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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

# THE MOUNTAIN MAN IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

S. MATTHEW DESPAIN
Norman, Oklahoma
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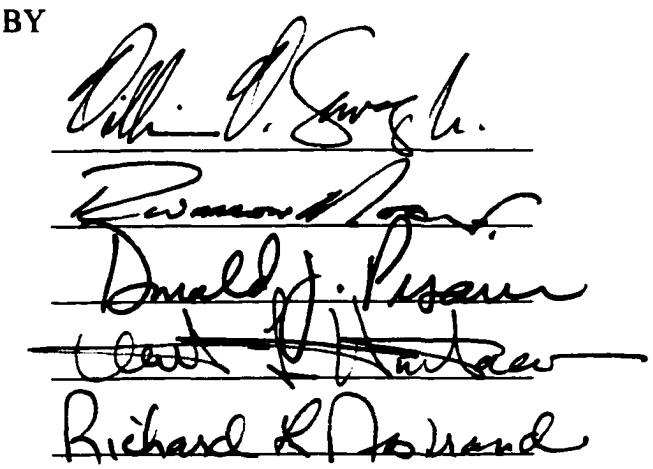

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# PREFACE

The mountain man hero enjoys a prominent place in American culture and his persistent image is an index of his appeal. Understanding how this image is perceived in the American mind and how it is manifested in numerous quarters of American culture becomes as important as analyzing the historic mountain man. This study then presents a history of an image, but it is also intended to reveal much about the society that embraces that image.

Over the years, the mountain man emerges as a cultural icon, a hero. The early mountain traveler-turned pundit, Rufus B. Sage, in his "Scenes in the Rocky Mountains," defines the mountain man as "a kind of *sui genus*, an oddity, both in dress, language, and appearance from the rest of mankind."[1] Historian William Goetzmann upholds the mountain man's symbolic significance as a "quintessentially unique American," a creature "no other country has produced."[2] And the mountain man is among what Dixon Wecter calls the "magic ranks of those ... whom every man takes as his heroes."[3] The mountain man typifies

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[1]Rufus B. Sage, "Scenes in the Rocky Mountains and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas, and the Grand Prairies," in *Rufus B. Sage, His Letters and Papers, 1836-1847* eds. LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, 2 vols. (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1956), I, p.127.

[2]William Goetzmann, *The Mountain Man* (Cody, Wyoming: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1978), p. 9.

[3]Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America: A Chronicle of Hero-Worship* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 476.

the kind of man Americans like to admire because he embodies rugged Anglo-American individualism, courage, proper manliness, enterprise, tenacity, resourcefulness, patriotism, and freedom of spirit -- all qualities that Americans like to claim as uniquely their own.[4] Consequently, the mountain man's image influences Americans' perceptions of their mythic West, themselves, and their nation. His image conveys various ideals, beliefs, and concerns from the larger culture to its individual members, and vice versa. When the mountain man appears in popular entertainment, seldom are questions asked regarding his actions in a given situation. And even when his behavior fails to distinguish him from other western types, his attire certainly labels him. Buckskin clad, fur capped, and heavily bewhiskered, the mountain man secures his place as the picturesque wanderer of the wilderness.[5] Few popular figures provide such a wealth of material, in so many quarters of American culture, as does the mountain man. The importance of his image and impact in American history and culture has yet to be thoroughly examined.

Before scrutinizing the mountain man's image, the historical figure from which the mythical one evolved must be defined. A mountain man was simply a beaver trapper, who lived year-round in the Central Rocky Mountains sometime from roughly 1824 to 1840, and

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[4]Ibid., chapter 18, wherein Wecter outlines the traits by which Americans usually choose their heroes. The mountain man possesses most all the requisite traits outlined by Wecter.

[5]Historian LeRoy R. Hafen has referred to the fur cap and buckskins as "perhaps the only original American costume," making those that wear it American originals themselves and "the best in rugged manhood." See LeRoy R. Hafen and Carl Coke Rister, *Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi*, 2d ed. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), p. 209.

who was attached to the rendezvous system.[6] Scholars further define him by distinctions such as nationality (almost exclusively Anglo-American), linguistics (having a unique "mountain parlance," coarse, metaphorical, jocular, and mono syllabic), or by stereotype (a hero, hedonist, or expectant capitalist).[7] Such scholarly definitions have little sway on the mountain man's popular image. Rather, the mountain man hero is molded by a variety of societal influences, including politics, art, capitalism, nationalism, feelings of masculinity, and hero worship.

