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Shelley Streeby

[T]he dead men, piled in heaps, their broken limbs, and cold faces, distinctly seen by the light of the morning sun, still remained, amid the grass and flowers, silent memorials of yesterday's Harvest of Death.

George Lippard, *Legends of Mexico* (1847)

They are strangely superstitious, these wild men of the prairie, who, with rifle in hand, and the deep starlight of the illimitable heavens above, wander in silence over the trackless yet blooming wilderness. Left to their own thoughts, they seem to see spectral forms, rising from the shadows, and hear voices from the other world, in every unusual sound.

George Lippard, *'Bel of Prairie Eden:
A Romance of Mexico* (1848)

In one of several scenes pictured in the complicated conclusion to *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million* (1853), George Lippard focuses on a band of “emigrants, mechanics, their wives and little ones, who have left the savage civilization of the Atlantic cities, for a free home beyond the Rocky Mountains” (284). As their leader, the socialist mechanic-hero Arthur Dermoyne, gazes on the moving caravan, he sees his followers as “three hundred serfs of the Atlantic cities, rescued from poverty, from wages-slavery, from the war of competition, from the grip of the landlord!” (284). For just a moment, the eastern US class divisions that Lippard foregrounds in his mysteries-of-the-city novels promise to recede as his sensational story moves west-

ward. That is to say, when in 1852 Lippard finally finished the novel that he had begun in 1848, the year that the US-Mexican War officially ended, he tried to resolve the violent, tangled urban gothic plots of *The Empire City, or, New York by Night and Day* (1850) and *New York* by appealing to a utopian vision of a migrant band of white colonists moving across “the boundless horizon and ocean-like expanse of the prairies” toward “a soil which they can call their own” (283–84).¹ But if this vision of a boundless expanse of vacant western land replaces the eastern class inequalities that loom large in *New York*, Lippard’s two gothic US-Mexican War narratives, *Legends of Mexico* (1847) and ‘*Bel of Prairie Eden: A Romance of Mexico*’ (1848), expose the scenes of empire building that supported this nationalist fantasy of white working-class freedom.

Lippard’s two war novels are only part of a huge body of printed texts and visual images that circulated widely during the years of the US-Mexican War. The print revolution of the late 1830s and 1840s, which made it possible to reproduce and distribute newspapers and books at cheaper prices and in larger quantities than ever before, directly preceded the war.² During the war, formulations of a fictive, unifying, Anglo-Saxon American national identity were disseminated in sensational newspapers, songbooks, novelettes, story papers, and other cheap reading material (Johannsen 45–67; Horsman 208–71). Through this popular literature a heterogeneous assortment of people imagined themselves a nation, staging their unity against the imagined disunity of Mexico, which was repeatedly called a “false nation” in the penny press.³ But the existence of such a unified US national identity was anything but self-evident during this period, for the 1840s were also marked by increasing sectionalism, struggles over slavery, the formation of an urban industrial working class, and nativist hatred directed at the new, mostly German and Irish, immigrants whose numbers increased rapidly after 1845. If the war sometimes concealed these divisions by intensifying a rhetoric of national unity, it could also make differences of class, religion, race, and national origin more strikingly apparent. For while sensational war literature such as Lippard’s may promote a unifying nationalism as well as the paradoxical idea of a nonimperial US empire, it also often unleashes uncanny, spectral forms that trouble exceptionalist fantasies of free soil, a vacant western landscape, and a united American people.⁴

During the late 1840s, a remarkable series of stories and novels were quickly produced to capitalize on popular interest in events in Mexico. Because this fiction was produced so quickly and because it is both highly formulaic and highly dependent on

newspaper accounts, it has been largely dismissed by scholars. Even Richard Slotkin, who examined some of this literature in *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (1985), calls it “The Myth That Wasn’t.” According to Slotkin, some “quality in the historical experience itself appears to have doomed to failure the attempts of writers to assimilate the experience to the existing language of literary mythology” (191).⁵ But I want to suggest that it is precisely this “failure” of literary mythology to “assimilate” the historical experience that makes popular sensational war literature especially revealing. In other words, this fiction’s mode of production, which accounts for its relative immediacy, its closeness to the “news” functions of the penny press, and the uneasy fit between literary conventions and historical experience often combine to foreground the gaps, contradictions, and seamy underside of the ideological projects of white settler colonialism and manifest destiny.

These contradictions are especially striking in the work of three popular writers who not only were important figures in the labor cultures of northeastern US cities such as New York and Philadelphia but who also wrote novels about Mexico. More specifically, Lippard, Augustine Joseph Hickey Duganne, and Edward Zane Carroll Judson [a.k.a. Ned Buntline]—writers that Michael Denning includes in a chapter that focuses on this period in *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (1987)—all wrote both the mysteries-of-the-city fiction that he calls “the genre of 1848” and sensational stories set in Mexico (86). Denning suggests that an “emphasis on the early westerns, tales of the frontier and of Indian fighting, as the dominant, most characteristic, and most interesting genre” of nineteenth-century popular literature has made it difficult to comprehend the significance of other genres such as the “mysteries of the city,” which he argues was the “first genre to achieve massive success and to dominate cheap fiction” (86). Many producers of sensational literature worked with both of these genres and drew on a common republican rhetoric to explore the mysteries of the capitalist city and to address issues of US empire building. The sensational literature of 1848 America responds, in other words, to a double vision of northeastern cities divided by battles over class, race, national origin, and religion, on the one hand, and on the other, to scenes of US nation and empire building in Mexico, which were increasingly forgotten or viewed as shameful in the years following the war.⁶

Even during the late 1840s, however, the war was extremely controversial. In New England, the war was especially unpopu-

lar because of pacifist, religious, and republican beliefs/fears that it was fought to extend slavery, that it would increase the power of Southern interests, and that it might mean incorporating large numbers of Catholics and nonwhites into the republic (Fuller 129–30, 162–63; Horsman 175–85; Schroeder 35–39; Stephanson 49–55). Ironically, many Southeasterners, notably John C. Calhoun, also opposed it for a variety of reasons, but especially because they thought that slavery could not thrive in Mexico, where it had been abolished; that it might therefore increase the strength of Northern antislavery forces; and that contact with or incorporation of nonwhites might threaten what Calhoun called the government “of the white race” (Fuller 85–87, 111–14, 130; Horsman 241; Stephanson 48). Support for the war and for expansion was strongest in the West, the mid-Atlantic, and New York City (Fuller; Stephanson 48). In general, many Democrats defended James Polk’s expansionist policies, although there were exceptions, such as Calhoun, and although fears of slavery extension provoked Pennsylvania Democrat David Wilmot’s famously divisive proviso, which stipulated that slavery and other forms of involuntary servitude be outlawed in any territory acquired from Mexico (Fuller 35–36, 53–57, 106–09; Stephanson 48–49). Many Whigs, on the other hand, denounced Polk for invading Mexico and argued for a “No Territory” position, though some supported the acquisition of California and other more sparsely settled portions of northern Mexico, and almost all of them continued to vote to send more supplies and troops to Mexico (Holt 248–58; Horsman 237–40; Schroeder). While most Democrats favored the acquisition of at least some territory, however, many who supported Polk and the war still argued, like the Whigs, against the annexation of densely populated Mexican areas (Horsman 237). The New York–based *Democratic Review*, for instance, where John O’Sullivan famously coined the term *manifest destiny*, defended Polk and welcomed the acquisition of California and New Mexico, but argued in August 1847 that the “annexation of the country to the United States would be a calamity. 5,000,000 ignorant and indolent half-civilized Indians, with 1,500,000 free negroes and mulattoes, the remnants of the British slave trade, would scarcely be a desirable incumbrance, even with the great natural wealth of Mexico” (101; Stephanson 46–47).⁷ The war and national expansion, in other words, brought to the fore contradictions in the concept of manifest destiny and disagreements about its meaning even among those who promoted it, though there were also many who attacked the concept as well as the war, which one historian has compared to the Vietnam

War because of the fierce opposition and dissent that it provoked (Schroeder x–xi).⁸

These debates about the war, expansion, and manifest destiny resound throughout the pages of the war literature produced by sensationalists such as Lippard, Buntline, and Duganne. Despite the substantial differences in their positions on the war and the role of nativism in their class politics, the trajectories of all three suggest that mysteries-of-the-city fiction and Mexican War novels must be read together, for class formation in northeastern cities was inseparable from the US-Mexican War.

Buntline, for instance, produced two Mexican War romances, *The Volunteer, or the Maid of Monterey* (1847) and *Magdalena, the Beautiful Mexican Maid* (1847), before he wrote several mysteries-of-the-city novels and contributed to the creation of the legend of Buffalo Bill. Buntline is probably best known for *Buffalo Bill: The King of Border Men* (1870), which was so wildly popular that it generated over 100 sequels and also inspired the traveling Wild West show that Slotkin has called “the most important commercial vehicle for the fabrication and transmission of the Myth of the Frontier” in the late nineteenth century (*Gunfighter Nation* 87). But another influential narrative about Buntline and popular culture turns eastward, especially to New York City, focusing particularly on Buntline’s participation in the Astor Place theater riot, his role in shaping white working-class culture through various forms of sensational literature such as journalism and the urban melodrama, and his significance in the story of the emerging split between high culture and mass culture.⁹ In 1848, Buntline began to write massive, muckraking mysteries-of-the-city novels such as *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (1848), *The B’hoys of New York* (1850), *Three Years After* (1849), and *The G’hals of New York* (1850). In these novels, he developed the white working-class characters of Mose and Lize, the Bowery B’hoy and G’hal who were also the stars of incredibly popular New York theatrical melodramas written by Benjamin Baker. During this time and intermittently for many years after, Buntline edited his own newspaper, *Ned Buntline’s Own*, for which he claimed 30,000 readers, who were drawn to his sensational stories as well as, presumably, the notices for meetings of nativist organizations such as the Order of United Americans and the Order of United American Mechanics that appeared in its columns. He was also jailed for inciting the Astor Place theater riot, which Lawrence Levine suggests marked the emergence of a split between high and low cultures in the mid-nineteenth century (68–69). If, as Eric Lott argues, the Astor

Place riot indicates a “class-defined, often class-conscious, cultural sphere” (67), then Buntline was an important figure and producer within that sphere.

