his dissertation, which addressed the “retrograde eyes” of the Blind Goby fish of San Diego Bay.⁸⁷ Soon after returning in 1891, he married Mary Bennett Ritter, who described their sailing trip to Point Lomo to collect specimens “a week from the day we were married.”⁸⁸ For the next several years, as William began his teaching appointment, Mary focused on building her medical practice and joining the leadership of several social welfare groups, including the State Federation of Women’s Clubs, through which she undertook an investigation of a sex trafficking ring in San Francisco.⁸⁹ During this time, Ritter began to complain about the burdensome expectations of professionalism, explaining that “this pressure is more than usually severe on one like myself” owing to his “keen interest in a variety of side matters” such as political activism, discussion clubs, popular science, and religion.⁹⁰ Soon, therefore, Ritter began seeking ways to integrate his eclectic interests into his teaching, partly by developing science courses for non-specialists. In a 1901 letter to Benjamin Ide Wheeler, President of the University of California, Ritter requested funding “to inaugurate next year the long cherished plan of laboratory and museum demonstrations to accompany my elementary lectures to literary students.”⁹¹ On some level, Ritter’s efforts reflected a suspicion of modern public education, which revealed its industrial character by abandoning adults as soon as it had filtered out the next managerial and professional class from the masses. As Ritter put it:

The educational systems and machinery of the country have furnished almost endless means for the instruction of boys and girls in the elements of science. The instruction having gone this far is dropped almost absolutely, there being no effort on the part of scientific men themselves to instruct grown-ups.⁹²

Ritter's stance on adult education reflected his own experience of being inspired to return to college and pursue a career in science after reading *Popular Science Monthly* as a young teacher in Wisconsin. At the same time, however, he remained firmly committed to biological research. Unlike LeConte, who criticized disciplinary specialization out of nostalgia for antebellum natural history, Ritter strongly embraced it as a critical aspect of the modern intellectual landscape. As he explained in a letter, "It is no longer possible, as formerly, for the physician, or the clergyman, or the business man to take up scientific investigation as a recreation, as a side issue, and become a leader in it."⁹³ In this respect Ritter approached the academy's changing "geographies of knowledge" much like William James, who, as Francesca Bordogna notes, did not oppose the formation of disciplines but rather worked to cultivate conversation among the disciplines and with popular audiences.⁹⁴

Organicism, Eugenics, and the La Jolla Research Station

Ritter's commitment to both "pure research" and popular science shaped his work for nearly two decades after joining the Department of Zoology in 1891, in particular his efforts to support the establishment of a museum on campus. His early efforts to curate a small collection of zoological specimens produced little of note during his early years at Berkeley, resulting in meddlesome letters from the Board of Regents inquiring into, for example, the whereabouts of a stuffed cat.⁹⁵ In 1907, a breakthrough came in the form of Annie Montague Alexander's proposal for a Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, which Ritter strongly supported. Although Alexander donated most of the specimens, President Wheeler had doubts about the utility of such a museum to the university's research agenda—particularly the proposed emphasis on displaying specimens in a holistic context. "Is it not true," Wheeler asked Ritter, that the Department of Zoology was "interested chiefly in the microscopical work rather than in the life and habits of the

animal all put together?”⁹⁶ The frustration in Ritter’s response was palpable, given the important role of field work in his own research. “There is no doubt in my mind,” Ritter responded, “that biology everywhere has ridden the minutiae hobby-horse too hard: has expected more from the microscope invaluable as the instrument is, than it is likely to yield. We must attend more to ‘the life and habits of the animal all put together’ as you say.”⁹⁷ Although plans for the museum were ultimately approved, Alexander was concerned that it did not truly have the support of the administration. As with Ritter’s goals for the La Jolla station, Alexander’s chief object was “to build up a research center for vertebrate zoology on the West Coast.”⁹⁸ She suspected, however, that Wheeler did not take its potential value seriously, and that it would remain ancillary to the University’s degree granting programs.

Ritter would have fared little better with the research station in La Jolla were it not for the sponsorship of siblings Ellen Browning Scripps and Edward W. Scripps, who put the project on a solid financial footing after several years of relying on meager university appropriations. After unsuccessfully soliciting funding from railroad baron Edward H. Harriman (who sponsored the 1899 expedition to Alaska that included Ritter, Keeler, and Muir) and the Carnegie Institution, Ritter turned to potential local sponsors, including the Scripps siblings and other residents of San Diego and La Jolla.⁹⁹ Whereas the university contributed a total of \$10,000 in the early years of the station, primarily to support publications, Ellen and Edward vastly increased the station’s budget through cash and other donations totaling \$82,000 through 1911, with an additional quarter million dollars from Ellen Browning Scripps’s estate.¹⁰⁰ The idea for the station—which in 1912 was renamed the Scripps Institution for Biological Research of the University of California—grew out of Ritter’s view, outlined in his letter to Wheeler regarding Alexander’s museum proposal, that biology needed to move out of the laboratory and into the field.¹⁰¹

As part of his vision for the station, which focused on research rather than teaching, Ritter saw the La Jolla community as an important constituency, and therefore implemented plans for public lectures, an aquarium, and more.¹⁰² Ritter explained the station's relationship with the public in "The Duties to the Public of Research Institutions in Pure Science," an article in *Popular Science Monthly*:

Elementary instruction was given to young people several summers; an aquarium and museum open to the public free of charge were maintained a number of years; from time to time popular lectures and demonstrations have been given by the investigators connected with the laboratory . . . and in various less obvious ways efforts have been made to be of service outside the realm of exclusive research.¹⁰³

In this respect, the research station was central to Ritter's evolving vision of public engagement. Precisely because of his success in decoupling teaching and research—a step that LeConte had warned would be a "fatal mistake"—Ritter sought alternative pedagogies that would satisfy his philosophical position that the worth of ideas was determined by their practical application to the world.¹⁰⁴ His solution was to envision the research station as an active participant in the surrounding community, with all the duties of citizenship. This framing of the station's mission elicited surprise from Ritter's friend, U.S. Commissioner of Education Elmer E. Brown, who wrote in 1909: "It is immensely interesting to one interested in the whole range of public education, to find that at the very time of your coming out from university instruction into pure research, you are also taking an especial interest in the wider education of the American people."¹⁰⁵ Just as the station's methodological position was that specimens needed to be examined in the contexts in which they were found rather than in distant laboratories, so too did the research station work to integrate itself into the community rather than simply sending back its findings to Berkeley.

In a 1907 address, “A Popular Lecture to Citizens of La Jolla,” Ritter responded to local concerns that the station was enlarging its scope beyond biology to include other realms such as botany and zoology. He did so by questioning the notion that “when creatures have to be examined with the microscope they belong to biology, whereas when they can be seen by and hunted and made pets of by everybody, they belong to zoology.” Using this concept as an entry point into a discussion of the station’s future plans, he assured those in attendance that his capacious view of biology did not mean that the station would grow out of control. Explaining that “science for its own sake” was a concept that deserved “utter repudiation,” he promised that he would work to ensure that the station would remain focused on its surrounding environment and community. Even its research agenda, he promised, would be built in the spirit of “making the most of the materials and conditions that are at hand.”¹⁰⁶ Ritter’s lecture was part of an ongoing practice of the Research Station to share its findings with interested residents of the region. One press release noted that, “in pursuance of its policy of making available to the public the results of its scientific activities,” the Station was announcing a “series of lectures and demonstrations, to be given during the summer of 1916.”¹⁰⁷ Likewise the Station hosted representatives of more than twenty colleges and universities—including institutions in England, Germany, and Russia—for research visits of various durations, and still more visitors as part of what Ritter called the “industry” for savants touring scientific institutions around the world “merely *to see* what is being done.”¹⁰⁸

Despite his success at establishing and funding the La Jolla research station, Ritter began to develop a nagging sense of marginalization. In defending his approach to field work, Ritter noted that “the laboratory method has been a sort of fetish for many years, and has made anything that is not laboratory, taboo.”¹⁰⁹ Although he later gave an address to the California

Academy of Sciences on “‘Back to Nature,’ Scientifically as well as Emotionally: The Case for More Field Work in Biology,” he worried that he was shooting himself in the foot by resisting the trend toward laboratory-based research.¹¹⁰ Ritter’s fervency in this methodological dispute stemmed from his position that the most commonly taught approaches to biology radically circumscribed the universe of available findings. The microscopic method, used to the exclusion of other methods, cut against his commitment to organicism, or the interconnectedness of all phenomena. One of Ritter’s main efforts to articulate this position came in the form of a *Popular Science Monthly* article, “Life from a Biologist’s Standpoint,” which argued:

To understand any organism it must be studied *as a whole* and in all its relations. Taking man as a type, his life must be studied throughout the whole cycle of its existence on earth and in its relations to all other lives and things. Not only must the germ-cells, the chromosomes and all the rest be subjected to investigation as to their forms, vital activities and chemico-physical composition, but the whole gamut of his experiences, physical, intellectual and spiritual, must be likewise searched out, so far as it is possible for human minds to search.¹¹¹

Ritter sent copies of the article to dozens of colleagues around the country, clearly envisioning it as a manifesto of sorts. He explained to one colleague, Vernon Kellogg, that “in this I have tried to summarize the essence of my views.”¹¹² Alice Robertson, a professor at Wellesley College who had herself done research in San Diego, wrote to Ritter praising the article: “The vigor of your blows at all false science gives me a feeling that you have a good appetite, that you sleep well, and are in a good biological condition, hence that your present life agrees with you, and that is good.”¹¹³ Robertson was not alone in believing that the vigor of one’s writing could be representative of physical health. This moment was witnessing the rise of an intelligence testing regime—largely through the work of Lewis Terman at Stanford University—that would put California on the forefront of the forced sterilization movement.