Recognizing the mountain man's prominence in American culture, J. Frank Dobie remarks that perhaps "hardly any other distinct class of men, irrespective of number or permanence, has called forth so many excellent books as the Mountain Men . . . [and] one doubts whether any other form of American life at all has been so well covered in ballad,

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[6]The rendezvous system is described in David Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), chapters 4 and 5; The times and places of the various rendezvous are detailed in Fred R. Gowans, *Rocky Mountain Rendezvous: A History of the Fur Trade Rendezvous, 1825-1840.* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976); see also LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, 10 vols., (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1965-1972), I, pp. 14-15, 73-176. For a typical definition of the mountain man see Denis McLoughlin, *Wild and Woolly: An Encyclopedia of the Old West* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1996), pp. 363, 522.

[7]The Anglo-Americanness of mountain men is a foregone conclusion in historical writings. See, for instance, LeRoy R. Hafen, W. Eugene Hollon, and Carl Coke Rister, *Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi*, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 154; and "The Museum of Mountain Man," *Journal of the West*, 36 (January 1997): 92. The unique mountain man speech is examined by Richard C. Poulsen, *The Mountain Man Vernacular: Its Historical Roots, Its Linguistic Nature, and its Literary Uses* (N.Y.: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1985), chapter 1. The debate over a mountain man stereotype is outlined succinctly in Harlan H. Hague, "Some Views of the Mountain Man," *The Pacific Historian*, 13 (Fall 1969): 81-92, and will be discussed in more detail later.

fiction, biography, [and] history."[8] Exclude the cowboy's place in American culture and Dobie's words are irrefutable. Other scholars acknowledge the importance of the mountain man in American culture and thus the worthiness of studying the mountain man image. Historian Richard W. Etulain suggests the possibility and recommends William W. Savage, Jr.'s *The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture* as a model.[9] And yet the mountain man's image remains unscrutinized according to Etulain's proposal. This study attempts to follow Etulain's suggestion. While such an endeavor can never be definitive, the intention here is to provide the reader with a general view of the development of the mountain man figure and an understanding of the uses to which it has been put in American culture. Historian Paul A. Hutton wrote, "The lives of heros are a testament to the values and aspirations of those who admire them. If their images change as time passes, they may act as a barometer of the fluctuating attitudes of society."[10] Following Hutton's advice, I have chosen the mountain man as a reliable companion for traversing the varied landscapes of American culture. Let us see where the mountain man's image leads.

Researching and writing a dissertation are never solitary activities. Many individuals have helped the process along, and to all of them I am greatly indebted. Thanks go to my

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[8]J. Frank Dobie, *Guide To Life and Literature of the Southwest*, rev. ed. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1981), p. 71. See also William Gwaltney, "The Fur Trade in Myth and Reality," *Journal of the West* 26 (October 1987): 4-7.

[9]Richard W. Etulain, "Western Historians and the Myth of Custer's Last Stand," *The Midwest Review* (Spring 1980): 62; The work Etulain endorsed is William W. Savage, Jr., *The Cowboy Hero: His Image in American History and Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

[10]Paul A. Hutton, "From Little Big Horn to Little Big Man: The Changing Image of a Western Hero in Popular Culture," *Western Historical Quarterly* 7 (January 1976): 19-45.

father, Rodney H. DeSpain, who introduced me to the subject of mountain men in my youth; to Professor Fred R. Gowans of Brigham Young University, who acquainted me with the scholarly study of mountain men; to Professor William W. Savage, Jr. of the University of Oklahoma, who revealed to me the possibilities of studying their popular image, who helped in countless ways in the creation of this dissertation, but most important, who redefined the role of mentor by his actions, wit, and wisdom; and to Professors Albert Hurtado, Warren Metcalf, Richard Nostrand, and Donald Pisani, of the University of Oklahoma, who served on my committee and offered valuable guidance. I am also indebted to Peter Hassrick of the Charles M. Russell Center at the University of Oklahoma for his insights into western art; to William H. Goetzmann of the University of Texas, Philip J. Deloria of the University of Colorado, and Skip Keith Miller of the Kit Carson Historic Museum for sharing with me their opinions and research; to Hardy Calaway who guided me through the world of buckskinning; to Maureen Blackman who gave generously of her time and talents reading over the manuscript; and to my graduate school colleagues who endured countless conversations about mountain men. Most of all, I would like to thank my beautiful wife, Carla, for her patience and support throughout the entire process, and for her willingness to read, re-read, type, and re-type, and for just plain putting up with it. To her, and to my wonderful son Kalin and my wonderful daughter Camryn, I dedicate this work. Raymond Chandler once observed "there are no dull subjects, only dull minds." If one finds this study dull, the fault is mine alone.[11]

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[11]Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder*, Vintage Books edition (New York: Random House, Inc., 1988), p. 12.