While both of these accounts—one which focuses on public culture and class formations in northeastern cities, the other on the trans-Mississippi West and the late-nineteenth-century imperial frontier—testify to Buntline’s considerable significance in the production of sensational popular culture, neither traces the connections between city and empire in his work or examines in any detail the imperial adventure fiction that he wrote for publishers of mass-produced story papers and pamphlet novels beginning in 1847. Buntline’s two Mexican War novels, however, anticipate the westerns that he produced late in his career as well as the nativist forms of white working-class protest that he elaborated in his urban reform literature. Both *The Volunteer* and *Magdalena*, like most other Mexican War novels published in the story papers, are international romances. In these novels, relationships between US soldiers and Mexican women are often used to figure possible postwar relationships between nations. But while it might be expected that these novels would celebrate US intervention and promote the annexation of all or part of Mexico, many raise questions about the justice of the war and express various fears about the incorporation of Mexico and Mexicans into the union. Even as Buntline celebrates the US citizen-soldier in *The Volunteer*, for instance, his hero calls the conflict a “war of invasion” (75), and in *Magdalena*, the romance between a US soldier and a Mexican *criolla* ends tragically when the heroine discovers the hero’s corpse on the battlefield at Buena Vista. Indeed, Buntline’s novels echo many of the objections to the war and to annexation that I outlined above. Although he supported US troops and glorified US military leaders, his nativist and white egalitarian beliefs made him wary of unequivocally endorsing a US policy of empire building in Mexico, and these same beliefs would shape the working-class nativism that he later promoted in newspapers, novels, and on the streets of New York City.¹⁰

Nativism and white egalitarianism also shaped poet, novelist, and reformer Duganne’s representations of Mexico and the war. Duganne was born in Boston, and the combination of nativism, antislavery beliefs, and anti-imperialism that characterizes much of his work was not uncommon in New England during this period. In the 1840s, when he lived in Philadelphia, Duganne produced mysteries-of-the-city novels such as *The Knights of the Seal; or, the Mysteries of the Three Cities* (1845) and *The Da-*

guerereotype Miniature; or, Life in the Empire City (1846). He also became involved in George Henry Evans's land reform movement, so much so that historian Jamie Bronstein has called him the poet of National Reform (146). Duganne's poetry, which championed the laborer's right to the soil and included titles like "The Acres and the Hands" (1848) and "The Unsold Lands" (1847), appeared in reform newspapers such as the *Voice of Industry* and Evans's *Young America*. Despite his advocacy of utopian reforms that might enable large numbers of small freeholders to settle in the West, Duganne denounced US imperialism in the long poem "Manifest Destiny" (1855), where he argued against war in general and satirized the rhetoric of manifest destiny in particular. But he also saw the war as an unfair contest between the "Yankee nation" and the "Mexic mongrel" (Duganne 231), and his anti-imperialism derived from nativist beliefs about the importance of keeping foreigners and Catholics out of the republic as well as from radical republican and antislavery convictions. After moving to New York around 1850, he was elected to one term as a representative of the nativist Know-Nothing party in the state assembly, and later served as lieutenant colonel of a company of New York Volunteers during the Civil War (Johnson and Malone 492).

In the early 1860s Duganne also contributed several stories to the first series of Beadle's famous dime novels, including *The Peon Prince; or, the Yankee Knight-Errant: A Tale of Modern Mexico* (1861) and its sequel *Putnam Pomfret's Ward; or A Vermonter's Adventures in Mexico* (1861). These novels, which take place in the mid-1840s, register the contradictions of anti-imperialism, white egalitarianism, and the emerging ideal of free labor during the antebellum period. Duganne's dime novels neither rehearse nor champion US military victories in Mexico; he is much more interested in imagining how a coalition comprised of creoles and Indians might remake Mexico in the image of the US by ending the system of debt peonage and enacting other liberal reforms. But Duganne's representation of Mexico as a space of anarchy, lawlessness, and race mixing; his emphasis on peonage as a system of degradation that destroys republican independence; and his Yankee character's racist invective against "greasers" (21) and "ingens" (22) all suggest some of the limits of his anti-imperialist position. Duganne's stories are but two of the scores of dime novels written about Mexico and the Mexico-US borderlands, and they should remind us that the West in the dime novel western is a hemispheric and global, and not only a national, space.¹¹ Duganne's poetry and fiction as well his

involvement in the cultures of labor and land reform also suggest how intimately questions of land, labor, and nativism in northeastern cities were connected to issues of empire.

This double axis of city and empire is also crucial to an understanding of Lippard's sensational literature and advocacy of poor and working-class people. The work of David Reynolds, Denning, and others has put Lippard back on the literary map as a radical democrat, as one of the most popular writers of his age, and as the author of sensational, quasi-pornographic mysteries-of-the-city literature such as *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall: A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime* (1844), *The Empire City*, *The Killers* (1850), and *New York*.¹² But Lippard's urban novels often open up onto scenes of empire; he wrote two novels about Mexico; and his involvement with the labor and land reform movements also made questions of US empire building both relevant and pressing for him. Like Duganne, Lippard promoted land reform and even founded a secret society to popularize National Reform principles, but whereas Duganne, Evans, and many other land reformers criticized the war, Lippard enthusiastically supported it, despite later misgivings. In a speech before the Industrial Congress in Philadelphia in 1848, Lippard based his urbanoid, utopian hopes for the future on the existence of free land in the West: "I know that the day comes when the interests of the Rich and Poor will be recognized in their true light,—when there shall be left on the surface of this Union no capitalist to grind dollars from the sweat and blood of workers, no Speculator to juggle free land from the grasp of unborn generations. When every man who toils shall dwell on his own ground, and when Factories, Almshouses, Jails, and the pestilential nooks of great cities, shall be displaced by the Homesteads of a Free People" ("Valedictory" 187). While Buntline's and Duganne's nativism made them fearful of adding large numbers of Catholics and "foreigners" to the nation, Lippard often denounced organized nativism, though his work is not devoid of anticlerical sentiments and conspiracy theories; he was therefore less worried about the incorporation of all or part of Catholic Mexico and more supportive of the war and annexation.¹³ Lippard's views were shaped by his German immigrant background and his engagement with the fiercely divided artisan republican labor culture of Philadelphia (Streeby, "Haunted Houses" 450–58). While his version of labor radicalism was a specifically Protestant one, he was less hostile to immigrants and Catholics than Buntline and Duganne were, and for this reason as well as others he was more approving of the project of US

empire building, despite the doubts and fears about imperial expansion that surface in his war novels.

Debates among Lott, Alexander Saxton, David Roediger, Michael Rogin, and others have helped us to understand how working-class men, many of whom were Irish immigrants, constructed white identities by staging blackness. This form of sensational popular culture corresponded to the Democratic coalition that incorporated many European immigrants by promoting a more expansive whiteness defined in opposition to blacks. Although the emphasis on black-white racial divisions is important, however, the present essay focuses on Lippard's war literature to support the argument that the sensational "body genres" of empire were also significant racializing discourses. Despite his scorn for party politics, Lippard, unlike Duganne and Buntline, generally promoted the pro-European immigrant whiteness championed by Democrats. But Lippard's war novels make it clear that imperialism also played an important role in consolidating a whiteness that included Irish and German immigrants but was defined in opposition to Mexicans and Indians as well as blacks. Indeed, because Lippard's work combines a fierce labor radicalism with a commitment, however contradictory, to imperialism, his sensational literature reveals the inextricable relationships between US class and racial formations and empire building in the Americas during the mid-nineteenth century. For if Lippard is, as Denning suggests, "the most overtly political dime novelist of his or subsequent generations" (87), then it is particularly important to address the significance of imperialism in his politics, especially since questions of imperialism have remained largely unasked because Lippard has most often been classified as a writer of urban literature.¹⁴ Another implication of my argument is that the nexus of city and empire is also crucial to an understanding of antebellum popular sensational literature and northeastern labor cultures more generally.

In part 1, "American Sensations," I suggest that in *Legends of Mexico* Lippard makes manifest a racialized definition of the nation-people and labors to justify exceptionalist theories of US empire as uniquely progressive and beneficent. Then, in the second part of this essay, I frame Lippard's war pictures with an account of the woodcuts and lithographs of battle scenes that circulated widely in newspapers and were sold as popular prints by cultural entrepreneurs. The history of class conflict and aggressive empire building that Lippard tries to disavow by projecting it onto Spain and Mexico erupts forcefully in *'Bel of Prairie Eden*, a romance that moves from the colonization of Texas

in the 1830s to the invasion of Vera Cruz during the war and then to postwar Philadelphia, which is the focus of the third section of this essay. Because nineteenth-century US labor historians often separate their accounts of economic and social unrest from the story of US expansionism, the linkages between class and racial formation, empire building, and international conflict have not been thoroughly examined (Bergquist 45–78). Although major studies of nineteenth-century US class formation typically marginalize the US-Mexican War, I argue that the “American 1848” played a crucial role in shaping the histories of class and race in US culture.¹⁵

1. American Sensations

In *Legends of Mexico*, Lippard celebrated the bloody events that “aroused a People into arms” (11), “spoke to the hearts of fifteen millions people” (11), “startled a People into action, and sent the battle-throbs palpitating through fifteen millions hearts” (12). In the first chapter, Lippard envisions the nation-people as a single human body that comes to life when it hears a “Cry, a Groan, a Rumor” “thundering” from the shores of the Rio Grande (11). Lippard makes a sensational appeal to his readers, an appeal that records a visceral, mass response to war to which his *Legends of Mexico* also aims to contribute. He intends to provoke a collective bodily response to the battles being waged over national borders. As Lippard mobilizes sensationalism in the service of US empire, differences of class and status (the “hardy Mechanic” [12], the “working people” [13]) appear only to disappear within the collective body of the “free People of the American Union” (16), which is united precisely in opposition to the mixed-race peoples of Mexico. Here, Lippard’s war sensationalism emphasizes intensely nationalist affects and feelings at the expense of class: he tries to subsume class within race and nation by urging readers to identify with a fictive, white US national body.