In this context, Ritter's view that biology's reach could legitimately extend to "the whole gamut" of human experience—"physical, intellectual and spiritual"—carried troubling political and social implications. Around the time of his *Popular Science Monthly* article, Ritter wrote several letters with eugenicist underpinnings, and despite his rejection of forced sterilization, he nevertheless had a hand in shaping California's eugenics movement.¹¹⁴ In a 1912 letter to Charles Kofoid, which included the title, "Concerning Eugenics and the Significance of Biology in General for Civilized Nations," Ritter attempted to defend himself against criticism from Kofoid that his thinking was based on eugenics:

Since in your criticism you speak of eugenics and appear to assume that what I am aiming at is really this new humanistic movement in biology, I may take this as a starting point for my discussion. The truth is I have no intention whatever of entering the field of eugenics.¹¹⁵

Once past this caveat, however, the letter went on to mount a defense of hereditarian thinking. According to Alexandra Stern, this was a common thread of California's environmental eugenicists—an understanding of "California's biota and topography through a framework of selective breeding, one in which specific species and organisms were elevated, chosen, and revered over others."¹¹⁶ Stern's examples include the Sempervirens Club and Save-the-Redwoods League, both of which involved Ritter's colleagues and friends.

Despite Ritter's foray into eugenics, he ultimately rejected the movement on grounds that selective breeding was an insidious use of Darwinist principles to elevate parts over the whole. Indeed, he saw this step as the root of the problem of modern militarism, as catastrophically manifested in World War One. In his 1918 collection of lectures, *The Higher Usefulness of Science and Other Essays*, he slammed Social Darwinists of all stripes, arguing that "there can not remain any doubt that the doctrine" of organic evolution, or survival of the fittest, "played a direct and very great part" in the Great War. Tracing his disillusionment with social applications

of natural selection, Ritter made the case for “the unjustifiability of applying it to the progress of civilization in such a manner as many persons, especially the Germans, have tried to apply it.”¹¹⁷ He argued instead that “modern civilization” had made it more urgent than ever that humans learn to recognize “the interdependencies among individuals.”¹¹⁸ In his 1915 book, *War, Science, and Civilization*, Ritter explicitly rejected the premises of eugenics, drawing on findings from the Scripps Institution as evidence of its absurdity. He concluded:

The doctrine that all human progress is accomplished by somebody’s beating somebody else, usually to the death, has had such vogue during the last few decades, particularly in business and politics, that it sometimes seems hopeless to get people to see how far it comes from agreeing with all the relevant facts.¹¹⁹

The response from his eugenicist colleagues to his change of heart was quite severe. Irving Fisher wrote to Ritter that his new stance “has surprised me considerably,” particularly his claim that “the eugenics movement [was] entangling itself in certain ideas of speculative biology which are to your mind basically unsound.” He was particularly taken aback by Ritter’s suggestion that recent events had raised his “skepticism to the point of grave apprehension.”¹²⁰

Indeed, the war gave Ritter a new and deeper urgency about steering biological science in a more socially responsible direction, a project that demanded engagement with other domains of thought. In 1915, Ritter gave a series of lectures for the Summer Session of the University of California, under the aegis of the Berkeley Extension Program. The series, which he called “Science and Civilization,” drew a parallel between his view of environments as organic unities and the study of American culture from many different angles, including religion, philosophy, science, “relation of the sexes,” aesthetics, and politics.¹²¹ The following year, at a forum called the Assembly of Science, Ritter offered a similar course designed to reconcile three ways of understanding the world: sociology, anthropology, and biology.¹²² His rationale was that science should be placed in a continuum with other elements of culture—and understood as a contested

domain with social and political consequences. Along these lines, Ritter called on educators to rethink the concept of specialization to avoid the dangers of pursuing a given vocation in a social and cultural vacuum. “The truer theory of specialization,” Ritter explained, “is to make the one talent strong not only by cultivating it but also by keeping many other talents well alive in order that they may support and contribute to the strength and efficiency of the main talent.”¹²³

During this time, Ritter became convinced that what he called a “commerce-mad” American culture could only be salvaged through educational reform. In one manifesto, he offered a plea to what he called “the soul doctors of the nation, the teachers, the preachers, the artists, the social reformers and the rest” to work together to prevent capitalism and militarism from destroying the country. Commerce, he wrote:

must become a servant, not a king of mankind. It must join hands with, not rule or suppress or deride Art, Education, Religion and the rest. Commerce like all these other interests of men, can reach its highest healthiest development only as a self-acknowledged willing servant of man in the fullness of his nature.¹²⁴

Ritter explained the need to temper commercialism as a struggle over the meaning of progress.

As he explained in an unpublished manuscript, “Biology and Modern Commercialism”:

“Everybody truly modern believes in something which, more or less vaguely, he calls progress.”¹²⁵ Just as he sought to recuperate the word, “practical,” in his college essay three decades earlier, Ritter distinguished “business” from “commercialism,” arguing that the former included many social meanings missing in the latter. By emphasizing “the business of living” as a capacious concept for educational reform, he sought “to rescue so large and good a word from the narrow, sordid state into which it has fallen through the dominant idolatry of our time, properly called *commercialism*.”¹²⁶

Ritter’s approaches to reform along these lines involved conversations across science, religion, and the arts, all of which he hoped would foster a culture and politics of mutuality. As

he explained in a letter to a friend, “my interest in poetry and drama and the other fine arts has been growing rather than declining on the later years with my fuller commitment to a career of scientific research.”¹²⁷ He later added: “The world would be quite as poor had it no art as it would had it no railroads.”¹²⁸ Indeed, Ritter’s theory of organicism was picked up by John Steinbeck as the basis for the “phalanx” theory in his novel, *In Dubious Battle*. According to Warren French, Steinbeck encountered Ritter’s work in lectures at Stanford University. As French explains: “Steinbeck’s attraction to these ideas appears to have been in some measure based on his inability to accept violence as a conscious manifestation of an individual’s behavior. He clung to the theory that the human race is basically educable, and Ritter’s speculations provided him with a means of rationalizing behavior that he could not deal with as another’s deliberate choice.”¹²⁹ Steinbeck’s closest scientific friend was the biologist Edward F. Ricketts of the Hopkins Marine Station, who, in Steinbeck’s recollection, took an “essentially holistic and ecological” approach to biology.¹³⁰ According to Richard Astro, Steinbeck and Ricketts “spent endless hours” discussing Ritter’s work, particularly his notion that “the whole is more than the sum of its parts.”¹³¹

In Ritter’s view, artists and writers were engaged in projects of world-making no less significant than those of capitalists and scientists. In an article for *Popular Science Monthly*, Ritter described what he saw as the several subjectivities involved in modern intellectual culture. These included, among others, the “realist in art,” the “humanitarian religionist,” the “man of the world,” the “outward gentleman who is an inward voluptuary,” the “subjective idealist,” and two varieties of “religious ascetic”—“sour-visaged” and “sweet-voiced.” He then explained: “A fact about these various worlds which comes out in bold relief when we place them alongside one another is the way they contradict, in some instances quite annihilate, one another.”¹³² Far from

validating simple notions of progress, therefore, “general education” initiatives could draw on the seemingly defunct, description-oriented field of natural history (recuperated as a sort of anthropology of the academy) to offer insight of how these “worlds” fit together in an organic whole. “It should create,” Ritter argued, “a great complex of knowledge, the whole logical and rational substance of which should be penetrated through and through by a subdued emotional appreciation of the beauty there is in the great whole.”¹³³

During this period between World War One and the founding of the Science Service, Ritter also began engaging more deeply in religious and ethical questions, moving away from eugenics toward a view—published later in *The Natural History of Our Conduct* and *Charles Darwin and the Golden Rule*—that biology could offer a foundation for mutuality and socialist fellowship.¹³⁴ In a 1916 letter to the pastor Shelton Bissell, Ritter argued that by attributing conflict to nature and charity to the spiritual domain, Protestant theology had created a “system powerless to enforce the Golden Rule where such gigantic interests are at stake as those between modern Labor and Capital, and between modern nations on the commercial arena.”¹³⁵ He proposed, instead, that “brotherhood” needed a firm scientific foundation to have any sway. In a letter the following year to J. Spencer Voorhees, pastor of the Congregational Church in La Jolla, Ritter tried to explain “why I am so good-for-nothing a church member.” His “defection from the church,” he explained, came from a change of heart as to the grounds of human fellowship:

I have become convinced, on scientific as well on emotional grounds, that the real basis for the brotherhood of man is in the very nature of men and nature generally, and is no mystical or supernatural thing at all. And being of this character it is universal for the whole human species and is not a matter of option and election.¹³⁶

Such was the spirit of Ritter’s “open letter” to William Jennings Bryan in 1922, which made the case that religion and evolution were, in fact, compatible, and that the failure to accept science

would lead to endless sectarian fighting.¹³⁷ At the same time, Ritter's attempt to find universal grounds for peace in biology ran into the problem, which he recognized, that science was no more universal than religion, and that its languages were open to appropriation by any number of social, political, and cultural projects. "Indeed," wrote Ritter, "so many and so facile are the notions about science that almost any social or economic or religious or ethical or educational 'movement' is wont to appeal to 'modern science' and to incorporate, somehow or other, the term science in its trade mark."¹³⁸ As James Gilbert has argued in *Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science*, even Bryan styled himself, "on his own terms at least, a scientist," regardless of the fact that his language and references "bore little direct resemblance" to modern theories and methods.¹³⁹ In many respects, the Science Service had its roots in Ritter's growing concern with the ease with which demagogues could appropriate the language of modern science to advance a political agenda.