# CHAPTER ONE

## EVOLUTION OF A HERO

The heroic icons with which Americans choose to identify evolved concurrently with American society and culture. The mountain man hero emerged as a distinct cultural icon early in the 1830s; at nearly the same time his in-the-flesh Rocky Mountain counterparts were earning their livelihoods. As the result of various social currents and pressing issues, anxieties, conditions, or directions, each generation of the remaining nineteenth century depicted him differently. Consequently, a mountain man hero evolved, acquiring those traits that have recurrently defined him. His popular image during the 1800s became an artifact of an evolving nineteenth-century American society and culture. Profit-minded purveyors of culture did not ignore the mountain man's popular image. His profitability persistently sustained that image in American culture and proved crucial in its development throughout the nineteenth century.

Historian Henry Nash Smith earmarked the mountain man as one of "The Sons of Leatherstocking." For Smith, James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking was patriarch of all western heroes, and mountain man Kit Carson was the first chip off the Natty Bumppo block. Smith's ill-conceived claim, based on selective evidence, has survived as the major theory on the mountain man hero's genesis because it is in Smith's *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, which historians have deemed a standard work.

Two errors plague Smith's theory, his mono-causational argument and his chronological claim of Leatherstocking's preeminence. Smith maintained that all frontier heroes postdating Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and *The Prairie* (1827) were literary descendants of one figure by one author founded on chronology. But Smith ignored one vital point. The mountain man's emergence in American literature occurred nearly the same time as Leatherstocking's. Smith also claimed to examine symbols and the West. He oversimplified the mountain man's image as a symbol of nineteenth-century American attitudes toward the West, depicting him as either civilized or savage. The mountain man symbolized far more in nineteenth-century American culture and society.[1] Indeed, other than in appearance and basic woodcraft skills, the mountain man revealed little in common with Cooper's Bumppo. The mountain man hero who emerged in the literature of the 1830s became the creation of authors influenced by their own cultural baggage and circumstances and not the literary progeny of Natty Bumppo, possessing qualities distinctly different from Leatherstocking. He was more primitive and savage, unconcerned with class distinction, a hater of Indians. This mountain man became a more suitable figure for the democratic and expansionist ideals that emerged during the mid-nineteenth century.[2] Historians can no longer put stock in Smith's arguments concerning the mountain man hero's origins.

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[1]Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, Vintage Books edition (New York, New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), pp. 53-98.

[2]Jules Zanger, "The Frontiersman in Popular Fiction, 1820-60," in *The Frontier Re-Examined*, ed. by John Francis McDermott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 141-153.

The mountain man hero and Leatherstocking emerged chronologically and in the same social climate. In the early 1800s, Americans concerned about both the new nation's identity and direction, wanted their own unique culture without European — and especially British — ties. The new nation lacked the artifacts of established culture including an individual and independent history, literature, and art. But America had wilderness, and plenty of it. Nationalists saw the wilderness as the resource from which to forage national identity and self-esteem.

Writers focused on the wilderness and its denizens (indigenous and otherwise) for subject matter.[3] From this current emerged Cooper's Leatherstocking, the mountain man hero, and similar frontier types in the national literature. As such, the mountain man was what R.W.B. Lewis referred to as an "American Adam." He was part of America's emerging mythology and identity from the beginning, an image contrived to embody contemporary ideas of the 1800s, to define "the authentic American as a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities."[4] The mountain man became "a new kind of hero" in American culture, "the heroic embodiment of a new set of ideal human attributes" that reflected a new nation with a new personality.[5] The image began separating itself from the real-life counterpart. This

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[3]Russell B. Nye, *The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1963), pp. 119-120 and chapter 11; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 67-77; James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 80-82.

[4]R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 1.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

hero of new adventure, in a wilderness setting, was divorced from old world history and ancestry. He was an individual, alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, who conquered whatever stood in his path by his own unique and inherent resources.[6] In the mountain man, a distinct American identity was realized that emerged in early-nineteenth century American literature.

But as the nation continued to seek its own culture and identity by leaning on things western American attention was continually drawn to the Far West by large land purchases, explorations, dealings among native tribes, foreign intrigue, and the like. The nation also stood at the brink of what scholars have termed the Jacksonian period. These continued concerns over national identity and emerging Jacksonian ideals both influenced the creation and character of the evolving mountain man hero. He in turn represented to the world a forward-looking nation on the make.