The mass response, the “wild excitement” (12) that Lippard both recorded and tried to reproduce was a relatively novel sensation, made possible by changes in print technology, improvements in transportation and distribution networks, and the availability of cheaper kinds of paper during the late 1830s and 1840s. As Robert Johannsen suggests, because of these changes in print culture, the US-Mexican War would be “experienced more intimately, with greater immediacy and closer involvement than any major event in the nation’s history. It was the first American war

to rest on a truly popular base, the first that grasped the interest of the population, and the first people were exposed to on an almost daily basis. The essential link between the war and the people was provided by the nation's press, for it was through the ubiquitous American newspaper that the war achieved its vitality in the popular mind" (16). In other words, the penny press and other forms of popular culture helped to produce feelings of intimacy, immediacy, and involvement in the war as papers reported, for the first time on an almost daily basis, on battles in Mexico and as songs, images, novels, and histories were widely disseminated.

The opening of Lippard's *Legends of Mexico* focuses on this very process whereby news of events in Mexico serves as the catalyst for a sensational, intensely nationalist response to the war. US newspapers speculated about the possibility of war for months after Polk sent an Army of Observation in February 1846 to the Rio Grande, which the US claimed, on specious grounds, as its new southern border when it annexed Texas in 1845 (Robinson 24; Acuña 12; Weber, *Mexican Frontier* 274). Then in May 1846, when Polk declared war, prowar demonstrations were staged in every major US city, including a rally attended by 20,000 people in Philadelphia, Lippard's Quaker City (Johannsen 8). But war supporters waited nervously for nearly two weeks for news about Zachary Taylor's forces. Lippard describes this situation in the beginning of *Legends of Mexico*: "In the spring of 1846, from the distant south, there came echoing in terrible chorus, a Cry, a Groan, a Rumor! That cry, the earnest voice of two thousand men, gathered beneath the Banner of the stars of a far land, encompassed by their foes, with nothing but a bloody vision of Massacre before their eyes" (11). Popular representations of embattled US troops must have incited feelings of fear, anxiety, and identification in many readers. Thus, when news of victories at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma finally reached the US, nationalist celebrations erupted throughout the country. According to Lippard, as "thunder at once, convulses and purifies the air, so that Rumor [of US victories in battle] did its sudden and tempestuous work, in every American heart. At once, from the People of twenty-nine states, quivered the Cry—'To Arms! Ho! for the new crusade!'" (12). As Lippard represents it, war reports convulse and purify American hearts, engendering a unified, univocal, national body.

Benedict Anderson suggests that representations of national simultaneity indicate a radically changed form of consciousness decisively linked to the spread of print capitalism. Newspapers in particular, he argues, encouraged readers to

imagine themselves part of a national community reconstituted by the “extraordinary mass ceremony” of “almost precisely simultaneous consumption” (35). During the 1840s, the invention of the telegraph facilitated even more rapid transmission of news, supporting collective nationalist responses to the war on an unprecedented mass scale. In *Legends of Mexico*, Lippard represents a scene of national fantasy as he imagines the nation-people simultaneously responding, in different places, to news of battles in Mexico:

From the mountain gorges of the north, hardy birds of free-men took their way turning their faces to the south, and shouting—Mexico! In the great cities, immense crowds assembled, listening in stern silence, to the stories of that far-off land, with its luxuriant fruits, its plains of flowers, its magnificent mountains overshadowing calm lakes and golden cities, and then the cry rung from ten thousand throats—Mexico! The farmhouses of the land, thrilled with the word. Yes, the children of Revolutionary veterans, took the rifle of '76 from its resting place, over the hearth, and examined its lock, by the light of the setting sun, and ere another dawn, were on their way to the south, shouting as they extend their hands toward the unseen land—Mexico. (12)

Here, the “word” reaches the “mountain gorges of the north,” the “great cities,” the “farmhouses of the land,” and “the children of Revolutionary veterans” everywhere, linking together these diverse sites on the basis of their common response to the news of war. This vision of bodies in different locations simultaneously turning “south” and shouting “Mexico” seeks to reconcile differences of region and occupation within a larger national unity. Although Anderson understands this process of imagining the nation through the medium of print in relatively abstract terms, Lippard represents the national community as a collective body that convulses, quivers, and thrills to the news of the War with Mexico. That is to say, if for Anderson, the nationalist “meanwhile” produces a sense of “community in anonymity” as it connects different parts of the nation (25, 36), Lippard’s war literature shows how nationalism works by also particularizing and foregrounding bodies rather than simply abstracting from and decorporealizing them. If the “skeleton” of national history must be clothed “with flesh and blood” in order for people to respond to it (26), then nationalism as mediated by print capitalism also depends on thrilling sensations of embodiment.

In the opening chapter of *Legends of Mexico*, these sensa-

If the “skeleton” of national history must be clothed “with flesh and blood” in order for people to respond to it, then nationalism as mediated by print capitalism also depends on thrilling sensations of embodiment.

tions of embodiment are distinctly racialized. Reginald Horsman argues that during the Mexican War “the Americans clearly formulated the idea of themselves as an Anglo-Saxon race” and adds that while many US commentators thought of this “race” as primarily English and distinguished it from an inferior Celtic race, for example, others viewed the “American” as “a unique blend of all that was best in the white European races” (208, 251).¹⁶ In *Legends of Mexico* Lippard rejects the identification of whiteness with Englishness as he defines the American people as fundamentally Northern European: “We are no Anglo-Saxon people. No!” Lippard asserts. “All Europe sent its exiles to our shore. From all the nations of Northern Europe, we were formed. Germany and Sweden and Ireland and Scotland and Wales and England, aye and glorious France, all sent their oppressed to us, and we grew into a new race” (16). By extending the boundaries of this new American race beyond the Anglo-Saxon, Lippard promotes a more inclusive definition of white Americanness that also welcomes, for instance, Irish immigrants, whose numbers were increasing rapidly during the 1840s.¹⁷ But this more expansive definition of white American unity crucially depends on the construction of Mexicans as a “mongrel race, moulded of Indian and Spanish blood,” that is destined to “melt into, and be ruled by, the Iron Race of the North” (15). The incorporation of Mexicans into the US national body clearly involves the reinforcement, rather than the erasure, of racial hierarchies, for Lippard imagines a form of union in which Mexicans continue to be ruled by white Americans. So if the Irish, Germans, and other Europeans Lippard includes in this “new” American race are admitted to the union as equal partners, Mexicans remain subordinated to white America. This vision of a united, more inclusive, white American race defined through a hierarchical relationship to Mexico is entirely consonant with the politics of manifest destiny, as Lippard himself makes clear: “Our lineage is from that God, who bade us go forth, from the old world, and smiled us into an Empire of Men.” He concludes, “Our destiny is to possess this Continent, drive from it all shreds of Monarchy, whether British or Spanish or Portuguese, and on the wrecks of shattered empires, build the Altar, second to the BROTHERHOOD OF MAN” (16).

As this passage suggests, Lippard attempts to identify America with a particular racially defined community in order to justify US empire building. That is to say, in *Legends of Mexico* the body of the nation-people is placed within both a sacred and a European lineage as Lippard appeals to a white democratic utopianism that he opposes to European monarchy. Unlike

Lippard's radical Protestant millennialism sanctions US imperialism as he imagines history culminating in a US empire which he describes elsewhere as a Palestine for redeemed labor. In this utopian fantasy, the contradictions of history, class conflict, and violent conquest are displaced by a vision of the American "race" as a chosen people and the US empire as a sacred community.

other past empires which have been subject to the vicissitudes of history, Lippard contends that the US empire will be unique, a holy, antimonarchical community dedicated to the brotherhood of man. But this conception of America as immanent utopia is fundamentally grounded on racial hierarchies and the dynamics of violent expansion: Lippard's radical Protestant millennialism sanctions US imperialism as he imagines history culminating in a US empire which he describes elsewhere as a Palestine for redeemed labor. In this utopian fantasy, the contradictions of history, class conflict, and violent conquest are displaced by a vision of the American "race" as a chosen people and the US empire as a sacred community.

Such a reading of US empire as uniquely beneficent and egalitarian is foregrounded on the cover of the 1847 T. B. Peterson edition of *Legends of Mexico*, where a citation from Thomas Paine's *The Crisis* (1777) appears: "We fight not to enslave, nor for conquest; But to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in." In 1847, in the middle of the US-Mexican War, this reference to Paine's Revolutionary War writings suggested multiple meanings. First, it set up the US-Mexican War as a repeat performance of the Revolutionary War (recall the "children of Revolutionary veterans" picking up the "rifle of '76" and setting out for Mexico). Although many opponents of the US-Mexican War argued that it invited the extension of slavery and was an unjustified war of invasion (Schroeder; Merk 89–106), this citation implicitly appealed to republican ideals of freedom and independence and explained the conflict with Mexico as another battle against tyranny. Second, use of this quote supported the exceptionalist premise that US empire was fundamentally different from the "shattered" new-world empires of Britain, Spain, and Portugal. More specifically, it implied that the US-Mexican War was a different sort of project than the Spanish conquest of Mexico, which had enthralled US readers for years, most notably in the form of W. H. Prescott's massive and extremely popular *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843). The passage from *The Crisis*, however, is actually misquoted; the original reads: "We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live in" (111).¹⁸ The substitution of the phrase "nor for conquest" for "to set a country free" shows how important it was to US imperialists to establish distinctions between the US-Mexican War and the Spanish conquest of Mexico, even as the parallels between the two remained a source of endless, if uneasy, fascination.

During the 1840s in the US, the Spanish conquest of Mexico was generally interpreted as necessary since it brought Chris-

tianity to the so-called New World. But it was also viewed as ultimately flawed because the Spanish were not Protestants but Catholics; because Spaniards as a people were said to be characterized by superstition, avarice, cruelty, and tyranny; because they were not considered racially pure, but rather were disposed to mix with conquered peoples; and because they were not the chosen people who, according to millennialists, were destined to lead the world to the utopia at the end of history (Slotkin, *Fatal Environment* 175–80). William H. Prescott was himself deeply ambivalent about Spain: he opposed the annexation of Texas and the US-Mexican War and seems to have worried that the US was not exempt from history, that it too might be subject to the instabilities of empire and fall (Franchot 35–82; Levin; McWilliams 158–86; Wertheimer 128–31). Despite the complexities and paradoxes of *The Conquest of Mexico*, however, readers often interpreted it as a sort of guidebook to Mexico for US military forces and as a historical model for the US-Mexican War, with the Spanish conquest prefiguring the victory of the US over Mexico, though the Spanish were widely considered to have been excessively cruel and “motivated by greed and avarice” (Johannsen 180). According to this logic, as the misquotation of Paine’s words suggests, because the US fought “not to enslave, nor for conquest,” it could escape Spain’s fate and usher in utopia.