The Science Service and Its Publics

Over the course of 1919, and for several years thereafter, Ritter puzzled over the problem of what, exactly, constituted the "public" of the Science Service, and why he wanted to reach it. It was not entirely self-evident, for example, who would read the scientific articles distributed to editors through the *Science News Bulletin* and what content would achieve the social goals he envisioned. As Ritter put it: "Surely if one is going into the business of disseminating science in the community generally, it is highly important that he himself at least should be quite sure as to what he would disseminate."¹⁴⁰ Although part of Ritter's rationale for establishing a scientific wire service was to combat quackery, Ritter himself was an accommodationist deeply interested in finding a middle way between biology and liberal Christianity.¹⁴¹ His goal was less to debunk Bryan and other anti-Darwinists than to foster higher quality conversations about science. This

approach differed from other, more confrontational groups such as the Los Angeles Chapter of the Science League of America, although Ritter firmly supported its efforts to teach evolution in public schools.¹⁴² Instead of distancing himself from religious groups, therefore, Ritter collaborated with sympathetic clergy to encourage scientific education for religious groups. For example, Willard Selleck, the minister of All Souls Universalist Church in Riverside, California, wrote to Ritter for help with designing a Sunday evening course in “Popular Science” for church members. Lectures included chemistry, plant biology, zoology, the structure of matter, and anthropology.¹⁴³

Despite Ritter’s commitment to popularization, his disdain of commercialism created conflict with Scripps, Slosson, and other leaders of the Science Service who had no qualms about using a market-driven approach to distribution and popularization. For Slosson and Scripps, the answer to the vexing question of what constituted the public was to build the widest possible tent through accessible prose and arresting broadcasts. They defined accessibility as both a matter of style and placement; the Science Service would produce articles stripped of jargon and placed in newspapers with the widest possible circulation. As Scripps noted in March 1919, in his earliest correspondence on the subject of the Science Service, a core principle of the project would be to seek articles of “such form and of such brevity as will permit them to find a place in and be welcomed by the daily press and the news weeklies of general circulation, as distinguished from special class circulation.”¹⁴⁴ As an institution of adult education, the Science Service was also envisioned as a response to the failings of the prevailing system of science education. According to Slosson, these failings included the impulse—common in high school science textbooks—to present science as “dogmatic fact” and especially to “become as impersonal and abstract as possible.” By contrast, the Science Service would draw attention to the profiles in genius and

areas of contestation that would historicize science as “a human invention growing and changing and turning this way and that by aggressive personalities or the accidents of history.”¹⁴⁵ Not only would this give readers a better sense of the dynamism of scientific research, argued Slosson and Scripps, but it would introduce a human interest element that would appeal to editors trying to sell newspapers.

Several contributors that Ritter had contacted through his letter writing campaign agreed that the Science Service had to position itself as mass entertainment to succeed. For example, William Hornaday—the director of the Bronx Zoo—wrote to Ritter that based on his experience with “the publicity mill,” he was “dead certain that even with the best material you will not be able to command sufficient newspaper and magazine support to make a real impression on the huge and conglomerate mass of the American people.”¹⁴⁶ Slosson likewise wrote that “the public that we are trying to reach in the daily press is in the cultural stage when three-headed calves, Siamese twins and bearded ladies draw the crowds to the side shows while the menagerie tent is soon vacated.” In this context, continued Slosson, what the public wanted was “snippets of sensational science” that would satisfy its “worship of superlatives.”¹⁴⁷ For men like Scripps, Hornaday, and Slosson, the “public” consisted of a massive sea of readers that was ontologically distinct from the guild of professional scientists. By contrast, Ritter’s formative influences—on a farm in Wisconsin and as a non-traditional undergraduate in Berkeley—had a profound effect on his perception of the possibilities of the Science Service and the diversity of its audience. As he explained to a friend, “I was born on a Wisconsin farm and the first twenty years of my life were almost wholly absorbed by actual farm labor, so my familiarity with and interest in agricultural matters were rubbed into my constitution too deep to permit of entire eradication.”¹⁴⁸ Ritter argued that, in addition to seeking entertainment, newspaper readers wanted some practical

angle that would connect the abstractions of modern science to their particular craft, from farming to teaching to industrial labor. In this respect Ritter embraced a therapeutic view of culture that positioned knowledge as a form of self-help.¹⁴⁹

Slosson's view of a big tent public can be seen most clearly, perhaps, in the instructions that he sent to potential Science Service contributors. The instructions urged writers to resist language requiring specific regional, cultural, or educational backgrounds, and instead to imagine an audience consisting of the "man on the street" or the "next-door neighbor." As the guidelines explained, "Cut out all unessential details. Avoid overloading the story with dates, figures, names, places and descriptions of apparatus. . . . Tell the story as you would repeat a bit of interesting gossip to your next-door neighbor."¹⁵⁰ Slosson's instructions bore a striking resemblance to William Strunk, Jr.'s *The Elements of Style*, a composition handbook originally written in 1919—the same year as the founding of the Science Service. Strunk advocated a stripped-down version of Standard English with memorable dictates such as "Omit needless words." Strunk's approach represented changes in American English pedagogy and rhetoric that encouraged what Kenneth Cmiel has called "the plain style"—largely in order to interpellate immigrants as "Americans" while shrouding the way this category was structured by middle-class white normativity. The "plain style" advanced this operation through "the illusion that language can be like glass."¹⁵¹ Thus for journalists and composition instructors alike, the standardization of English promised to cultivate a more homogenous American public. As Marcel LaFollette has described the rationale of the Science Service in her history of its forays into radio and early television: "The working classes, and the waves of immigrants, needed information to equip them for unfolding challenges, for technologies and social change barely visible on the horizon."¹⁵² What is missed by a focus on the Science Service itself is the larger

context of educational debate that produced it, and specifically the role of California as the originating site of both the Science Service and the most robust eugenics movement in the United States in the 1920s.

In this respect, the Science Service as a culture industry tapped into discourses of public health and race that Nayan Shah explicates in relation to San Francisco's Chinatown—a link that helps explain the involvement of eugenicists in the Science Service despite its embrace of the promise of universal adult access to scientific education. As Shah puts it:

The entanglement of race in modern science, governance, and morality reveals a paradox at the core of modernity itself. Modernity, on the one hand, promotes ideas of universality and, on the other hand, obsessively objectifies difference.¹⁵³

Indeed, despite Ritter's disavowal of the eugenics movement and embrace of socialist politics, he saw the effort to "disseminate science" as a hygienic enterprise that would help homogenize the diverse, polyglot publics of early-twentieth-century California and construct an environmental, back-to-nature identity for the region. As he described his plans for a museum in La Jolla in 1920, the same year as the founding of the Science Service, "What I have in mind for the museum in the way of an elementary educational agency would be to devote it expressly to the end of deurbanizing or, more exactly, of ruralizing and agriculturalizing this community."¹⁵⁴

The choice of the word "deurbanizing" was far from innocent, as it implied an effort to prevent La Jolla from becoming a cosmopolitan collection of immigrant communities like San Francisco.

It was this potential direction of Science Service that troubled one of its most highly coveted contributors, Mary Hunter Austin. Despite the hereditarian themes in her work, namely her work on genius, Austin opposed the eugenics movement and urged Ritter to debunk its claims through Science Service materials.¹⁵⁵ For example, in May 1922, Austin wrote to Ritter explaining her disgust with another California writer, Gertrude Atherton, who had been

publishing articles that treated Madison Grant's eugenicist tract, *The Passing of a Great Race*, as "sound science." Because of its "verve and assurance," Atherton's writings on eugenics, continued Austin, had "received more attention than any scientific material yet put forth by Science Service." Austin implored Ritter to seize the opportunity to debunk it and offer "a thoroughly sound and inclusive statement of what we really do know about racial traits in relation to mentality and types of culture."¹⁵⁶ The following month, after hearing about the heated conflict between Ritter and Irving Fisher, a eugenicist, over Ritter's disavowal of the movement, Austin wrote to Ritter, "I was tremendously pleased with your stand on the matter."¹⁵⁷

Austin had first met Ritter years before in Berkeley. He and Slosson considered Austin to be the ideal sort of writer for the Science Service: trained in science, renowned for her literary talents, but lacking a formal academic position. As Austin herself put it in a lecture, "I do not belong to any recognized branch of science. I am, however, a scientist."¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, Ritter had written to Austin to reestablish their acquaintance, which had lapsed for twenty years, and solicit her support: "Presumably you have long ago forgotten me," he wrote, "but I have not forgotten you. You called on me many years ago at the University of California[.]"¹⁵⁹ They set up a meeting in New York for the following month to discuss the Science Service, after which Ritter wrote to Austin to reiterate the value of her potential contributions:

It is largely because I recognize in the type of mind that inclines to art and literature, more capacity for synthetic imagination and thought than usually characterizes minds that go into science, that has led me to the conclusion that the cooperation of persons like yourself will be essential if the deeper meaning of science for human life is ever to be 'put over' for the rank and file.¹⁶⁰

Slosson was equally eager, writing to Ritter: "I am very anxious to make use of Mrs. Austin's literary ability . . . and do not want to dampen her enthusiasm for Science Service."¹⁶¹ Austin,

however, had doubts about the competence of Ritter and Slosson, seeking outright control of the Service's magazine operations as a condition of participating. She confided in a friend that Ritter's idea "that he can 'drum up writers' [suggests that he] knows even less about the requirements of popular magazine writing than Slosson does. And there is not a hint of any realization on his part that writing is a profession, and sometimes an art, demanding the unique concentration of a life time to learn."¹⁶²

Given Austin's stature as a writer and public intellectual, it is no surprise that she was put off by the way Slosson's entreaties positioned her skills as a valuable commodity. As she wrote to the botanist Daniel T. MacDougal, a close friend who was himself heavily involved in the Science Service, about the offer to contribute: "I see no good reason for refusing, but I do not like to be treated like a public utility. I doubt the advisability of scientific men trying to run an essentially literary enterprise by going about extracting items of opinion and information from miscellaneous writers."¹⁶³ Austin wanted editorial control of the Science Service's magazine operations in order to plan longer feature stories instead of the short dispatches released in the weekly wire service. Believing that science as practiced in the United States was too much a pawn of industry, Austin envisioned stories that would play up the social value of science. The practice, she wrote in *The Bookman*, "which goes by the name of scientific research, has presented itself in American life chiefly in the form of mechanical utility" without translating its findings into broad "social utilities."¹⁶⁴ In the same article, which went to press less than three months after her meeting with Ritter, she sharply criticized the Science Service's approach to finding contributors and predicted that it would never achieve its goals without rethinking the relationship of science and the public.