The mountain man hero began appearing with writers like James Kirk Paulding whom he called "pleasing specimen of unrestrained nature ... [and] of American gentility," to depict unique American identity derived from the wilderness.[7] Writers influenced by Jacksonian ideals of commerce and expansion introduced the mountain man hero in

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[6]Ibid.

[7]James Kirk Paulding, *The Lion of the West*, edited and with an introduction by James Tidwell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), p.22. Other frontiersman works by Paulding included Paulding, *The Backwoodsman: A Poem* (Philadelphia: M. Thomas, 1818); and James Kirk Paulding, *Westward Ho!: A Tale* 2 vols. (New York: J. and J. Harper, 1832). See also Hart, *The Popular Book*, pp. 80-82; Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947), pp. 73-76, 305.

American literature. These western adventure tales expressed the contemporary ideals of American economic enterprise. Just as the real mountain men reflected this entrepreneurial current, being what historian William Goetzmann called "Jacksonian men," so too did their literary counterparts.[8] This Jacksonian man was the "typical American, ... an expectant capitalist, a hard working ambitious person for whom enterprise was a kind of religion."[9] Add this Jacksonian ideal to the literary genre of adventure tales in a wilderness setting, and what emerged was the "adventurous enterprise" literary genre of the early nineteenth century. The enterprising mountain man hero reflected a society transformed by romanticism into a democracy of selves, with *laissez-faire* capitalism turning a once religious national spirit into an economic one, underpinning a sense of national mission. This national development created a new mentality that, as historian Michael Paul Rogin explained, "made independence, opportunity, and self-help the cardinal virtues."[10] The earliest mountain man heroes embodied these traits.

James Fenimore Cooper casually addressed the mountain man type in *The Prairie*

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[8]William Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 106-109; See also William Goetzmann, "The Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man," *American Quarterly* 15 (Fall 1963): 404-406; Peter Antelyes, *Tales of Adventurous Enterprise: Washington Irving and the Poetics of Western Expansion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. ix-xvi, 1-5.

[9]Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made it* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 57.

[10]Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 288.

(1827), but chose to contrast him against Leatherstocking.[11] Leatherstocking represented a middle ground between civilization and savagery. For Cooper, the mountain man had regressed too far, and when Cooper transported his hero to the Far West in *The Prairie*, he determined the mountain man's lifestyle to be too primitive and beneath Leatherstocking's dignity.[12] For Cooper, no subsequent frontiersman type was worth literary treatment. Leatherstocking personified a special breed; and the mountain man was not included therein, because Cooper regarded him as unsuited to heroic status.[13]

A noted writer during the 1830s and 1840s, Reverend Timothy Flint introduced and popularized the adventurous mountain man hero to American readers in his *The Shoshonee Valley: A Romance* (1830), the first novel about mountain men, and *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky* (1831).[14] When Flint introduced American readers to the

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[11]Cooper's decision to deal with the mountain man thus stemmed from prevailing negative opinions in society about those occupying the far reaches of the wilderness. J. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur expressed this popular view well in describing America's frontiersmen as "no better than carnivorous animals of a superior rank, living on the flesh of wild animals, ... barbarous, ... dependent on their ... native tempers, and ... remote from the power of example, and check of shame ... [who] exhibited the most hideous parts of our society." Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur, *Letters From an American Farmer* (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1963), pp. 66-67. The German tourist Charles Sealsfield viewed the Western trapper in similar fashion as an ignoble type. See Charles Sealsfield, *Life in the New World; or Sketches of American Society* (New York: J. Winchester, 1844), p. 42.

[12]James Fenimore Cooper, *The Prairie: A Tale*, introduction by Henry Nash Smith, reprint (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1950), p. 450.

[13]Smith, *Virgin Land*, pp. 64-76, 88; Cooper, *The Prairie*, pp. v-vi; Leslie A. Fielder, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1968), p. 121.

[14]Timothy Flint, *The Shoshonee Valley: A Romance* (Cincinnati: E.H. Flint, 1830); James Ohio Pattie, *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky*, ed. Timothy

mountain man hero in his works, national attention was concentrated on the Far West and its international, economic, and literary aspects. Society was poised to receive the mountain man as a representation of a self-made man of adventurous enterprise in westward expansion. In both his mountain man works, Flint employed the adventurous enterprise literary form.