And yet, this belief in the exceptional status of US empire was by no means untroubled by doubts and contradictions. The ideological legacy of eighteenth-century republicanism, for instance, continued to powerfully shape ideas about empire in the 1840s. According to republican beliefs, the pursuit of empire always threatened a republic with corruption and decline through overextension and by engendering luxury, bringing in foreign populations, and encouraging the establishment of professional armies (Pocock 510). This republican “drama of imperial decline,” as Angela Miller calls it (33), is staged in Thomas Cole’s famous series of paintings entitled *The Course of Empire* (1833–36). Cole depicts what he and many of his contemporaries understood to be the five stages of empire: the savage state, the arca-dian or pastoral state, consummation, destruction, and finally desolation. As one contemporary writer put it, Cole’s paintings represented “the march of empire, or the rise, decadence, and final extinction of a nation, from the first state of savage rudeness through all the stages of civilization to the very summit of human polish and human greatness, to its ultimate downfall” (qtd. in Miller 23). Miller suggests that many of Cole’s contemporaries responded enthusiastically to the paintings even as they struggled to deny the relevance of this narrative for US empire;

they maintained that the “exceptional conditions of its expansion—peaceful, nonaggressive, republican, and blessed with an inexhaustible wilderness—guaranteed that the nation would avoid the fate drawn by Cole” (34). But during the war years, the fiction of peaceful and nonaggressive US expansion became much more difficult to maintain, and the rhetoric of republicanism often contributed to contemporary languages of anti-imperialism.

All of this suggests that assertions of American exceptionalism cannot always be taken at face value, but rather should often be seen as nervous attempts to manage the contradictions of the ideology of US empire building, contradictions which pervade war literature such as Lippard’s. In other words, efforts to forget or redescribe the project of empire building are often attempts to ward off evidence showing that US expansion is not peaceful, nonaggressive, benignly republican, or directed toward an inexhaustible wilderness. This sort of evidence proliferated in war representations, which inevitably revealed that Mexico was not a vacant wilderness, that many different peoples already lived there, and that violence would be required to displace them. This is the problem that the citation from *The Crisis* tries to solve. Moving from the double negation of slavery and conquest to a utopian vision of room on the earth for all, the placement of Paine’s words on the cover of *Legends of Mexico* urges readers to forget about those who were being displaced as well as the bloody scenes of displacement that cleared the earth for “honest men” to live in. If we judge this book by its cover, then, Lippard’s legends suggest a paradox. He wants us to forget, or at least to remember differently, the very scenes that he is committed to picturing in explicit and disturbing detail. How does he hope to convert military conquest into a benign “making room” (111)? That is, how does he try to make the violence of empire building disappear within a vision of white America as utopia?

First, he invokes the Black Legend. This system of beliefs was supported by anti-Catholic sentiments, accounts of the Spanish Inquisition, reports of Spanish atrocities in the New World, and ideas about the horrors of racial mixing. After the Black Legend traveled across the Atlantic with the early colonists, it was reinforced by the anti-Catholic nativism of the 1840s as well as the war with Mexico.¹⁹ Lippard draws on the Black Legend when he identifies tyranny, luxury, and avarice with Spain, introduces rapacious Spanish villains, and contrasts an evil Spanish conquest with a liberating US-American presence in Mexico. In the opening chapter, for instance, Lippard implicitly distinguishes northern European colonists of the Americas from

the Spanish when he insists that northern Europeans crossed the Atlantic “not for the lust of gold or power, but for the sake of a Religion, a Home” (15). By identifying Spanish conquerors with the lust for gold and power that he deplored in both journalism and urban gothic literature, Lippard struggles to distance himself from the very analogy between Spain and the US that his words repeatedly suggest.²⁰ Even though he tries to distinguish the two, however, US empire becomes, as we shall see, an uncanny double of the Spanish empire in this text. For if the US displaces and replaces the remnants of the Spanish empire in Mexico, it also inherits the curses heaped on Spain: as the violence depicted in this novel escalates, it becomes difficult to separate Spanish tyranny from US-American freedom.

Lippard’s second major strategy is to unify the US nation-people by repeatedly sketching pictures of endangered, mutilated, or destroyed US bodies. He often uses bloody, gothic language and imagery to illustrate the horrors of war. Lippard zooms in on gory scenes where a Mexican cannonball is unroofing the skull of a US soldier (55); or where US troops advance through a battlefield strewn with their comrades “in mangled masses” (82); or where a soldier’s lower jaw is torn away “by the blow of a murderous lance” (128). Like other prowar writers, he also represents evil Mexican soldiers mangling and robbing the US dead and wounded as they lie helpless after the fight. By representing Mexicans as a threat to the bodies of the nation-people, Lippard urges readers to unite despite their differences.

In one especially telling instance, he focuses on an Irish immigrant, a common soldier, who came “from the desolated fields of Ireland, across the ocean, then into the army” (55). As he often does in his war fiction, Lippard lingers on the manly body of the soldier, “attired in a blue round jacket, his broad chest, laid open to the light.” As he listens to the words of his commander, his “swarthy face is all attention, his honest brow, covered with sweat, assumes an appearance of thought.” Then suddenly, as one example among many of the “infernal revelry of war,” Lippard depicts a grotesque battle scene where “the soldier is torn in two, by a combination of horrible missiles, which bear his mangled flesh away, whirling a bloody shower through the air. That thing beneath the horse’s feet, with the head bent back, until it touches the heels, that mass of bloody flesh, in which face, feet, and brains, alone are distinguishable, was only a moment past, a living man” (54). The intentness with which Lippard focuses on the mangled body of the Irish soldier suggests a number of possible readings. The sensational excessiveness of this account may appeal, for instance, to a ghoulish voyeurism that

takes pleasure in scenes of bodily destruction. Indeed, the scene might attract a reader who particularly enjoys reading about the destruction of the Irish immigrant body, a liminal figure serving as a scapegoat through which the fantasy of bodily destruction can be more easily staged. But Lippard frames the incident with a sentimental narrative about the soldier's wife, who followed him with baby in arms from Ireland to the battlefield and who holds on to his festering body all night until the army gravediggers bury it. Lurid as even this detail is, the inclusion of it along with the initial description of the soldier suggests that Lippard is also trying to provoke sympathy in his readers by focusing on the bereaved family as well as the destruction of the "good" soldier's body.

Inasmuch as Lippard urges readers to feel for this Irish immigrant soldier, he implicitly responds to nativist prejudices against the Irish. That is, such a representation of the immigrant body could be said to symbolically incorporate marginal whites such as the Irish into the American "race," since Lippard makes the soldier into a martyr for the white nationalist cause. Once again, however, this incorporation of marginal whites takes place at the expense of Mexicans positioned as a threat to the white family and the bodily integrity of the Irish soldier. And if Lippard's representations of bodies endangered or shattered by Mexican forces extend Americanness to the Irish immigrant, they are also meant to unite readers at home. Lippard even pictures for his audience the sensations of nationalist unanimity that he wants them to feel in response to these war scenes: "At this very hour, in the American Union at least one hundred thousand hearts, are palpitating in fearful anxiety for us, afraid that every moment may bring the news of the utter slaughter of Taylor and his men" (77).

But as Lippard seeks to mobilize gothic sensationalism on behalf of US nation and empire building, the goriness of his battle scenes transgresses the very racial and national boundaries that he in other ways tries to establish. As the scene shifts from the first battles of the war at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma to the fighting in the city of Monterrey and then to the war's bloodiest battle, Buena Vista, Lippard represents more and more scenes where Mexican homes are invaded, Mexican families are destroyed, and Mexican bodies are "splintered into fragments" (96) and mowed "into heaps of mangled flesh" (101). Instead of converting conquest into liberation, this focus on Mexican losses registers the spectacular acts of violent displacement that supported the nationalist dream of white freedom.

As Lippard labors to distinguish US empire from Spanish

empire, he often adapts rhetorical strategies from mysteries-of-the-city novels. In novels such as *New York* and *The Quaker City*, Lippard frequently contrasts the high life of the rich and powerful with the lowly life of the poor and oppressed. This strategy is so common in mysteries-of-the-city literature that it is one of its defining features. Mysteries-of-the-city novels also often attack wealthy nonproducers by misrecognizing capitalism as the intrusion of a feudal-aristocratic mode of production into liberal democratic America. Here, however, Lippard uses contrasts and the language of feudalism to cast Mexicans in the role of wealthy oppressor. When he first introduces General Arista before the battle of Palo Alto, for instance, he uses the same kind of language, along with the supplement of a racialist orientalism, that he deploys to characterize evil rich seducers such as Gus Lorimer in *The Quaker City*.²¹ The description of the interior of Arista's tent is the key to his character, as Lippard defines it: "Within the tent, seated on a luxuriously cushioned chair, near a voluptuous bed, glistening with the trappings of oriental taste, you behold a man of warrior presence, his gay uniform thrown open across the breast, while he holds the goblet of iced champagne to his lips" (22). The "gaudy uniforms" of the Mexicans are akin to the expensive, fashionable outfits worn by the East Coast libertines that Lippard lampoons elsewhere (23). By identifying the Mexican general with luxury, voluptuousness, exotic tastes, and excessive pleasures, Lippard aims to arouse the class-based sensations that he stimulates in his urban gothic fiction. In other words, rhetorical strategies used in mysteries-of-the-city novels to explain class relationships are translated into the context of relationships between nations. For if Arista and his men are reconstructed as wealthy oppressors, US officers are cast as lowly but heroic class Others, as Lippard contrasts the sumptuous scenes in the Mexican camp to the US quarters where leaders, sleeping on "rude" camp beds and attired in "plain apparel," rest in preparation for the next day's march (23).