What was needed, in Austin's view, was wholesale educational reform. As she saw it, Slosson's instructions to contributors requiring concise, economic prose was symptomatic of a failure to recognize that "the whole effulgence of native talent is dimmed by the surface application of writing rules." She continued:

If the universities undertake to teach interpretive science writing as a process of acquiring a bag of scientific facts on one hand, and a bag of literary tricks on the other, and mixing them on a typewriter, the case of Mr. Scripps's more intelligent demos is already lost. Literature is produced not by taking pains but by having them.

The goal of scientific journalism should not be to fill the mind of the reader with facts, no matter how carefully reviewed by professional scientists, but rather to "prepare the mind for wonder." This "unlimbering of the scientific attitude," as Austin put it, would require that scientists realize "you cannot make people intelligent merely by the process of firing facts at them, even in the crackling, machine gun form of news." The Science Service, she argued, should not "come offering itself as a redemption from social futility" without understanding the way "ideas, like moisture, seep down along the roots of the speech in which they are delivered." Scientists, in Austin's view, could only influence the "common mind" by seriously engaging with literary modes of knowledge production, not simply reducing writing to yet another technology of mass culture. This required "a new appreciation on the part of our universities, of literature as a way of life" rather than a means to other ends, therapeutic or not.¹⁶⁵

As it turned out, this criticism was at the heart of Ritter's rejection of professionalism near the end of his life, and his embrace of amateurism and the woodpecker as part of a radical new public sphere that included human and animal alike. He wanted, as he put it, "a way to batter down the stone wall that has so long separated the humanist sciences from the natural sciences."¹⁶⁶ During the early years of the Science Service, neither Ritter nor Scripps had seen the reading public as a worthy source of knowledge in its own right, employing instead what one

writer in the *Columbia Journalism Review* has called the “authoritarian credibility model.”¹⁶⁷ As the project was implemented, however, Ritter came to believe that the more important purpose of the project lay in the extent to which it empowered readers to think like scientists and evaluate claims and evidence for themselves. In this respect, Ritter found himself turning back to the sort of popular science courses that he had offered to the general public while at Berkeley. As far back as 1908, Ritter had proposed schemes for “strictly popular courses” on “the animal life of Berkeley and San Francisco Bay” that would be “open to all students and outsiders, requiring no prerequisites and carrying no credit.”¹⁶⁸ The Science Service was ultimately a variation on this idea carried out on a scale Ritter had hardly imagined in 1908. But as the project strived for industrial efficiency and alienated writers like Austin, Ritter found himself turning back to the local, giving public lectures at churches and community centers and finding unexpected new collaborators, both human and avian. In the end, Ritter was not satisfied to count his public in terms of numbers; he preferred to put faces to names and build communities that could gather together in a classroom.

Notes

Portions of this chapter were delivered to the American Studies Association annual meeting on November 21, 2010.

¹ See, for example, William Ritter to Roy Wood Sellars, February 16, 1920, Box 2, William Emerson Ritter Papers, MSS 71/3c, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California (hereafter *Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library*). Ritter's letter to Sellars, a philosophy professor at the University of Michigan, followed the same general formula of his letters to dozens of other scholars during this time soliciting support for the Science Service. Ritter personalized each letter to account for the suggestions that each individual had made during Ritter's tour of the country in 1919 to build support for the project. The collaborative nature of Ritter's campaign was noted by Edwin Slosson, who wrote in 1921 that over the previous two years, Ritter had "personally consulted several hundred scientists and journalists as to the best means of accomplishing the prescribed purpose. He succeeded in enlisting the support of the leading scientific societies of the United States." Edwin Slosson, "The Missing Link Between Science and the Public," 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Record Unit 7091, Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter *Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives*).

² William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, May 13, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

³ A press release announcing the establishment of the Science Service mirrored this list: "The charter of the new organization is a wide one, authorizing Science Service to employ newspapers, periodicals, books, lectures, conferences, motion pictures and any similar educational agencies in the distribution of scientific information." "Science News Agency Founded," Press Release, April 4, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁴ According to Marcel LaFollette, "This notion that Science Service should be self-sustaining initially attracted skepticism from the scientists—probably because they did not perceive news about science as a commodity for which there might be a market." Marcel LaFollette, Science on the Air: Popularizers and Personalities on Radio and Early Television (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 52.

⁵ Slosson noted that he was "more interested in the popularization of science than in anything else in the world" and that he had "given lectures on popular science at the University of Chicago, Chautauqua Institution and Columbia University." Edwin E. Slosson to William Ritter, November 20, 1920, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives. For a sympathetic view of Slosson's background, see "Edwin E. Slosson: Great Popularizer of Science," Science News Letter (October 26, 1929): 251-253. See also David Rhees, A New Voice for Science: Science Service Under Edwin E. Slosson, 1921-29 (M.A. Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1979).

⁶ Such was the position of psychologist Joseph Jastrow of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who argued that "people should understand not only conclusions but the processes of proof upon

which they rest.” Joseph Jastrow to William Ritter, November 19, 1919, Box 12, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷ The book included a paean to the University of California, which, in Slosson’s words, “has escaped from the bonds of the traditional curriculum which some would have imposed upon it and has found outside a larger humanism than they dreamed of. It has become something far different from the congeries of trade schools, which others wanted, and has developed new forms of vocational training.” Edwin E. Slosson, Great American Universities (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 153.

⁸ In this respect, the project was part of what Andrew Jewett has called the “massive effort to mobilize science” in this period “as a resource for strengthening American democratic practices.” Andrew Jewett, Science, Democracy, and the American University: From the Civil War to the Cold War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

⁹ Edwin Slosson, fragment, ca. 1919, Box 1, Folder 2, Record Unit 7091, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁰ As William Ritter put it, “There is much that is curiosity-satisfying, much that is practically useful, much that is dramatic; and were Science Service to ‘play up’ these aspects to the extent that it might it could soon reach a self-supporting basis, and could then go on and largely increase its funds. At least this is the view held by some members, of which I am one, of the organization.” William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, May 13, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives (emphasis added). Likewise Edwin Slosson wrote, “We can get into the papers a certain amount of scientific information by giving it a somewhat sensational form. That is good as far as it goes. I believe in it. If the substance of an article is in the main sound, I would not shrink from the adoption of a frivolous or extravagant form. But we recognize that when we conform to the prevailing sensational demand, we are not getting over the best part of science.” Edwin E. Slosson, “Notes of a Talk to Trustees of Science Service,” June 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives (emphasis added).

¹¹ As Ritter explained Scripps’ philosophy in a 1921 article, “Science for the Millions”: “Serious adult education must be an essential part of real life. It cannot be a charity.” William E. Ritter, “Science for the Millions,” May 1921, Box 4, Folder 17, William Emerson Ritter Papers, MC4, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California. A rough draft of the article included the crossed-out alternative titles, “Science for Everybody” and “Educate Everybody in Science.” William Ritter, miscellaneous notes, 1921, Box 1, Folder 6, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹² Michael Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 128

¹³ Paolo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005 ed.), 73.

¹⁴ William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, ca. 1915, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁵ William Ritter, The California Woodpecker and I: A Study in Comparative Zoology in which are set forth numerous facts and reflections by one of us about both of us (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), xii. For the evolving norms of professionalism in Ritter's time, see Burton Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976). See also Thomas Bender, "The Cultures of Intellectual Life: The City and the Professions," Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3-15, and José Ortega y Gasset, Mission of the University, trans. Howard Lee Nostrand (London: Routledge, 1946). On professional biology in particular, see Lynn Nyhart, Biology Takes Form: Animal Morphology and the German Universities, 1800-1900 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). For the emergence of professional science in California, see Michael Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

¹⁶ Note on creating folder of "Ritterania" is written in top margin of William Ritter, "An Untilled Field for a Revised Kind of Research in Zoology," 1930, Folder 4, Box 107, RU 7091, Science Service Records, SIA. See also William Ritter to Warren Thompson, "Epistle to the Scrippsians," June 3, 1937, Folder 9, Box 189, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁷ William Ritter, The California Woodpecker and I: A Study in Comparative Zoology in which are set forth numerous facts and reflections by one of us about both of us (Berkeley, 1938), 143, 315.

¹⁸ In this respect, Ritter found himself at odds with the dominant trend toward biological atomization, or what Linda Nash has called "modern body," embracing instead ideas in accord with the older "ecological body." As Nash explains, "An emphasis on a singular etiologic agent for each disease gradually replaced the idea that disease marked a disequilibrium between the body and its environment." Linda Nash, Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 11-12 and 83.

¹⁹ William Ritter, "Possible Aims of The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," October 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives. Ritter added that this "ruralizing influence" involved drawing attention to the "limited original supply furnished by our earth of the things indispensable for man's existence" and, in the same vein as Charles Keeler's The Simple Home (1904), encouraging "modes of life whereby the maximum of usefulness, efficiency and self-satisfaction in living can be attained by a minimum of consumption of the physical essentials of life."

²⁰ E.W. Scripps, "The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," March 5, 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

²¹ Edward W. Scripps to William Ritter, November 24, 1921, Box 19, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

²² One irony of Scripps's attack was that Ritter, in fact, had come from a working class background. In a letter to his uncle, Ritter noted that even after becoming a professor, he still felt the lingering effects of his years spent earning money for college. See William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, December 19, 1897, Box 1, Ritter Family Papers.