In *The Shoshonee Valley,* Flint depicted a Far West Eden into which entered a group of Kentucky trappers on an "adventurous and spirit-stirring" mission, men who possessed high moral and spiritual-mindedness.[15] They boasted the proper cranial nodules to test any phrenological exam of the day, being men whose superior qualities were identified by the "protuberances marked in unalterable characters upon [their] skull[s]."[16] The antagonists were a mix of French, British, and Russian fur men who were cowardly, of inferior character, and short on wits.[17] Staging issues of national superiority, Flint's heroes constantly outwitted their non-American adversaries. The spirit of enterprise framed the work with both heroes and villains busily engaged in that enterprise. The two types were distinguished by matters of principle; the Americans were assigned higher moral ground when dealing with Indians. The non-Americans exploited the natives by alcohol, gambling, and prostitution, thus

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Flint (Cincinnati: J.H. Wood, 1831).

[15]Flint, *The Shoshonee Valley*, p. 6.

[16]Ibid., p. 5. Phrenology was a nineteenth-century pseudo-science health and reform craze by which supporters and practitioners claimed that charting the shape of a person's head could identify the individuals various character traits. It was the nineteenth-century equivalent of educational testing. For a brief history of phrenology see Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), pp.156-163.

[17]Flint, *The Shoshonee Valley*, p. 30.

spoiling the wilderness Eden in the process. The Americans thwarted their rivals using superior intellect, "deportment, ... stern and yet reckless manner, ... and habits."[18] Flint labeled his mountain men as "adventurers," and characterized them as "fearless, and adamantine men ... who followed the steps of the intrepid Lewis and Clark," and found "in their own ingenuity ... all the Divinity" to be "sufficient to themselves."[19] These then were the Jacksonian men.

The same year that Flint published *The Shoshonee Valley*, James Ohio Pattie offered to sell Flint the story of his own Far West adventures. In Pattie, Flint recognized a true-to-life hero like the fictive ones of his *The Shoshonee Valley*. He identified the American adventurer who had traveled the West seeking his fortune, while fighting Indians and surmounting the wilderness, from the Big Muddy to exotic California. Pattie was an authentic mountain man, an enterprising adventurer, a heroic figure, and Flint realized the potential of the man and his story. Flint understood the popularity of western adventure stories, and their potential to influence cultural nationalism and the Jacksonian spirit. In his preface to *The Shoshonee Valley* Flint made such matters clear. He contended that by reading about men like Pattie, Americans could realize what distinguished them and learn to put off the "effeminate spirits" of European culture that made "men of soft hands and fashionable life," and to kindle "something of that simplicity of manner, manly hardihood,

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[18]Ibid., pp. 62-69, 107, 154.

[19]Ibid., p. 20-21.

and Spartan energy and force of character" that was American society.[20] Flint explained that it was the qualities of the self-made man, of the expectant capitalist, and of the man of adventurous enterprise that made Americans distinctive. Flint's mountain men symbolized these principles associated with the nation's western expansion.

While Flint's works appeared in their first editions, a young Albert Pike, with pretensions to literary fame, joined one of Charles Bent's caravans to Nuevo Mexico in 1832-33.[21] He recorded his adventure, depicting the mountain men he encountered, and published it as *Prose Sketches and Poems, Written in the Western Country* (1834), and in it depicted the mountain men he encountered.[22] The work made Pike the first Anglo-American to write about the Southwest. But *Prose Sketches and Poems* was in part a booster publication of American interests in New Mexico and Texas, richly ethnocentric. Mexicans were "cowardly," "treacherous," and foolish, contrasted to energetic, Anglo-Americans with providence on their side.[23] Pike's two most heroic mountain men, of Jacksonian genre, were Bill Williams and John S. "Peg-Leg" Smith. About Williams, Pike noted: "As a specimen of the genuine trapper, Bill Williams certainly stands foremost ... [as] a shrewd, acute, original man."[24] Specifically, Pike described his hero as large and "all muscle and sinue, and

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[20]Pattie, p. 3.

[21]Harvey L. Carter, "Albert Pike," in *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen, II, pp. 265-274.

[22]Albert Pike, *Prose Sketches and Poems, Written in the Western Country*, ed. David J. Weber (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987).

[23]Ibid., pp. xv, 40-42.