Lippard also maps a language of class onto nation when he moves from descriptions of battle scenes to the legends of "passion, of poetry, of home" (27) that "clothe the skeleton" of history "with flesh and blood" (26). In one of these legends, Lippard tells the story of a beautiful *mestiza* named Inez who has secretly married a US soldier, only to be separated from him by her tyrannical Castilian father. The extravagant luxury of the settings that Inez inhabits suggests parallels between the elite Mexicans and the mansion-dwelling capitalist aristocracy of Lippard's mysteries-of-the-city fiction. Inez's bedroom is paved with mosaic slabs of marble and includes a "fountain, bubbling from a

bath, sunken in the centre of the place, while four slender pillars supported the ceiling” (28). Around her bed are “grouped vases of alabaster, blooming with all manner of rare and delicate plants, from the wild blossoms of the prairie to the gaudy cactus, plucked from the steepes of dizzy cliffs, or gathered from the green spots of desert wastes” (28). The language suggests that the labor of a vast network of minions has been deployed to furnish Inez’s chamber with flowers. And when Inez dreams of her marriage to the US soldier in the Cathedral of Matamoras, we learn that the altar is made of solid silver, with a candelabra of gold above it and a balustrade of precious metals extending on either side. “Count the wealth of a fairy legend; and you have it here, in this solemn cathedral,” Lippard advises us. “And yonder—smiling sadly over all the display of wealth—stands the Golden Image of the Carpenter’s Son of Nazareth, and by his side, beams the silver face of his Divine Mother” (29). Here, Lippard’s Protestant iconoclasm combines with a radical republican fear of luxury to position these Mexican Catholics, with their fashionable churches and excessive displays of wealth, as the counterparts of the “upper ten” that he attacks in his mysteries-of-the-city novels.

Despite the many parallels between the Mexican ruling class and the “upper ten” that Lippard demonizes in his mysteries-of-the-city fiction, his desire to unite the US nation-people along racial lines prevents him from explicitly comparing the privileged classes of Mexico and the US in *Legends of Mexico*. Instead, elite Mexicans almost exclusively take on the role of the evil rich, while even US officers, many of whom are the sons of wealthy and influential men such as Henry Clay, become heroes.²² For the most part, then, Lippard’s critique of US class relations is rerouted as he foregrounds heroic regional, national, and racial types. For instance, the US soldier that Lippard calls the Virginian, who is presented as a point of readerly identification and as the appropriate partner for Inez, is characterized only by his region, his race, and his beguiling masculinity, which is showcased by his attire, “the plain blue undress of an American officer, which revealed every outline of his slight, yet sinewy frame” (31). Class almost disappears as a marker of moral value in Lippard’s descriptions of US characters; introducing it would fragment the very national community he is trying to consolidate. On the other hand, class is mapped onto nation and used to demonize Inez’s father, who plots to wed his *mestiza* daughter, a symbol of the Mexican nation-people, to another Spaniard. By constructing a romance that brings together Inez and the Virginian despite the opposition of her wealthy father, Lippard suggests that the US, rather than Spain, is the appropriate partner for

Mexico and that US empire must and should replace Spanish empire there.

While Lippard avoids making explicit comparisons between wealthy US and Spanish oppressors in *Legends of Mexico*, his animus against the Spanish and his use of the *mestiza* Inez as a symbol of the Mexican nation might suggest parallels between the oppressed Indians, who are victimized by the Spanish dream of gold, and the exploited lower million in the US. That is, even though Lippard struggles to redirect class identifications in *Legends of Mexico*, he evokes a certain amount of sympathy for Mexican Indians by placing them in a position that is symbolically similar to that of aggrieved groups within the US. These kinds of parallels are frequently explored, however tentatively, in the popular literature of the period. In many accounts of the conquest that circulated during these years, Mexican Indians were represented much more sympathetically than the Spanish conquerors, even though many of these representations also included racist allusions to human sacrifice and other exotic rituals. These more sympathetic representations of Mexican Indians often, however, supported hispanophobic responses that justified US intervention in Mexico. In *Legends of Mexico*, for instance, Lippard includes a romanticized representation of an Indian tribe that has fled to the mountains bearing torches lighted at the eternal flame of Montezuma. "When the Hero-Priest Hidalgo,—descended from the Aztec race—raised the standard of revolt, and declared the soil of Anahuac, free from European despotism," Lippard writes, "that torch blazed in the faces of the Spaniards and lit them to their bloody graves" (34). In this passage, Lippard identifies the Mexican War of Independence with Indian struggles against Spanish despotism and thereby seems to endorse Indian resistance, though he quickly moves on and focuses once again on white North Americans as the agents of change in Mexico.

Even though Lippard extends some sympathy to Mexican Indians, he never represents them as equals. Instead, he tends to identify them with the past, so that his largely Prescott-derived pictures of Indian enclaves have a "land-that-time-forgot" feel to them. The Indian tribe that he focuses on in *Legends of Mexico* is completely cut off from modern Mexico, "fenced in from civilization by impenetrable thickets swarming with wild beasts" (34), and he describes them as "one of those remnants of the Aztec people, which have been hidden in the desert, from the eye of the white man, for three hundred years" (35). Even though Lippard is implicitly critical of "civilized" values here, his representation of Indians as relics of the past suggests that they will not play a

significant role in Mexico's future. What is more, with the exception of Inez, Lippard usually represents the racial heterogeneity of Mexico negatively. For example, like most other writers for the penny press, Lippard describes "the Ranchero" as "that combination of the worst vices of civilization and barbarism" (25). Drawing on the dominant strain of the race science of the time, Lippard suggests in this passage that racial mixtures, particularly the mixture of Spanish and Indian blood, result in offspring combining the worst of both races (Horsman 210). Once again, Lippard appeals to racial distinctions to override the parallels between internal hierarchies in the US and Mexico that his words might otherwise suggest.

Despite the fact that Lippard generally condemns racial mixtures and tries to distinguish between the US and Mexico on grounds of racial purity, his fantasy solution to the conflict between the two nations is a marriage between a US soldier and the half-Indian, half-Spanish Inez. This plot device recurs in much of the war literature, although most of the heroines are creoles. International romances between US soldiers and elite Mexican *criollas* were often represented in the popular literature as a benign form of imperial conquest or as an alternative to it: the romance plots of much cheap war fiction were echoed by contemporary calls to conquer Mexico by whitening it through transnational heterosexual unions. In November 1847, a writer for the *Democratic Review* even suggested that a postwar US army of occupation in Mexico could result in the "strong infusion of the American race," which "would impart energy and industry gradually to the indolent Mexicans, and give them such a consistency as a people, as would enable them to hold and occupy their territories in perfect independence. . . . The soldiers succeeding each other for short terms would most of them, as they were discharged, remain in the country, and, gradually infusing vigor into the race, regenerate the whole nation" (388–90). While this writer ostensibly hopes to see an independent Mexico, he reinforces stereotypes of Mexican men as indolent and Mexican women as both sexually available and naturally attracted to US men.²³

As popular writers fantasized about heterosexual union between a feminized Mexico and a masculinized US, they tried to stabilize the volatile and historically contingent categories of gender and sexuality in order to turn force into consent and conquest into international romance.²⁴ In this way, they tried to establish distinctions between a rapacious Spanish conquest and an idealized, peaceful, and nonaggressive US relationship to Mexico. But these romances rarely conceal the coercive power

relations that lie at their heart, and they also raise issues about racial mixture that undermine the precarious distinction between a united white American race and a racially heterogeneous Mexico. For if the mixture of Spanish and Indian blood is said to result in offspring that combine the worst of both races in the case of the demonized *ranchero*, then the marriage between the *mestiza* Inez and the Virginian, for instance, might well threaten to corrupt the fictive purity of white America, despite optimism about the possibility of “improving” the Mexican “race” through pairings between US men and Mexican women. Although Lippard never addresses this inconsistency, these kinds of contradictions plague his efforts to clearly distinguish the US and the Spanish empires and therefore threaten to undermine his exceptionalist vision of “America.”

One of the most complicated convolutions of this distinction-forging logic occurs when Lippard tries to represent the US-Mexican War as a just retribution for the atrocities committed during the Spanish conquest of Mexico. On the eve of the battle of Palo Alto, for example, an old Aztec priest in the remote Indian community lights a torch at the flame of Montezuma and proclaims the doom of the Spaniards. Just as the Spaniards conquered the Aztecs, the priest declares, so will “a new race from the north” defeat the Spaniards in battle: “That Murder done by the Spaniard, returns to him again; and the blood that he once shed, rises from the ground, which will not hide it, and becomes a torrent to overflow his rule, his people, and his altars!” (47). The gothic language of uncanny, bloody revenge heightens as the chant continues: “Montezuma, from the shadows of ages, hear the cry of thy children! Arise! Gaze from the unclosed Halls of Death, upon the Spaniard’s ruin, and tell the ghosts to shout, as he dashes to darkness in a whirlpool of blood: Montezuma, and all ye ghosts, sing your song of gladness now, and let the days of your sorrow be past! Even, above the ocean of blood, which flows from thy mouth, over the land of Anahuac, behold the Dove of Peace, bearing her green leaves and white blossoms to the children of the soil!” (47). In this passage, the ghosts of Indians who died during the Spanish conquest lurk in the shadows of the unclosed Halls of Death, mutely witnessing the preparations for the battle between Mexico and the US. Lippard suggests that the victory of US forces will exorcise these ghosts by bringing about the Spaniard’s ruin. He figures the US as the savior of Montezuma’s children; paradoxically, the ocean of blood that is spilled as the US fights Mexico impels the Dove of Peace to greet the long-oppressed “children of the soil” with green leaves and white blossoms.

But the irony of this passage is that the US must imitate Spanish conquerors in order to replace them and put the ghosts of the earlier conquest to rest. For if US forces dash the Mexicans to darkness in a whirlpool of blood, what ghosts will this second bloody conquest engender? By raising the ghosts of conquests past, Lippard invokes specters that trouble the exceptionalist premise that the US-initiated war was not an act of aggressive expansionism but rather the extension of freedom to oppressed peoples. For even as he tries to represent the US as the redeemer of Mexico, bringing peace to the indigenous “children of the soil,” the paradoxes that he encounters and the bloody battle scenes that directly follow threaten the distinction he is trying to make between the Spanish and US empires: Lippard’s war pictures foreground the instability of empire, the contradictions of history, and the violence of US conquest despite his desire for us to remember things differently.