²³ Edwin Slosson to William Ritter, December 8, 1921, Box 1, Folder 6, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

²⁴ According to Watson Davis, who directed the Science Service from 1933 to 1967, Ritter's efforts "secured the scientific support that made Science Service possible." Watson Davis to Mary Bennett Ritter, November 9, 1940, Box 8, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

²⁵ Ritter's framing of the project was partly inspired by Chester Rowell, an editor of the Fresno Republican and former lecturer in journalism at the University of California, who presented a paper to a local science conference on "The Press as an Intermediary between the Investigator and the Public." William Ritter to Chester Rowell, June 26, 1919, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. The tour is described in Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 339.

²⁶ William Ritter to Adelaide Brown, October 25, 1919, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

²⁷ Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922). See also John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems (New York: Henry Holt, 1927), which was a response to Lippmann's book.

²⁸ Walter Lippmann to William Ritter, November 21, 1919, Box 14, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

²⁹ William Humphreys to William Ritter, January 15, 1920, Box 12, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

³⁰ Herbert Spencer Jennings to William Ritter, November 21, 1919, Box 12, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

³¹ Ellsworth Huntington to William Ritter, November 20, 1919, Box 12, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

³² Christopher Newfield, Ivy and Industry: Business and the American University, 1880-1980 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

³³ Mission statement is from the SSP's website: <<http://www.societyforscience.org/>> (Accessed 2010).

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- ³⁴ William Ritter, "Natural versus Supernatural, or, A Man as a Unified Whole and as Part of Nature as a Unified Whole," Hosmer Chapter of the Laymen's League, First Unitarian Church, Berkeley, 1933, Carton 5, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ³⁵ Franz Boas to William Ritter, July 16, 1940, Box 5, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ³⁶ E.W. Scripps, "The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," March 5, 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ³⁷ William Ritter, "Possible Aims of The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," October 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ³⁸ Discussion of the purpose of the Science Service and selection of Ritter as the project's first chairman are noted in "Minutes of First Meeting of Trustees," May 20, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ³⁹ William Ritter, "Possible Aims of The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," October 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴⁰ Edwin E. Slosson, "Suggested Organization of Central Office of Science News Service," 1920, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴¹ E.W. Scripps, "The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," March 5, 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴² Edwin E. Slosson, "Notes of a Talk to Trustees of Science Service," June 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴³ Beverly L. Clark to Edwin E. Slosson, August 26, 1925, Box 19, Folder 6, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴⁴ Howard Wheeler, "Report of Manager of Science Service," ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴⁵ Edwin E. Slosson to William Ritter, December 6, 1920, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives. See also Edwin E. Slosson, "Suggested Organization of Central Office of Science News Service," 1920, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴⁶ Edwin E. Slosson to D.T. MacDougal, December 21, 1920, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.
- ⁴⁷ William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, May 13, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁴⁸ “Report of Manager of Science Service,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁴⁹ Howard Wheeler, “Report of Manager of Science Service,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵⁰ William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, May 13, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵¹ Wheeler explained that the collaboration would help the Science Service “lay the foundation of a service of our own, going direct to newspapers large and small throughout the country, that will eventually make us independent of these established syndicates.” Howard Wheeler, “Report of Manager of Science Service,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵² “A Summary of the Activities of Science Service In Connection with the Publicity of the Meeting of the National Academy of Sciences,” ca. 1920, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵³ Howard Wheeler, “Report of Manager of Science Service,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵⁴ “The Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science,” Science (July 30, 1920): 114.

⁵⁵ Edwin E. Slosson, “A New Agency for the Popularization of Science,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵⁶ Watson Davis, “Stories to Be Careful Of,” ca. 1927, Box 443, Folder 10, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives. Reprinted in Science News Letter on July 1, 1950, along with note establishing original dating. “Hints for Writing Science,” Box 443, Folder 9, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵⁷ Edwin E. Slosson, “A New Agency for the Popularization of Science,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵⁸ Edwin Slosson, fragment, ca. 1919, Box 1, Folder 2, Record Unit 7091, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁵⁹ Edwin E. Slosson, “The Possibility of Pamphlets,” ca. 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁶⁰ Alexandra Stern, “The Legacy of Genetics in the Era of Human Genomics,” Public Lecture, December 5, 2012, Ann Arbor, Michigan. See also Alexandra Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and

Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 287.

⁶¹ Edwin E. Slosson to Frank J. Ryan, June 21, 1922, Box 19, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁶² Edwin E. Slosson, "Notes of a Talk to Trustees of Science Service," June 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁶³ Edwin Slosson, "The Missing Link Between Science and the Public," 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁶⁴ William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, May 13, 1921, Box 1, Folder 3, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives (emphasis in original).

⁶⁵ The story of Ritter's decision to attend the University of California is recounted in the autobiography of his wife, Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 165, and Helen Raitt and Beatrice Moulton, Scripps Institution of Oceanography: First Fifty Years (La Jolla, 1967), 3.

⁶⁶ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, March 9, 1879, Box 1, Folder 33, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁶⁷ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, May 15, 1880, October 16, 1881, and December 4, 1881, Box 1, Folder 34, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁶⁸ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, October 16, 1881, and December 4, 1881, Folder 34, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁶⁹ William Ritter, Untitled Thesis, Oshkosh Normal School, Wisconsin, 1884, Carton 9, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷⁰ Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 175.

⁷¹ William Ritter, "Biology in the University," Address to University of California alumni banquet, May 14, 1913, Carton 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷² William Ritter to Caroline Nisbet LeConte, July 20, 1901, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷³ William Ritter, "The Advantage of Philosophical Studies," April 23, 1888, Carton 9, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷⁴ William Ritter to William James, March 31, 1908, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷⁵ Ritter's participation in clubs is mentioned in several other collections as well. His role in the Evolution Club, for example, is discussed in Charles Keeler to Louise Bunnell, April 10, 1892, Box 1, Charles Keeler Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

⁷⁶ William Ritter to Joseph Grinnell, August 14, 1907, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. See also William Ritter, "The World Versus Matter," Popular Science Monthly (March 1914): 271-283, and William Ritter, "First Meeting, Zoological Seminar, 1906," Carton 10, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷⁷ William Ritter to George Howison, November 8, 1906, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁷⁸ William Ritter to Edwin Slosson, November 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 6, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁷⁹ William Ritter, "A Twenty-Minute Profession of Religion by an Evolutional Naturalist" (undated manuscript), Carton 6, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁸⁰ "Would Abolish Birds on Hats: Audubon Society is Formed by Berkeley Folk Who Love the Winged Tribe," San Francisco Call, October 17, 1904.

⁸¹ Years later, in a letter to Vernon Kellogg describing the reception of one of his manuscripts, Ritter wrote that John Dewey was "the only person who seems to have really caught on to what I am driving at." William Ritter to Vernon Kellogg, February 2, 1910, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. The previous year, F.J.E. Woodbridge had informed Ritter that John Dewey had praised his work to the Journal of Philosophy editorial staff. See F.J.E. Woodbridge to William Ritter, October 18, 1909, Box 23, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁸² Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 175.

⁸³ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, October 20, 1889, Box 1, Folder 37, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁸⁴ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, July 20, 1890, Box 1, Folder 39, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁸⁵ Samuel Adams Drake, Historic Fields and Mansions of Middlesex (Boston, 1873).

⁸⁶ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, November 24, 1889, and March 16, 1890, Box 1, Folder 38, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁸⁷ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, April 26, 1891, Box 1, Folder 39, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California, and Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 186.

⁸⁸ During this trip, their boat capsized and the newlyweds waded ashore, finding an unexpected specimen—the amphioxus—in the sand along the way. According to Mary Bennett Ritter, this “important find may have helped to decide the location of the Biological Research Station of the University of California.” Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 187.

⁸⁹ Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 192.

⁹⁰ William Ritter to Nelson Ritter, May 5, 1895, Box 1, Folder 43, Ritter Family Papers, MC15, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

⁹¹ William Ritter to Benjamin Ide Wheeler, March 2, 1901, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁹² William Ritter to M.A. Bigelow, November 16, 1909, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁹³ William Ritter to unidentified recipient, February 10, 1893, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁹⁴ As Bordogna puts it: “James did not aim to eliminate the disciplines. Division of labor in the academy as in society was, for him, crucial. He retained the disciplines but wished that practitioners could interact in different ways. In his communities of inquirers people were not at all required to give up their disciplinary identities, although they were required to suspend—if only for a while—those disciplinary habits that would prevent them from engaging novel perspectives, unusual topics, and people who worked in different fields or belonged to different social-cultural environments.” Francesca Bordogna, William James at the Boundaries: Philosophy, Science, and the Geography of Knowledge (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 272.

⁹⁵ Secretary of the Board of Regents to William Ritter, September 5, 1904, Box 29, Folder 33, Records of the Regents of the University of California, CU-1, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

⁹⁶ Benjamin Ide Wheeler to William Ritter, December 20, 1907, Box 22, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁹⁷ William Ritter to Benjamin Ide Wheeler, December 21, 1907, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

⁹⁸ Annie Montague Alexander to William Ritter, March 25, 1909, Box 5, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. See also Barbara Stein, On Her Own Terms: Annie Montague Alexander and the Rise of Science in the American West (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁹⁹ William Ritter to Edward Henry Harriman, February 20, 1901, Box 1, and William Ritter to Carnegie Institution, February 13, 1902, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁰⁰ William Ritter, “The Marine Biological Station of San Diego: Its History, Present Conditions, Achievements, and Aims,” University of California Publications in Zoology, vol. 9, no. 4 (March 9, 1912): 158 and 165, and Benjamin Ide Wheeler to Julius Wangenheim, January 10, 1911, Box 22, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. See also Verne A. Stadtman, The University of California, 1868-1968 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 204-206.