[24]Ibid., p. 34.

the most identifyable [man] ... in the world," and comparable to Leatherstocking.[25] But Williams' enterprising character was what distinguished him. Pike described Williams as having "no glory except in the woods," where "his whole ambition [was] to kill more deer and catch more beaver than any other man about him."[26] Williams lived a life where "there [was] so much independence and self-dependence, ... so much freedom from ... restraint, from form and ceremony" and where "his gun and his own industry suppl[ied] him" his needs.[27] To readers and reviewers of *Prose Sketches and Poems*, this mountain man hero possessed all the chivalrous traits of any Sir Walter Scott hero appended to an enterprising character.[28]

The media, in particular western newspapers, promoted the Jacksonian image by providing news of fur trade ventures. Prototype adjectives describing character or ability appeared, with the nouns "adventure" and "enterprise" used abundantly. These papers depicted the mountain men as agents of national destiny in whom matters of national character and uniqueness were often embodied. Occasionally these portrayals appeared in Eastern papers with regional and national readership.[29]

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[25]Ibid., pp. 34, 58.

[26]Ibid., p. 34.

[27]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[28]"Crayon Sketches and Journeyings," *The Boston Pearl and Literary Gazette*, 8 November 1834; "Tales of Character and Country," *The Arkansas Advocate* (Little Rock), 11 April 1834.

[29]Mountain man descriptions in western papers include *St. Louis Enquirer*, 13 April 1822; the *Missouri Republican*, 9 July 1823; the *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), 16 November 1824; The *Missouri Advocate and St. Louis Enquirer*, 8 October 1825, 29

Washington Irving, more than any other author, established mountain men as heroes and amplified their role in American expansion. Irving was already one of America's cherished writers when he turned to western topics in the 1830s.[30] His return to America in May, 1832, closed a seventeen-year hiatus in Europe; his celebrity touched both sides of the Atlantic. He knew what tugged at the American psyche, and, when addressing a coterie of New York's upper crust who were celebrating his return, he hinted at the cultural nationalism that would motivate his future efforts, saying:

> I come from gloomier climes to one of brilliant sunshine and inspiring purity. I come from countries lowering with doubt and danger, where the rich man trembles and the poor man frowns--where all repine at the present and dread the future. ... Is this [America] not a land in which one may be happy to fix his *destiny* and *ambition*--if possible to found a name.[31]

Irving's sympathies toward "progress" (both national and individual) were deeply rooted in the concepts of property and economic endeavor, and which were part of the nation's identity. This idea of progress, in the economic sense, became integral to Irving reaffirming his identity as an American writer. It directly influenced how he portrayed the mountain man.

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October 1825, 11 March 1826; *Missouri Herald and St. Louis Advertiser*, 8 November 1826; *Missouri Observer*, 31 October 1824; *The Missouri Saturday News* (St. Louis), 14 April 1838. Eastern accounts include *Niles Register*, 8 June 1822, 4 December 1824.

[30]Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, pp. 73, 88; Michael Kraus and David D. Joyce, *The Writings of American History*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), pp. 120-122; Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890* (New York: Antheneum: 1985), p. 119.

[31]"Speech at the Irving Dinner," *New York Mirror*, 9 June 1832; Cited in Stanley Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), II, p. 27.

Irving did what Flint had done with Pattie's *Narrative*; Irving used history as his work's foundation. The popularity of history as literature was on the rise, and Irving's two works on the fur trade, *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (1836), and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.* (1837), were histories.[32] The increased popularity of history came from the same forces that had given rise to American literature. History provided national identity. Irving understood this, and he also understood that tales of adventurous enterprise could exhibit and celebrate America's unique course. In writing fur trade histories, Irving capitalized on the country's most well known Far Western commerce to interpret the nation's economic mission westward. He intended for his mountain men to embody the Jacksonian American qualities as part of that mission.

Before writing *Astoria* and *Bonneville*, Irving headed west to reacquaint himself with America's social and geographical landscapes. Irving found himself, like his creation Rip Van Winkle, in an America different from the one he had left. The trip provided him material for his fur trade works and his *A Tour of the Prairies*.[33] Like Flint, Irving believed the wilderness was essential to creating proper character, whether individual or national. He wrote: "I can scarcely conceive a kind of life more calculated to put both mind and body in

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[32]The editions of Irving's fur trade works used are Washington Irving, *Astoria, or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, ed. Edgeley W. Todd (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965); and Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A., in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West; Digested from his Journals by Washington Irving*, ed. Edgeley W. Todd (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). The growing popularity of historical works in American literature is explained in Mott, *Golden Multitudes*, chapter 15.