2. War Pictures

The going forth is beautiful. To see those flags flutter so bravely from the lances, like the foliage of those trees of death, to hear the bugles speak out,—but the morrow? The coming back? Hark! through the darkened air, did you not hear a sound, like the closing of a thousand coffin lids?

George Lippard, *Legends of Mexico* (1847)

Most of *Legends of Mexico* is devoted to the display of sensational pictures of battle scenes—it was even advertised in the pages of the weekly *Quaker City* as “the most graphic and readable book ever written on the war with Mexico” (30 December 1848, 3). The narrative moves from the opening border skirmishes in May 1846 to the first battles at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma and the attack on Monterrey in September 1846 before concluding at Buena Vista on 22 and 23 February 1847. Notably Lippard leaves out other battles fought during this period, battles which were more difficult to glorify, including the “confused and costly” encounters at Contreras and Churubusco and the “ill-advised” battle of Molino del Rey (Johannsen 91). Despite such telling omissions, however, his *Legends of Mexico* reveal much about popular responses to the war as it took place, for Lippard incorporates the language of contemporaneous newspaper accounts and frequently references war pictures that were staged as panoramas in theaters, reprinted as illustrations in papers, and sold on the street as popular prints.

Bill Brown proposes that Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) "registers a shift in the mass mediation of war" (126), reinterprets the Civil War "through the cultural lens of the [camera] lens itself" (127), and thereby illuminates "a history of American seeing" (125). It could be argued that Lippard's war literature also registers such a shift but at an earlier moment, when improvements in communications and print technology made it possible for pictures, news, books, and other printed, war-related material to circulate throughout the nation shortly after the important battles of the Mexican War took place. We can glimpse the effects of these new technologies in Lippard's writing as they structure the framing of the visible in *Legends of Mexico*. He begins his long account of the battle of Palo Alto by painting a panoramic picture that resembles, in its representational strategies, the bird's-eye views of battlefields and military lines that were also on display in popular lithographs and in moving panoramas, a new form of popular theatrical entertainment which featured scenes painted on giant canvases that were unwound on rollers (Johannsen 221). As he leads the gaze of the reader from point to point through interjected instructions—"look yonder," "here you see," "there, you behold"—he describes the battlefield in terms of its vision-accommodating possibilities: "No hillocks to obstruct the view, no ravines for ambushade, no massive trees, to conceal the tube of the deadly rifles . . . it seemed the very place for a battle, the convenient and appropriate theatre for a scene of wholesale murder" (49). And viewed from a distance, before the action has begun, he sees the "imposing array" of the armies as "very beautiful" (50).

This panorama of war clearly depends on a proprietary aesthetic—a vision of the Mexican landscape as open and available to the reader's controlling, colonizing gaze. But *Legends of Mexico* also contains many scenes that focus on Mexican injuries and war losses, and often these passages lead in unexpected directions. For instance, as the Battle of Resaca de la Palma nears its close, Lippard focuses on the road to Fort Brown, "paved with corpses, roaring with thunder, blazing with the lightning of cannon." While earlier he invited the reader to gaze at the "beautiful" array of troops preparing for battle, here he directs us to "[g]aze there, and see the Mexicans go down at every shot, by ranks, by platoons, by columns. It is no battle, but a hunt, a Massacre!" As the US troops set fire to the prairie, the movement of the flames "crushes and hurls and burns the Mexicans toward the center of death, the Rio Grande." And yet, instead of describing this as a glorious sight, the narrator seems to shrink from it: "The heart grows sick of the blood. The chaparral seems a great

heart of carnage, palpitating a death at every throb. Volumes would not tell the horrors of that flight!" (99). And then, when Mexican soldiers try to crowd onto a raft and escape down the river, the boat capsizes, "and where a moment ago was a mass of human faces, lancers' flags and war-horse forms, now is only the boiling river, heaving with the dying and the dead." For days afterward, "those bodies, festering in corruption, floated blackened and hideous, upon the waters of the Rio Grande" (100). At this point, as the battle turns into a massacre, it becomes difficult to distinguish scenes of US empire building from the "blackest" legends of the Spanish conquest.

While Lippard quickly moves to place this battle scene within the context of Zachary Taylor's march to "redeem" the continent, his panoramas of death undermine the already difficult to sustain distinction between an evil Spanish and a benign US conquest, for the carnage suggests parallels between Mexican War battles and infamous episodes of the Spanish Conquest such as the massacre at Cholula, where over 3,000 Indians were slaughtered. This is especially true when battles are fought in densely populated areas such as the city of Monterrey, where almost 10,000 people lived. According to Prescott and other historians, the massacre at Cholula had been particularly horrible—an encounter that "left a dark stain on the memory of the Conquerors" (366)—because it involved noncombatants, townsmen who "made scarcely any resistance" (362) to the Spaniards who sacked and burned the city, leaving corpses "fester in heaps in the streets and great square" (365). During the four-day battle at Monterrey in late September 1846, US soldiers advanced through the city by invading homes of townspeople, knocking down walls between connected dwellings, and then moving on through to the next house. This battle plan inevitably involved noncombatants and caused massive destruction in the area. According to the 15 Mexican writers of the war history translated into English in 1850 as *The Other Side: Or Notes for the History of the War between Mexico and the United States*, after the battle "Monterrey was converted into a vast cemetery. The unburied bodies, the dead and putrid mules, the silence of the streets, all gave a fearful aspect to this city" (Alcaraz et al. 80).

While most of the visual artists chose to ignore this aspect of the battle and to instead focus on remote views of the city or panoramas featuring the area's dramatic landscape, a few did try to picture the devastation that took place. In Napoleon Sarony and Henry Major's lithograph entitled "Third Day of the Siege of Monterey" (1846) and in Nathaniel Currier's "Battle Of Mon-

terey" (1846), US soldiers are depicted fighting in the streets and breaking through stone fortifications, with homes and the cathedral in the background. But in *Legends of Mexico*, US soldiers invade Mexican homes, and as Lippard pictures the fighting there, images of rape, death, and violence directed at noncombatants dominate the narrative. From his perspective, war on the battlefield "where the yell of the dying, rings its defiance to the charging legions, wears on its bloodiest plume, some gleam of chivalry, but War in the Home, scattering its corpses, besides the holiest altars of life, and mingling the household gods, with bleeding hearts and shattered skulls—this, indeed, is a fearful thing" (116).

In the beginning of this chapter, as Lippard describes Monterrey and its environs, he adopts the representational strategies of the popular prints that offered panoramic views of the city's spectacular setting: "They tell me that Monterrey is beautiful; that it lies among the snow-white mountains, whose summits reach the clouds." As he focuses on the lands surrounding the city, he emphasizes images of material abundance—tropical fruit and foliage, the green cornfields, and "the rich garniture of the soil"—that would appeal to prospective US colonists. Lippard imagines the city itself as a woman, an "Amazon Queen," with orange groves which "girdle her dark stone walls, with their white blossoms, and hang their golden fruit above her battlemented roofs." "From this elevated grove, towards the south, around the sleeping city," he writes, "winds the beautiful river of San Juan, now hidden among the pomegranate trees, now sending a silvery branch into the town, again flashing on, besides its castled walls" (107). As he speculates on the difficulties of conquering the city (it seems "impregnable," "No arms can take it; no cannon blast its impenetrable walls" [108]), the gendered rhetoric of war and conquest that he deploys suggests the invasion of the city would be a metaphorical rape of Monterrey, the Amazon Queen. And when he finally zooms in on the besieged city, a bloody vision of war transforms the pastoral landscape into a gothic nightmare: the reader is drawn into a scene that is marked by violent struggle and the suffering of the city's inhabitants. As the orange groves that girdle the city are mowed down, the romantic picture of the city as a virgin Amazon Queen is displaced by images of violation and rape. As the beautiful San Juan becomes a river of blood, the shame registered by its "crimson blush" betrays the violence of US empire building (109). And as a woman in her home is crushed and splintered by weapons of war, Lippard revises popular representations of the battle of Monterrey that cut

the besieged city-dwellers out of the picture. As clouds of battle smoke stretch “like an immense shroud along the western sky” (109), such gothic transformations unsettle exceptionalist formulations of US conquest as uniquely good or benign.

Lippard further emphasizes a gendered reading of conquest by pairing this picture of the transformation of the landscape with a story that takes the reader into a Mexican home where two young women, virgins of course, wait for their father and brother to return from the fighting. Lippard places the reader inside the house with the women, instead of the US soldiers, as the battle intensifies: “And the storm grew nearer their house; it seemed to rage all around them, for those terrible sounds never for one moment ceased, and the red flash poured through the narrow window, in one incessant sheet of battle lightning” (111). Finally, the door to their chamber gives way, “the red battle light rush[es] into the place” (113), and their dying father falls backwards into their home, with blood pouring from a wound in his chest. Once again, Lippard figures the invasion of the homes of Monterrey as a symbolic rape. The American volunteer who “fired for the first time, with the lust of carnage” (113), and who killed the father and receives the latter’s dying curse, is thus figured as invader, rapist, and murderer all at once. For as the soldier “saw the unspeakable agony, written on each face,” he “knew himself, a guilty and blood-stained man” (113).