¹⁰¹ In an early statement on station’s mission, written in 1905, Ritter explained that its approach would overcome the fact that “no segment of the phenomena presented by an animal, morphological or physiological, is fully understood until it is regarded in the light of the entire life career of that animal.” William Ritter, “A General Statement of the Ideas and the Present Aims and Status of the Marine Biological Association of San Diego,” University of California Publications in Zoology, vol. 2 (April 5, 1905): xvi. Ritter shared the results of such a study four years later in the same journal: William Ritter, “Halocynthia Johnsoni: A Comprehensive Inquiry as to the Extent of Law and Order that Prevails in a Single Animal Species,” University of California Publications in Zoology, vol. 6 (November 15, 1909): 65-114.

¹⁰² William Ritter, “Concerning the Care and Development of the Several Departments of the Institution,” ca. 1914, Box 3, Folder 21, Ritter-Scripps Papers.

¹⁰³ William Ritter, “The Duties to the Public of Research Institutions in Pure Science,” Popular Science Monthly vol. 80 (January 1912): 51. Ritter later made plans for an on-site natural history museum that—far from operating in the spirit of mutuality—aggressively sought to transform the community: “What I have in mind for the museum in the way of an elementary educational agency would be to devote it expressly to the end of deurbanizing or, more exactly, of ruralizing and agriculturalizing this community.” William Ritter to Edward W. Scripps, April 17, 1920, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁰⁴ University of California Alumni Association, Proceedings at the Banquet Given to Professor Joseph LeConte, September 24, 1892, p. 15, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, Athens.

¹⁰⁵ Elmer E. Brown to William Ritter, November 24, 1909, Box 6, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁰⁶ William Ritter, “A Popular Lecture to Citizens of La Jolla,” July 1907, Box 4, Folder 6, Ritter-Scripps Papers.

¹⁰⁷ “The Scripps Institution for Biological Research of the University of California,” 1915, Box 3, Folder 21, William Ritter Papers, MC4, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

¹⁰⁸ William Ritter, “The Scripps Institution for Biological Research” (Report for the San Diego Union, January 1, 1913), Box 3, Folder 21, William Ritter Papers, MC4, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

¹⁰⁹ William Ritter to Joseph Bird Grinnell, March 7, 1908, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹¹⁰ William Ritter, “‘Back to Nature,’ Scientifically as well as Emotionally: The Case for More Field Work in Biology,” Address to the California Academy of Sciences, March 21, 1917, Carton 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. In arguing this position, Ritter found himself at odds with the dominant trend toward biological atomization, or what Linda Nash has called “modern body,” embracing instead ideas in accord with the older “ecological body.” As Nash explains, “An emphasis on a singular etiologic agent for each disease gradually replaced the idea that disease marked a disequilibrium between the body and its environment.” Linda Nash, Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 11-12 and 83.

¹¹¹ William Ritter, “Life from the Biologist’s Standpoint,” Popular Science Monthly, vol. 75 (August 1909): 190.

¹¹² William Ritter to Vernon Kellogg, April 27, 1908, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹¹³ Alice Robertson to William Ritter, December 1, 1909, Box 18, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹¹⁴ For eugenics in California, see Alexandra Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); and Melissa Jenkins, “‘If Humans Were Bred Like So Many Cattle’: Eugenics, Samuel J. Holmes, and the University of California” (B.A. thesis, University of California, 2005).

¹¹⁵ William Ritter to Charles A. Kofoid, October 12, 1912, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹¹⁶ Alexandra Stern, Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 119. See also Jonathan Spiro, Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2008). Although Ritter rejected eugenics per se, his valorization of rural life and concerns about civic decline echoed its themes, as when he noted that New England, in the process of urbanization, had recruited “foreign industrial laborers of the least desirable sort, for any other purpose than mere machine-like factory operatives.” William Ritter to Edward W. Scripps, April 17, 1920, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹¹⁷ William Ritter, The Higher Usefulness of Science and Other Essays (Boston, 1918), 7-8. The volume consisted mostly of public lectures that Ritter had given in 1915-1918, in settings such as

the San Diego meeting of the Western Society of Naturalists and the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Berkeley.

¹¹⁸ William Ritter, The Higher Usefulness of Science and Other Essays (Boston, 1918), 93.

¹¹⁹ William Ritter, War, Science, and Civilization (Boston, 1915), 73-75.

¹²⁰ Irving Fisher to William Ritter, June 5, 1922, Box 9, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²¹ William Ritter, "Science and Civilization," Outline for Lectures, Summer Session, University of California, 1915, Carton 10, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²² William Ritter to William T. Johnson, May 29, 1916, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. In this letter, Ritter describes the aims of the series to a prospective student and suggests some preliminary reading with which he can prepare.

¹²³ William Ritter to E.F. Bigelow, September 16, 1911, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²⁴ William Ritter to D.P. Barrows, November 8, 1910, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²⁵ William Ritter, "Biology and Modern Commercialism," Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1915, Carton 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²⁶ William Ritter, "Biology and the Business of Living," Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1915, Carton 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²⁷ William Ritter to "Ryder," September 15, 1912, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²⁸ William Ritter to I.S. Taber, May 19, 1917, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹²⁹ Warren French, "Introduction," in John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle (New York: Penguin, 1992), xvi.

¹³⁰ John Steinbeck, "About Ed Ricketts," in John Steinbeck, The Log from the Sea of Cortez (New York: Penguin, 1995), 264.

¹³¹ Richard Astro, "Introduction," in John Steinbeck, The Log from the Sea of Cortez (New York: Penguin, 1995), xii-xiii.

¹³² William Ritter, "The World Versus Matter," Popular Science Monthly (March 1914): 272.

¹³³ William Ritter, "The World Versus Matter," Popular Science Monthly (March 1914): 283. As Ritter later explained, "The natural history method of viewing organic beings is *per se* the comprehensive method, one of its best mottos being, as we have repeatedly seen, 'neglect nothing.'" William Ritter, The Unity of the Organism, or the Organismal Conception of Life

(Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1919), 283. As Mary Bennett Ritter noted of her husband: “His professional title should be the old fashioned ‘Natural Historian.’” Mary Bennett Ritter, More Than Gold in California (Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1933), 238.

¹³⁴ William Ritter, The Natural History of Our Conduct (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), and William Ritter, Charles Darwin and the Golden Rule (Washington: Science Service, 1954). The latter volume was edited by Edna Watson Bailey and published posthumously.

¹³⁵ William Ritter to Shelton Bissell, November 5, 1916, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹³⁶ William Ritter to J. Spencer Voorhees, October 31, 1917, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹³⁷ William Ritter, Open Letter to William Jennings Bryan on Evolution, ca. July 1922, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹³⁸ William Ritter, “The Common Ground of Three Domains of Knowledge Frequently Called the Exact, the Descriptive, and the Humanistic Sciences” (Paper read to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, December 1919), Carton 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹³⁹ James Gilbert, “William Jennings Bryan, Scientist,” Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 27. One of Ritter’s colleagues, Watson Davis, reacted with disbelief at the news that Bryan had joined the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Watson Davis to William Ritter, January 7, 1925, Box 8, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁴⁰ William Ritter, “The Common Ground of Three Domains of Knowledge Frequently Called the Exact, the Descriptive, and the Humanistic Sciences” (Paper read to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, December 1919), Carton 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. In a letter to Warner Fite, a philosophy professor at Princeton University, Ritter explained that he had written this paper for the purpose of getting feedback from the scholarly community about the feasibility of the Science Service. William Ritter to Warner Fite, November 18, 1919, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁴¹ For more on this middle ground, see Peter Bowler, Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons: Evolution and Christianity from Darwin to Intelligent Design (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). Ritter’s sense of being an outlier among his colleagues can be seen in a seminar that he offered for educators on science and religion. One person in attendance asked: “Do you find your scientist friends have church affiliations?” Ritter responded that “many of them do but they are ashamed of them.” See Invitation to Four Lectures to Educators, William Ritter, San Diego, October 12, 1922, Carton 10, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, and “Notes of Discussion Following Dr. Ritter’s First Talk,” October 14, 1922, Carton 10, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁴² The letterhead of the Los Angeles chapter of the Science League listed Ritter’s name as a member of the “honorary advisory board.” For the group’s agenda, see Charles Fletcher Lummis

to Ina Coolbrith, August 18, 1925, Box 2, Ina Coolbrith Additions, MSS 70/117c, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California. See also William Ritter, "The Move to Prevent the Teaching of Evolution in the Public Schools of California," School and Society, v. 20 (December 6, 1924): 729-731.

¹⁴³ Willard C. Selleck to William Ritter, December 4, 1922, Box 19, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁴⁴ E.W. Scripps, "The American Society for the Dissemination of Science," March 5, 1919, Box 1, Folder 1, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Edwin E. Slosson, "Notes of a Talk to Trustees of Science Service," June 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁴⁶ William Hornaday to William Ritter, November 19, 1919, Box 12, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library. Hornaday had gained notoriety for putting Ota Benga, a native of Central Africa, on display in the primate section of the Bronx Zoo (then known as the New York Zoological Society) in 1906. For more on Ota Benga, see Jonathan Spiro, Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2008), 44-49, and Rachel Adams, "Freaks of Culture: Institutions, Publics, and the Subjects of Ethnographic Knowledge," Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 25-59.

¹⁴⁷ Edwin E. Slosson, "Notes of a Talk to Trustees of Science Service," June 17, 1921, Box 1, Folder 2, Science Service Records, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁴⁸ William Ritter to H.V. Andrews, February 13, 1905, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

¹⁴⁹ See T.J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in Richard Wightman Fox and Lears, eds., The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

¹⁵⁰ Edwin Slosson to Mary Austin, n.d., Science Service Circular, AU 4524, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹⁵¹ Kenneth Cmiel, Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: William Morrow, 1990), 260-261. See also William Strunk, Jr., The Elements of Style: The Original Edition (New York: Dover, 2006 ed.).

¹⁵² Marcel LaFollette, Science on the Air: Popularizers and Personalities on Radio and Early Television (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 47.

¹⁵³ Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001), 5.