[33]Washington Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, ed. John Frances McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956).

a healthful tone."[34] But physical and psychological well-being aside, Irving saw superior American character stemming from wilderness contact. He contended that:

> We send our youth abroad to grow luxurious and effeminate in Europe; it appears to me that a previous tour on the prairies would be more likely to produce that manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence most in union with our political institutions.[35]

Irving used the West's expansion to identify national progress. He suggested some pastoral initiation preparatory to carrying forth the nation's purpose. Irving perceived that mountain men had gone through this wildemess initiation and, as a result, were essential to the nation's progress. They became Irving's quintessential American type.

Irving's *Astoria*, while not about the Rocky Mountain trapper, did depict fur traders and exploration, and Irving invested it with the principles of self-interest, enterprise, and national expansion.[36] Long before writing *Astoria*, Irving had been enamored by the fur tradesman figure. Irving felt both the wilderness and history were romantic subject, and when he visited Canada in 1803, those convictions influenced his perceptions of the Northwest Company's men. These fur men captured his admiration and when writing Astoria's introduction, Irving recalled them and their lives, commenting:

> [T]he stories of these Sinbads of the wilderness made the life of a trapper and fur trader perfect romance to me ... From those early impressions, the grand enterprise of the great fur companies, and the hazardous errantry of their associates in the wild parts of our vast continent, have always been themes

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[34]Ibid., p. 85.

[35]Ibid., p. 55.

[36]For an explanation about the different modes of fur trade enterprise and its players, see David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840.*

> of charmed interest to me; and I have felt anxious to get the details of their adventurous expeditions among the savage tribes that peopled the depths of the wilderness.[37]

While on his western tour he became impressed with the mountain men, having met some of Astor's American Fur Company men, and others under William Sublette, returning from the 1832 rendezvous.[38] So, when Astor proposed *Astoria,* Irving recalled that "the suggestion struck upon the chord of early association already vibrating in my mind."[39]

*Astoria* chronicled John Jacob Astor's ill-fated enterprise in the Pacific Northwest in 1811-1812. The fur baron's ambition for an account of this venture led him to ask his friend Irving to write one. Astor desired a place in history beyond economic success. He wanted recognition for having aided national expansion westward, "having originated the enterprise and founded the colony that [were] likely to have such important results in the history of commerce and colonization."[40] As early as 1813, Thomas Jefferson had kindled Astor's aspirations about Fort Astoria's place in history, calling it "the germ of a great, free and independent empire on that side of our continent."[41] Astor's ego fed his ambitions for recognition, and he and Irving agreed that Irving would write the work. Irving wrote what

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[37]Ibid., pp. xlv-xlvi.

[38]Irving, *Bonneville*, p. 66

[39]Ibid., p. xlvi

[40]Pierre Munro Irving, *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, 4 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1863), III, p. 60.

[41]Quote cited in Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History, A Reinterpretation*, Vintage Books edition (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), pp. 13-14.

became a chronicle of an adventurous enterprise cast in the inevitable course of American history.[42]

While writing *Astoria*, Irving continued meeting mountain men and fur traders who shared information about the Far West. The most noteworthy was Captain Benjamin Bonneville fresh from three years spent in the Rockies. Irving and Bonneville talked about Bonneville's peregrinations, since Bonneville traversed much of the country in which *Astoria* was set. But Irving's association with Bonneville eventually rewarded Irving with the material for his third and final western work, and his seminal presentation of the mountain man image.

During the spring of 1836, Irving received a narrative Bonneville wrote about his experiences. Bonneville had failed to interest any publishers in the manuscript. As Irving tells it, Bonneville gave him the work "to fit for publication and bring it before the world."[43] He asked Irving to assess the manuscript's literary worth, and Irving offered one thousand dollars for it.[44] Bonneville accepted. Irving later confessed that the manuscript was "the staple" of *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville USA*, but that it was Irving who made heroes of the men in it.[45]

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[42]Irving, *Astoria*, pp. xix-xxiii.

[43]Ibid., p. 6.

[44]Pierre Irving, *Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, III, p. 114; See also John F. McDermott, "Washington Irving and the Journal of Captain Bonneville," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (December 1956): 465-466.

[45]Irving, *Bonneville*, p. liii.

*Bonneville* characterized the adventurous enterprise genre, and in the book Irving defined the characteristics of the mountain man hero. The work chronicled Bonneville's attempt to compete in the Rocky Mountain fur trade. In 1832, Bonneville obtained an extended leave from the Army to lead a fur trade expedition into the Far West, to reconnoiter British and Indian positions, estimate their numbers, and map the region for official purposes. For three years his company of 110 trappers roamed the Far West, interweaving commerce and national expansion, private interest and public duty. Irving portrayed the expedition as adventuresome and included Indian troubles, deprivations, and explorations. Thus, *Bonneville* was written as an adventure story depicting the mountain men as vanguards of national economic expansion into the West.