Although it might be possible for the US reader to distance himself/herself from the scene by realizing that these horrors are happening to Mexicans, the volunteer does not make such a distinction. In fact, he compares this Mexican home to the home he left behind in Pennsylvania: “I have a father, too, away in Pennsylvania, and sisters, too, that resemble these girls” (114). As the Mexican home that he has invaded becomes an uncanny double of his home in Pennsylvania, the entire battle scene takes on a ghastly hue. Unable to bear the horror of the murder scene, “only wishing to turn his eyes away from that sight,” he escapes to the roof and witnesses the end of the battle of Monterrey. But even the panoramic view of the city that meets his gaze provides no real distance from the scene he has left, for, “sick of the battle,” he sees only “one great lake of carnage” as “three days battle rolls by every street and avenue, along these roofs, and through yonder smoking ruin” (114). Everywhere he fixes his eyes, “the dead looked so ghastly up in his face!” (115). The violence extends to noncombatants, too, for the soldier also sees a dead woman, “clotted with blood, while her frozen features, knit so darkly in the brow, and distorted along the lips, told how fierce

the struggle in which she died" (115). And when he returns to the room where he left the sisters and their dying father, it seems "like a death vault." As he feels his way through the pitch-black chamber, his hands touch the cold faces of the dead, which leave his fingers wet with clotted blood. When finally the glare of battle momentarily lights up the room, he sees three corpses instead of one, for a single bullet has pierced the skulls of one sister and the brother who had returned from battle and, with his head close to hers, had tried to console her. This "picture" was only "one of the thousand horrible sights which the light of battle, revealed in the Homes of Monterey" (117).

Lippard ends by trying to give the chapter a redemptive conclusion, one which rings resoundingly hollow after the pages of horror that precede it. First, he pulls back from the battle scene, takes a remote perspective, and pictures the landscape restored and transfigured, the river no longer blushing with blood, the homes of the town framed in gardens of flowers. "Over the Bishop's palace waves the Banner of the Stars," Lippard writes, "symbol of that Democratic truth, which never for a moment ceases to speak, This continent is the Homestead of free and honest men. Kings have no business here. Hasten to possess it, Children of Washington!" (119). Second, he marries the bereaved Mexican woman to the murderer of her father and describes her as both "a true woman" and a trophy of war, a "gift" sent "from Paradise," which the soldier's father and sisters take "to their hearts" (121). In both of these ways, Lippard tries to banish scenes of invasion by promoting a vision of consensual relations between the US and Mexico. In the first instance, he invokes the ideals of democracy to rewrite the story of violent conquest as a narrative about the extension of freedom. In the second, he attempts to turn force into consent and symbolic rape into marriage, making his readers feel at home in Mexico by replacing disturbing images of the invasion of Mexican homes with a romantic wedding picture.

But if Lippard repeatedly tries to turn force into consent, most of *Legends of Mexico* reveals that, as the Mexican writers of *The Other Side* argued, the age of US empire building, which was called "one of light," was, "notwithstanding, the same as the former—one of *force and violence*" (Alcaraz et al. 32). And in Lippard's second novel set in Mexico, *Bel of Prairie Eden*, which was published in 1848, representations of international romance are displaced by dramas of seduction, rape, and revenge as his utopia for redeemed labor becomes a haunted homestead in the Texas borderlands.

3. White Utopia Is a Haunted Homestead

In the first chapter of *'Bel of Prairie Eden*, Lippard initially represents Texas prairies in idealized terms, as a boundless, utopian space where emigrants can escape the past and realize their dreams of freedom by settling on virgin, vacant land. In the opening chapter two brothers, the sons of wealthy Texas colonist Jacob Grywin, gaze at a beautiful view: "the prairie, bathed in the light of the setting sun" (7). By calling their home Prairie Eden and by describing the Texas landscape in literally glowing terms, Lippard echoes the extensive literature written to encourage prospective settlers in Europe and the US to relocate in Texas during the 1830s and 1840s (Sundquist 154–55). During the 1820s Mexico passed colonization laws allowing foreigners to buy land in Texas more cheaply than it could be purchased in the US. For the next two decades, beginning in the Mexican period and continuing after the US annexed Texas in 1845, emigrants from the southern US especially, but also from eastern US cities, Ireland, Germany, and other parts of Europe flocked to the area, often settling in small colonies founded by land agents called *empresarios* (Weber, *Mexican Frontier* 162–63; Foley 17–19; Jordan 31–59). In order to sell their vision of a colonized Texas to emigrants, land companies and speculators represented the region as a utopia for the landless, an Edenic place where settlers could escape the class constraints of Europe and the US and establish equality and independence through land ownership.²⁵ But Lippard's Texas is haunted by the race wars that mark its foundation as well as by volatile, shifting national sentiments and the very forces of the capitalist city that some emigrants sought to escape.

From the beginning, many ominous signs indicate that all is not well in Prairie Eden. Grywin, the founder of the colony, is a "broken bank director of Philadelphia, who turned traitor to the trust of some thousand widows, and then fled the city, seeking refuge for his guilty wealth in the prairie of Texas" (20). Instead of providing utopian spaces that allow immigrants to escape the capitalist relations of the city, Texas here serves as a refuge for the corrupt capitalist who wants to leave his crimes, but not the profits they yielded, behind him in the East. Although he is a Northerner, Grywin also brings slaves with him to Texas, and Lippard thereby references widespread fears that the incorporation of new territory into the Union would mean the extension of slavery. An *empresario*-like figure, Grywin arrives in Texas in 1840, accompanied by 50 "retainers," including "forty white laborers—some civilized people from the States, others

German emigrants—and ten black slaves,” who build a mansion for him on the prairie (8), and surround it with their own “small huts” (16). The luxurious mansion resembles those described in urban gothic literature, especially when it is contrasted with the lowly huts on its borders; it could have been lifted from *New York* or *The Quaker City* and dropped on the Texas prairie. Lippard repeatedly uncovers uncanny resemblances and traces connections between the capitalist US city and scenes of empire building in Texas and Mexico in a novel which, as the book’s cover tells us, “begins on the wild prairie—goes on in the city of Vera Cruz—winds up in Philadelphia.” But moss hangs like a silvery shroud around Grywin’s mansion; the prairie is inhabited by spectral forms that prophesy “evil, nothing but evil” (13); eerie buzzards silently circle over the rooftops of Vera Cruz on the night that US troops land in the city; and remorse for acts of seduction and revenge committed in Mexico pervades the gloomy conclusion that takes place in Philadelphia.

Even at the outset, then, this novel implies that this colony, and also perhaps the colonization of Texas, are based on shaky foundations. This premise haunts the narrative, suggesting that everything that subsequently happens to Grywin’s house might result from his original guilty acts as well as from his attempts to escape their consequences. For Grywin’s house is soon in danger—literally, when it is invaded by his overseer and former clerk, Red Ewen, in league with troops from the Mexican army that he has joined, and symbolically, when the Mexican officer Don Antonio Marin offers Grywin’s daughter, ’Bel, a choice between her honor and her father’s life. While in *Legends of Mexico* Lippard juxtaposes battle scenes to romance plots, in *’Bel of Prairie Eden* the conflict between the US and Mexico is translated into dueling narratives of seduction, rape, and revenge where women’s bodies condense tangled webs of complex issues that are never resolved.

Although Lippard initially stigmatizes the Texas colonizer, he soon turns the tables by demonizing the Mexican Marin. We discover that Marin knew ’Bel and her family before, in Philadelphia, when he was the attaché of the Mexican legation. At that time, he asked to marry ’Bel and was refused; to that refusal her father “added some words, at once needless and bitter” (22). But if this contemptuous refusal seems at first to partially justify Marin’s vengeful feelings, attempts to represent him as anything other than monstrous disappear after he threatens ’Bel’s virginity. Soon thereafter, he drugs her with opium, gets her consent to have sex with him in order to save her father’s life, and then hangs Grywin anyway. Later, Marin also orders his soldiers to murder

Grywin's younger son, Harry. At these moments, Lippard blames Mexico for the war and encourages readers to feel for white settlers on the Texas borderlands. By making Ewen and the Mexican soldiers a threat to the white family and the homestead in Texas, Lippard mobilizes sensations of fear and horror on behalf of the Texas colonizers that may override his representation of the colonization of Texas as a morally tainted enterprise.

But the vengefulness of Grywin's remaining son, John, is just as monstrous, and it leads to an ending that is anything but happy. After John learns what has happened to his family, he begins to plot his sadistic revenge. First, as Marin and his father walk together one evening, a bullet from an unknown source pierces his father's brain. John, of course, is responsible. Second, John seduces Marin's sister, Isora, and then arranges it so that Marin is forced to watch from a hidden aperture while John has sex with her. Finally, John tricks Ewen into murdering Marin by plunging a knife into his heart as part of an initiation rite. But this "Satanic revenge" returns to haunt John after he falls in love with Isora (70), even though she never learns that John's enemy was her brother or that her brother is dead. John marries Isora and takes her back to Philadelphia, but she soon becomes unhappy and thinks only about seeing Marin again; meanwhile John is tortured by the thought that she is pining away because of his excessive revenge. At the novel's end, Isora dies of grief and John is left alone with his remorse.

As I have suggested throughout this essay, Lippard's invocation of a panoply of gothic effects—"haunted houses, evil villains, ghosts, gloomy landscapes, madness, terror, suspense, horror" (Goddu 5)—to narrate the US presence in Texas and Mexico has contradictory effects. On one hand, it contributes to the demonization of Mexicans and may thereby feed the war frenzy of readers. There is also plenty of lurid material here to stimulate a voyeuristic response at some distance from a well-defined, coherent position on the war. But the novel also suggests that romance cannot heal the wounds of war: the marriage plot used by Lippard at the end of *Legends of Mexico*, a plot that so many writers deployed to make the conquest of northern Mexico appear to be consensual, fails as a way of resolving international conflict. Force is never plausibly transformed into consent; the violence that structures most of the narrative does not disappear but instead fully implicates the Texas colonizer in the bleak conclusion. It is even possible to read this as an antiwar novel if one emphasizes the ending and interprets the escalating revenge plots as an allegory about the futility of the violence between the US and Mexico.