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- ¹⁵⁴ William Ritter to Edward W. Scripps, April 17, 1920, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁵⁵ Austin's "private reservations" about eugenics are discussed in Penny Richards, "Bad Blood and Lost Borders: Eugenic Ambivalence in Mary Austin's Short Fiction," in Lois Cuddy and Claire Roche, eds., Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complicity (Bucknell University Press, 2003), 148-163.
- ¹⁵⁶ Mary Austin to William Ritter, May 6, 1922, Box 5, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁵⁷ Mary Austin to William Ritter, June 20, 1922, Box 5, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁵⁸ Mary Austin, "Getting Science Into the Thought Stream," ca. February 1923, AU 204, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- ¹⁵⁹ William Ritter to Mary Austin, April 26, 1922, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁶⁰ William Ritter to Mary Austin, May 7, 1922, Box 2, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁶¹ Edwin E. Slosson to William Ritter, May 29, 1922, Box 19, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁶² Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, November 10, 1922, Box 59, AU 1174, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- ¹⁶³ Mary Austin to Daniel MacDougal, April 27, 1922, Box 59, AU 1160, Mary Austin Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- ¹⁶⁴ Mary Austin, "Science for the Unscientific," *The Bookman*, vol. LV, no. 6 (August 1922): 561.
- ¹⁶⁵ All quotations in this paragraph are from Mary Austin, "Science for the Unscientific," The Bookman, vol. LV, no. 6 (August 1922): 563-565.
- ¹⁶⁶ William Ritter to Watson Davis, February 17, 1937, Box 4, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.
- ¹⁶⁷ Justin Peters, "Trust Falls: Lessons from St. Louis on Authority, Credibility, and Online Communications," Columbia Journalism Review (March 4, 2010). <http://www.cjr.org/the_news_frontier/trust_falls.php> (Accessed 2010). Peters adds: "For decades, by deciding what stories were covered and how they were covered, newspapers set the boundaries of acceptable discourse in their communities."
- ¹⁶⁸ William Ritter to Joseph Bird Grinnell, April 3, 1908, Box 1, Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library.

Conclusion

Public Universities in the Age of MOOCs

The careers of Charles Keeler, Mary Austin, and William Ritter exemplified the “outside” voices that drove debates over democratic higher education in the early twentieth century. All three came to California from working class farming families in the Midwest and gained access to considerable cultural power, whether through academic, commercial, or literary networks. For various reasons—from their eclectic intellectual interests to their engagement with popular audiences—none were entirely accepted as insiders within the increasingly rigid professional structure of the modern research university. All nevertheless saw themselves as advocates of public higher education and sought the democratization of knowledge production through the alternative avenues of power that were available to them. From local boosterism to mass culture, these intellectuals embraced a middlebrow educational populism that challenged the supremacy of the modern research university in the production of knowledge. Their work helped generate popular enthusiasm for educational access as a critical element of the future of American democracy, not simply through access to universities, but also through alternative cultural formations, or what I have called people’s classrooms.

These people’s classrooms were a hallmark of educational activism in California. During the 1870s, activists representing the Granger movement and other labor groups nearly succeeded in converting the University of California into a vocational institution focused on, in the words of the Morrill Act, “agriculture and the mechanical arts.” Contested in assembly halls and the local

press, the democratic educational discourse of this period reinforced the stratification of Bay Area public culture along lines of race and gender and shaped the identities and practices of public intellectuals, who embraced community meetings, camping trips, and public lectures. By the twentieth century, the University of California had established itself as a center of original research, and the state's economy was increasingly driven by mass entertainment and industrial agriculture. Accordingly, public intellectuals employed new modes of knowledge production, turning increasingly to mass culture as a vehicle for addressing the practical challenges facing California and serving the intellectual interests of its people.

Much about this story was distinctive to California. For one, California's debates over education were marked by environmental imagery to an unparalleled extent. From Yosemite to Carmel, San Francisco to the San Joaquin Valley, knowledge could not be easily separated from the distinctive places and spaces of its production. It is no coincidence that many of the same figures involved in the struggle over public higher education in California—Joseph LeConte, John Swett, Keeler, and others—were also involved in the founding of the Sierra Club and the rise of the modern environmental movement. Nevertheless, the cultural formations that developed in and around the University of California were part of a larger story. Across the United States, college town activists like Keeler sought to capitalize on the presence of universities to benefit the people and businesses around them. Likewise, Austin's vision of the "university as a center of regional culture" spoke to the growing identification of public universities with particular communities rather than the defense of polite culture. And although few had access to the capital required to build a mass cultural institution from scratch, Ritter's success at building a network of contributors for the Science Service suggests that interest in popularization outpaced its professional acceptability. Indeed, far from representing a minor

footnote to educational history, the Science Service constituted a cooperative gamble by its contributors that mass culture could serve as an efficient and effective mode of communicating scientific findings to the “masses,” thereby bridging the divide between universities and the public sphere.

Despite the popular resonance of their activities, all achieved change in violation of the emerging professional norms of the modern academy. Ritter, Keeler, and Austin managed to successfully shift public discourse at the expense of their individual reputations. By the 1940s, all three had fallen into obscurity. Ritter found himself “losing caste” among biologists for his foray into popular science, particularly as he began to write of the woodpecker as a collaborator.¹ Keeler likewise fell out of favor among both businesses and university authorities in Berkeley, who eschewed the antimodern ethos of the Hillside Club and found himself without access to publishers. At the time of his death in 1937, he left behind several book-length, unpublished manuscripts, including *Bayville Boosters*. Finally, like several other women writers of her generation, Austin’s final years in New Mexico left her closely associated with regionalist literature, her work consigned to obscure corners of college syllabi despite her influential role in modernist literary networks.² In this perspective, the ideal of modern research universities as what John Muir called “patent, high-heated educational furnaces”—or rather, institutions in which regional perspectives and interpretations are burned away and replaced with homogeneous national norms—seemed to have carried the day completely. At the University of California, this industrialization of higher education—begun with the embrace of original research and the division of educational labor among branch campuses—seemed to have reached its apogee with the opening of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in 1952 to support nuclear weapons research during the Cold War.

Yet the Cold War also witnessed powerful affirmations of democratic education. Far from representing a new beginning, the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education built on the state's long-standing accommodation with the demands of democratic activists to make education accessible to a broad cross-section of California's population. Indeed, the state's tripartite system of higher education—with functions divided between the University of California system, California State University system, and a network of junior colleges—had emerged over the twentieth century as an answer to the push for vocational education. In a similar vein, the Master Plan affirmed the state's commitment to free tuition for state residents.³ Far from simply emerging in a vacuum, California's ability to offer a college education to so many of its residents was a product of many decades of activism both inside and outside higher education. Although Keeler, Ritter, and Austin are mostly absent from the historiography of higher education in California, in fact their work helped create a broad consensus that the university belonged to the people.⁴

California's investment in higher education over the first third of the twentieth century was among the most important—and least recognized—achievements of American modernism. As a response to the conditions of modern industrial capitalism, the democratization of public higher education had a profound effect on American social and cultural life, offering the capital necessary for innumerable working-class and middle-class students to access democratic power. Indeed, by the time of the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (better known as the G.I. Bill), California provided a college education to more of its residents than nearly any other state in the country.⁵ The massification of California's experiment obscured an underlying and more labile cultural power, namely the fact that public universities shaped many of their own critics (both Ritter and Keeler, for example, were graduates of University of California) who

challenged the homogenization of knowledge production from the outside and sought alternative schemes of democratic education such as the Science Service.

This tension between individual invisibility and collective significance is in some sense a mirror image of prevailing histories of modernism that emphasize aesthetic responses to the conditions of modernity. By the latter standard, Keeler and Ritter were largely conventional if not reactionary. Keeler, in particular, devoted much of his writing late in life to romanticizing the close-knit social and intellectual world of Berkeley in the 1890s, which he believed to have been destroyed by the modern world. His final manuscript, “Friends Bearing Torches,” was essentially a meditation on this sense of loss, and its central image—a band of friends carrying the torch of idealism into hostile modernity—gestured to a world under siege. Yet far from disappearing, Keeler’s approach to democratic knowledge production, which left its mark in the culture and built environment of Berkeley, found resonance with generations of students. During the 1964-65 Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, student protests against University of California prohibitions on political activity depended heavily on the spectacular occupation of space, most notably the plaza between Sproul Hall and Sather Gate, which also became a locus of protest against the Vietnam War. Other sites of activism included People’s Park (at the intersection of Bowditch and Dwight in Berkeley), a major space of radical student organizing during both the Free Speech Movement and antiwar protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise Ronald Reagan’s election as Governor of California in 1966 followed in the wake of his promise to bring these spaces under state control—specifically to “clean up the mess in Berkeley”—heralding a long period of public disinvestment in higher education. In short, despite the growth of the University of California into a multi-campus network, the struggle over the meaning and

purpose of democratic education continued to unfold in particular places in Berkeley, in a landscape shaped by the activism of Keeler, Ritter, Austin, and their generation.

The Reagan Era and the years that followed witnessed a protracted battle over funding for public education in California, largely waged through a series of anti-tax ballot initiatives. As revenues for higher education declined, the Regents of the University of California approved a series of tuition increases. Although free tuition for state residents had been the bedrock of higher education in California from 1869 through the 1960s, the cost of tuition by 2012-13 had reached \$13,200 at the University of California, pricing out many state residents and sending the average loan burden for graduates soaring.⁶ In this context, several non-traditional educational experiments have again challenged the structures of public higher education. These include projects such as Freedom University in Georgia, a makeshift people's classroom that was formed in response to the decision of the University System of Georgia Board of Regents in 2010 to ban undocumented students from selective state colleges and universities.⁷ Perhaps most notable, however, has been the rise of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. In an echo of William Ritter's Science Service, which sought to make scientific knowledge accessible through the power of mass media, MOOCs depend on a network of professors to film lectures and develop online course modules that can be offered free of charge to tens of thousands of students at once. The pioneers of MOOCs have justified these courses as democratic initiatives that promise to vastly expand access to higher education by overcoming the inefficiencies of brick-and-mortar universities. Building on a long tradition of such offerings—including podcasts, lectures on tape, and the Chautauqua system—MOOCs take advantage of the ineffectiveness of large lecture courses, which have become the dominant mode of content delivery in American universities.⁸ By breaking lectures into short modules and assigning a high volume of short quizzes offering

instant feedback, MOOCs integrate research on learning and teaching that supports the utility of “enhancing the lecture” with active learning.⁹ Despite their utility for content delivery, MOOCs are far less effective for teaching composition, critical thinking, and research skills. Since no individual faculty member can read the work of thousands of students, assessment for writing assignments depends on peer-to-peer exchanges rather than feedback from the instructor.

Nevertheless, the primary appeal of MOOCs is financial, both for students seeking free education and for universities envisioning an influx of revenue if they can find a way to monetize the heavy traffic attracted to their online courses. According to a March 2013 survey of participating faculty by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a combined 86% believed that MOOCs would reduce the cost of obtaining a college degree either marginally or significantly.¹⁰ These courses are hosted by a small number of companies, most notably Coursera and Udacity, that have signed contracts with institutions such as Stanford University, California Institute of Technology, and the University of Wisconsin—nearly all elite institutions with high brand recognition. The University of California, meanwhile, sought to develop its own platform, UC Online, which charged a small fee for courses, but has struggle to attract students due to the popularity of tuition-free offerings on Coursera and Udacity.¹¹ The first wave of MOOCs were heavily slanted toward the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), but increasingly coursework is available in the humanities and social sciences as well. In March 2013, the University of Washington announced its first online-only degree, in Early Childhood and Family Studies, which involves several MOOCs funded through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.¹² From the perspective of administrators, such a degree program promises a dramatic increase in tuition revenue without equivalent increases in faculty and physical capacity.

The broad social ambitions of MOOCs can be seen in the mission statements and press releases of Coursera, Udacity, and their partners. Founded by two Stanford professors, Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng, Coursera promises on its website “to give everyone access to the world-class education that has so far been available only to a select few.” In language strikingly reminiscent of the aspirations of the Science Service, which promised “Science for the Millions,” Coursera’s vision statement adds: “We envision a future where the top universities are educating not only thousands of students, but millions.”¹³ But where some see the democratization of knowledge, others see an attempt by elite universities to corner the market on tuition dollars through cheap, mass-produced education. By seeking to enable “the best professors to teach tens or hundreds of thousands of students,” proponents of MOOCs are devaluing the teaching labor of faculty at regional universities. In this calculation, the loss of mentorship and face-to-face instruction is outweighed by vicarious access to a small number of professors from elite universities, who, in turn, stand to make millions of dollars through bidding wars between platforms. Far from acknowledging this profit motive, however, Coursera continues to cast its courses as “free” despite steps by partner institutions like the University of Washington to utilize its courses for tuition-based online degrees. Instead, the democratic social aspirations of MOOCs are placed front and center.

For example, on April 3, 2013, Coursera began offering a course on Democratic Development by Stanford University professor Larry Diamond. Envisioning an enrollment of thousands of students from around the world, Diamond casts his course as a do-it-yourself nation-building project spreading knowledge about democracy to the Global South. “It is hoped,” states the course description, “that students in developing or prospective democracies will use the theories, ideas, and lessons in the class to help build or improve democracy in their

own countries.”¹⁴ Such claims represent a neoliberal revival of the high modernist ambition to reach what Ritter called “the millions” and change the world through mass adult education. This vision also depends, however, on the anonymity created by the enormous numbers of students enrolled in MOOCs. Stripping away the inefficiencies of face-to-face contact in a classroom allows the students in a course to become highly fungible—any given user account can represent anything or nothing, plucked out of a pool of tens of thousands for special attention based on the location of its IP address, or just as easily ignored.

In this respect, MOOCs bear much more resemblance to the Science Service than the other modes of knowledge production, or people’s classrooms, examined in this dissertation. In the case of the Science Service, the success of the endeavor depended on delivering an appealing and inexpensive product to newspapers. So too for universities today, the allure of MOOCs rests on the potential to increase revenues while reducing costs, although the precise methods of collecting revenues are yet to be determined. At the same time, MOOCs are also a response to widespread public disgust with the prohibitive cost of attending college. After several decades in which the financing of higher education has shifted from taxpayers to individual students, the burden of student loan debt has begun to produce a major structural backlash.¹⁵ From this perspective, the digital environments of MOOCs are serving as “outside” spaces of democratic education, not unlike the people’s classrooms that proliferated during the early years of the University of California.

The ascendance of the Science Service model does not, however, herald the obsolescence of the modern research university. Rather, MOOCs are unveiling a specific weakness in the pedagogical practices of mass public education, namely the reliance of universities on huge lecture courses that lend themselves to mass reproduction in a digital environment. Far from

representing a novel structural change, MOOCs are simply carrying the cost-cutting impulse behind high-enrollment lecture courses to its logical conclusion. The universities best prepared for survival in this environment are those that have developed a curriculum around high-impact practices such as small seminars, experiential learning, capstone courses, and civic engagement initiatives.¹⁶ This situation places renewed significance on figures like Charles Keeler and Mary Austin, who offered ideas for rethinking the university as “a center of regional culture” marked by intensive engagement with the surrounding community. Indeed, far from vanishing, the struggle for democratic education in California continues to challenge all who are interested in building a better future.

Notes

¹ Ritter expressed his fear that he was “losing caste” in William Ritter to E.W. Scripps, ca. 1915, Box 1, Folder: Outgoing Letters 1915-6, William Ritter Papers, Bancroft Library, Berkeley. See also William Ritter, The California Woodpecker and I: A Study in Comparative Zoology in which are set forth numerous facts and reflections by one of us about both of us (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938).

² As June Howard has noted, “most women and nonwhite writers who in 1920 were thought worthy of inclusion in anthologies and course syllabi, had been eliminated from them by 1950.” June Howard, “Sarah Orne Jewett and the Traffic in Words,” in Howard ed., *New Essays on The Country of the Pointed Firs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19.

³ Liaison Committee of the Regents of the University of California and the State Board of Education, A Master Plan for Higher Education in California, 1960-1975 (Sacramento: State Department of Education, 1960).

⁴ For example, Keeler, Austin, Ritter, and LeConte are all absent from Verne Stadtman, The Centennial Record of the University of California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), and John Aubrey Douglass, The California Idea and American Higher Education: 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁵ John Aubrey Douglass, “California Higher Education in Historical and Global Perspective,” California Postsecondary Education Commission, March 21, 2007. <<http://www.cpec.ca.gov/Agendas/Agenda0703/douglass.pdf>> (Accessed March 31, 2013).

⁶ “What does UC cost?” <<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/paying-for-uc/cost/>> (Accessed March 31, 2013).

⁷ Freedom University. <<http://www.freedomuniversitygeorgia.com/>> (Accessed March 31, 2013). I have noted this experiment in an interview: “IA Interviews Alex Olson, PAGE Fellow and Cross Scholar,” Imagining America Blog, January 19, 2012. Interview conducted by Jamie Haft. <<http://imaginingamerica.org/?p=6985>> (Accessed March 31, 2013).

⁸ See, for example, Samuel Freedman, “History Teacher Becomes Podcast Celebrity,” The New York Times, January 31, 2007. Likewise in the 1990s, the Teaching Company dominated the market with a catalog of lectures on tape under the brand name *The Great Courses*. See Linda Mathews, “Adult Education: No Tests and You Can Hit Rewind,” The New York Times, March 31, 1996.

⁹ See, for example, Charles C. Bonwell, “Enhancing the Lecture: Revitalizing a Traditional Format,” New Directions for Teaching and Learning (Fall 1996): 31-44. Other endeavors that integrate such research include the Rosetta Stone language learning system, which builds lessons around constant interactive quizzing.

¹⁰ Steve Kolowich, “The Minds Behind the MOOCs,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 18, 2013. <<http://chronicle.com/article/The-Professors-Behind-the-MOOC/137905>> (Accessed March 31, 2013).

¹¹ Alisha Azevedo, “UC Online Strives to Compete in an Era of Free Courses,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, October 1, 2012.

¹² Molly McElroy, “UW announces new, low-cost online-only degree completion program in early childhood studies,” Press Release, Office of News & Information, March 27, 2013. <<http://www.washington.edu/news/2013/03/27/uw-announces-new-low-cost-online-only-degree-completion-program-in-early-childhood-studies/>> (Accessed March 31, 2013).

¹³ “Our Vision,” Coursera. <<https://www.coursera.org/about>> (Accessed March 31, 2013). See also William E. Ritter, “Science for the Millions,” May 1921, Box 4, Folder 17, William Emerson Ritter Papers, MC4, Scripps Institution of Oceanography Library, La Jolla, California.

¹⁴ Larry Diamond, “Democratic Development,” Coursera Course Description, April-May 2013. <<https://www.coursera.org/course/democraticdev>> (Accessed March 31, 2013). The course recommends two books, including Diamond’s own The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World (New York: Henry Holt, 2008).

¹⁵ Andrew Martin and Andrew Lehren, “A Generation Hobbled by the Soaring Cost of College,” The New York Times, May 12, 2012.

¹⁶ See The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2012); Susan Sturm, et al., Full Participation: Building the Architecture for Diversity and Public Engagement in Higher Education (Syracuse: Imagining America, 2011); David Scobey, “Civic Engagement and the Copernican Moment,” Keynote Address, September 21, 2011, Imagining America National Conference, Minneapolis; and Alexander Olson, et al., “Page Fellows Discuss the ‘Copernican Moment’ in Higher Education and Civic Engagement,” Imagining America Blog, March 27, 2012. <<http://imaginingamerica.org/blog/2012/03/27/page-fellows-discuss-the-copernican-moment/>> (Accessed March 31, 2013).

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