Lippard apparently began to have second thoughts about his war fiction soon after the conflict had ended. In the brief sketch “A Sequel to the Legends of Mexico,” which appeared in *The White Banner* in 1851, Lippard worried about whether the “very pictures of war and its chivalry” which he had drawn a few years earlier “might not be misconceived and lead young hearts into an appetite for blood-shedding” (108). So a few years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, he imagined Taylor and his army of conquest transformed into an “Industrial Army,” with spades instead of muskets and ploughs instead of cannons transforming the Pennsylvania *desert* “into a very garden, adorned with the homes of one hundred thousand poor men, who before the campaign began, had been starving in the suburbs of the Great Cities” (109). In this sketch, Lippard tries to make two haunting visions of war disappear: the class warfare threatened by poor men accumulating in eastern cities, and the violent, bloody scenes of the US-Mexican War that he and other writers had drawn for the sensational press during the 1840s. While he hoped to banish these disturbing images of US expansion and domestic unrest by sketching a Jeffersonian picture of an agrarian republic transforming poor men and artisan radicals into virtuous and useful US settlers, most of his writing betrays the impossibility of escaping the nightmare of capitalist industrialization and violent empire building into a free space of egalitarian possibility. Although, with the important exception of Slotkin, critics who have begun to recover Lippard’s work and to discuss his class politics have had little to say about his Mexican War novels, it is impossible to understand the connections between class formation and empire building without reading this literature.

If, as Amy Kaplan argues, the role of empire has been largely ignored in the study of US culture, then efforts to foreground the construction of “American nationality” through “political struggles for power with other cultures and nations” must also focus on the war with Mexico (14–15). While scholars often locate the origins of US imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century, the past that is reanimated in sensational war literature should provoke the reexamination of a longer history of empire in the Americas, because the events of 1848 make it clear that US class and racial formations throughout the nineteenth century were decisively shaped by international conflict and both the internal and global dynamics of empire building.

Notes

1. This scenario is obviously informed by an agrarian theory of western lands as a sort of “safety valve” that could mitigate class tensions in the East. For one of the classic discussions of this theory, see Henry Nash Smith 234–45. See also John Mack Faragher’s edited collection, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and Other Essays* (1994). For persuasive evidence that the safety valve never worked, see Shannon. For a helpful discussion of the links between land reform activism and US working-class history, see Deverell. For recent work that confronts and complicates the Turnerian premises on which twentieth-century versions of the safety valve theory are based, see a collection edited by Clyde A. Milner II titled *A New Significance: Re-Envisioning the History of the American West* (1996).
2. On the print revolution, see Denning 10–11, 85–117, and throughout; Johannsen 16–20, 175–79; and Saxton 95–108, 321–47.
3. For popular representations of Mexico as a “false nation,” see Gene Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821–1846: An Essay on the Origins of the Mexican War* (1975). On the nation as imagined community, see Anderson. According to Anderson, the spread of print capitalism is an indispensable precondition for the rise of modern nationalisms. Because of the conjunction of the print revolution and the war, the late 1840s represent a key moment in the formation of modern US nationalism. On nationalism as “fictive ethnicity,” see Balibar 96–100.
4. See Priscilla Wald’s reading of Freud’s 1919 essay “The Uncanny” (5–7). Wald notes that Freud’s essay was written “while the national boundaries of Europe were being redrawn,” links together discussions of nationalism and Freud’s meditations on “the anxiety generated by the German *unheimlich* (literally, not homely or homelike)” (5), and argues that “the uncanny sends us home to the discovery that ‘home’ is not what or where we think it is and that we, by extension, are not who or what we think we are” (7). I find her remarks particularly useful in thinking about the popularization of nationalism and the eruption of uncanny “American” sensations in the wake of the war with Mexico and the redrawing of national boundaries that followed it.
5. See also Pettit 3–79 and Norman D. Smith’s “Mexican Stereotypes on Fictional Battlefields: Or Dime Novels of the Mexican War” (1980).
6. If, as Rogin has argued in “‘Make My Day!': Spectacle as Amnesia in Imperial Politics [and] The Sequel” (1993), imperial spectacles disconnect images from a larger unifying narrative, allowing the audience “both to have the experience and not to retain it in memory” (507), then graphic sensational representations of the war might well have permitted contemporary readers to simultaneously enjoy and disavow the violence of US empire building. Since today, however, the US-Mexican War is often described as a forgotten war, it seems likely that attention to the repressed imperial spectacles of the past could give a needed jolt to historical memory. For the lurid representations of corpses and wounded bodies reveal a long, violent history of US empire building that counters theories of American exceptionalism; the fragmented nature of the images and their resistance to unifying narratives may expose the contradic-

tions of imperial ideologies; and the incorporation of material from other texts that were quickly produced during the war years makes sensational literature a kind of palimpsest of the popular cultures of US imperialism in the American 1848. Of course, if others have forgotten the war, 1848 has long been an important date for Chicano and Mexican scholars and cultural producers. See, for instance, Acuña 1–133 and Robinson. See also John Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (1984); Padilla 3–73; and Saldívar 8, 36–56, 168–83. On the relationship between “Spanish fantasy” and “a national amnesia with regard to Mexicano and Chicano worldviews” (53), see Gutiérrez-Jones, esp. 50–79.

7. Edward Widmer suggests that while in the early 1840s O’Sullivan hoped that the US could realize its manifest destiny through peaceful rather than violent means and although he initially “disapproved of the war,” he “reversed himself shortly afterward” (50).

8. For an excellent discussion of the contradictions in O’Sullivan’s and other literary young Americans’ use of the concept of manifest destiny, see Wald 105–06.

9. Peter Buckley’s unpublished 1984 dissertation, “To the Opera House: Culture and Society in New York City, 1820–1860,” is still the best source for information on Buntline. See also Buckley, “The Case Against Ned Buntline: the ‘Words, Signs, and Gestures’ of Popular Authorship” (1988) and Monaghan.

10. In the 1850s, however, Buntline would promote filibustering expeditions to take over Cuba, in part because of his proslavery allegiances; this imperial enterprise was supported by proslavery Southerners who wanted to expand that institution. See Monaghan 194.

11. For an interesting recent selection of dime novel westerns, see Bill Brown’s edited collection, *Reading the West: An Anthology of Dime Westerns* (1997).

12. On Lippard’s mysteries-of-the-city literature, see also Ashwill; Ehrlich; Nelson 143–60; and David Reynolds’s introduction to *The Quaker City* (1995) as well as *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (1988) 82–84, 204–08, 216–17.

13. See Denning 112–14. Denning suggests that while Lippard condemned the nativism that led to the 1844 riots in Kensington and Southwark and satirized anti-Catholic sentiments, his “sense of the role of the Papacy in the defeat of the revolutions of 1848 led him to [an] elaborate narrative of two Catholic Churches, an absolutist one plotting to establish an anti-republican empire in North America and, within it, ‘another Church of Rome, composed of men, who, when the hour strikes, will sacrifice everything to the cause of humanity and God’” (114).

14. Reynolds considers Lippard to be “the most militantly radical novelist of the pre-Civil War period” (Reynolds, *Beneath* 205).

15. See, e.g., Noel Ignatiev’s *How the Irish Became White* (1995); Lott; Roediger; and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (1984). While Saxton does not include

many specific references to the US-Mexican War, his discussion of mid-nineteenth-century land policies and white supremacy is extremely useful for an analysis of the American 1848. Other helpful studies include Almaguer 1–104; Horsman 208–48; and Takaki 154–64. For an analysis of the significance for American studies of the American 1848 and the Mexican War, see Streeby, “Joaquín Murrieta and the American 1848.”

16. Matthew Jacobson argues that during and after the era of the famine migration, US imperialism “pulled for a unified collectivity” of whites even as “nativism and the immigration question fractured that whiteness into its component—‘superior’ and ‘inferior’—parts” (204). He suggests that the Irish were unevenly incorporated into whiteness, and that “‘Anglo-Saxondom’ itself was an unstable and hotly contested terrain. The ‘Anglo-Saxon’ mission of subduing the continent and reaching across the Pacific thus both destabilized and shored up immigrants’ whiteness: it excluded them (as the wrong kind of citizens) from the glories of national destiny, and yet conferred upon them (as citizens nonetheless) the fruits of white-supremacist conquest” (206).

17. Horsman suggests that race scientist Josiah Nott, for instance, classified Celts with the “dark-skinned” races he deemed inferior to Anglo-Saxons (131). However, according to Roediger, during these years most Democratic theorists were “defining ‘white’ in such a way as to include more surely the Irish and other immigrants” (141).

18. For a discussion of Paine’s *Crisis* papers, see Foner 139–42.

19. On the Black Legend, see Fernández Retamar 56–73; Charles Gibson’s edited collection, *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and New* (1971); Gutiérrez 68; Paredes 139–65; and Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* 335–41. For an excellent account of how “these and other constructions of a Spanish other led inexorably to the Enlightenment’s exclusion of Spain from the realm of the civilized and even to the US hostile takeover of Spain’s empire at the end of the last century” as well as to US ideologies of manifest destiny, see Mariscal 7–22.

20. While Prescott, according to John P. McWilliams Jr., assumed “the formidable task of acknowledging Spanish cruelties while upholding Spanish heroism” (174), his contemporaries were more likely to emphasize the cruelties even as they paradoxically described the US-Mexican War as a sort of reenactment of the Spanish conquest. “Drawn to the Spanish subject as a critical precursor,” McWilliams writes, “American writers were thus prone to distance themselves from the very analogy their words suggest” (162).

21. In response to an earlier version of this essay, Mariscal pointed out that Arista is constructed as a racialized oriental figure in ways that might respond to race scientists’ ideas about the Spanish as a mongrel race with African-Arab characteristics.

22. Lippard seemed to regret this later. In the 5 May 1849 issue of the *Quaker City*, he solicits letters from private soldiers for a book called “The Real Heroes of the Mexican War”: “It will picture the deeds of every man who distinguished himself, and not confine itself to a mere eulogy of those titled persons, whose greatness too often consists, solely in their rank and official position” (3).

23. For an analysis of these and other stereotypes of women of Mexican origin in California, see Castañeda. On the construction of California women in Anglo-American discourses and in *testimonios*, see Sánchez 198–227.

24. For an important analysis of Chicana critiques of consensual paradigms, see Gutiérrez-Jones 103–122.

25. A good deal of promotional literature, usually produced by those with financial investments in colonization projects, was aimed at potential German immigrants. In 1845, for instance, Johann H. S. Schulz called Texas the paradise of North America; another German writer claimed that Texas soil was “among the most fertile in the world” (qtd. in Jordan 40). During this period, tens of thousands of German immigrants came to Texas. Some of these colonists were connected to a German overseas colonization society; others settled on *empresario* grants; and still others were part of a short-lived “utopian communal settlement” founded by German intellectuals (Jordan 45).

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