Irving's mountain men heroes were products of Jacksonian persuasions; they were adventurous, heroic, and industrious. He minimized the harshness and tedium of the trapping life. He accentuated the mountain men's heroic qualities, portraying them as successful individuals.[46] And he changed the work's original title from *The Rocky Mountains* to *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, because he understood the day's ideological currents and the public interest in works depicting action and enterprise with "the merit and charm of discovery, dear to every brave and adventurous spirit."[47] Irving created the mountain men to be heroic practitioners of both enterprise and exploration. As such, Irving's mountain men projected an American identity. The wilderness, Irving concluded, was what

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[46]Ibid., pp. l-li.

[47]Ibid., p. 159.

produced in his mountain men the "manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence, most in unison with [the] political institutions" of the day.[48]

Essential to Irving making his mountain men heroic was his need to portray them as unique and superior. He did this by using the term "Mountaineers" — he never called the Rocky Mountain trapper a mountain man as they have become popularly known in American culture and history — to distinguish the Rocky Mountain trappers from the rest of fur trade society. He then elevated their status by giving them character and abilities unmatched by other fur tradesmen.[49] These "Mountaineers" in *Bonneville* were "a totally different class" and "physically and mentally a more mercurial race than the fur traders and trappers of former days."[50] For Irving, this "new" class of American trappers was more determined in their business than other races and even previous American fur trade men. Their superiority came from their "wild wood life" and their Anglo-American heritage.[51] By using race to assert the mountain men's superiority, Irving delineated them from fur men of other nationalities. Irving depicted his mountain men as stronger, more independent, intelligent, and more virtuous than European equivalents. For instance, French fur men were "less hardy, self-dependent and game spirited," according to Irving, and precise opposites of the

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[48]Irving, *A Tour of the Prairie*, p. 55.

[49]Ibid., p. 10.

[50]Ibid.

[51] Primitivism, as an important aspect of romantic ideals, is outlined in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 47-49.

mountain men of "old American stock."[52]

Horsemanship was another trait that Irving used to distinguish the mountain man hero. As Irving put it, "a man who bestrides a horse must be essentially different from a man who cowers in a canoe."[53] It was a trait that would become typical of America's western icons. True, the horse was important to the trade; but it does not follow that horsemanship made the mountain man superior. Horses were commonplace. Astride and controlling something so large and powerful, standing between himself and the ground, the horse gave the mountain man a symbolic power that has been important to his and every other Western hero's imagery ever since — at least to those whose business is the analysis of American literature.[54]

According to Irving, even the mountain man's choice of arms revealed a superior act of intelligence. He noted, "the American always grasps his rifle; he despises what he calls the 'shot-gun'," meaning the fusee, that the European fur man used.[55] The mountain man in American culture has since become associated with phenomenal marksmanship, a fine rifle, and proficiency with a host of edged weapons. Just as the Winchester and the six-shooter became the cowboy's familiar armament, so the Hawken rifle and the large skinning knife became the trademark weaponry of the mountain man. And his ability to use them was

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[52]Irving, *Bonneville*, pp. 19, 11.

[53]Ibid., pp. 10, 18.

[54]Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 92-93.

[55]Irving, *Bonneville*, p. 19.

seldom questioned.

By applying these qualifications of race, superior intelligence, fitness, skillfulness, and ability to the mountain man, Irving ascribed a preeminence and uniqueness to American character. On the matter he wrote:

> The American trapper stands by himself, and is peerless for the service of the wilderness. Drop him in the midst of a prairie, or in the heart of the mountains, and he is never at a loss. He notices every landmark; can retrace his route through the most monotonous plains, or the most perplexed labyrinth of the mountains; no danger nor difficulty can appall him, and he scorns to complain under any privation.[56]

Compared to a European fur man who "takes little heed of landmarks, depends upon his leaders ... and is easily perplexed and lost," Irving's mountain man exemplified the more independent, "hardy, lithe, vigorous, and active" American, "extravagant in word, and thought, and deed; heedless of hardship; daring of danger; prodigal of the present, and thoughtless of the future."[57]

With rifle and horse, the mountain man of Irving's pen became a self-sufficient and independent man, an adventurous enterpriser who despised the comfort of a permanent abode, and spurned social restraint. His character and skills were unquestioned and reaffirmed his superiority. They were indicative of Jacksonian qualities. Irving's image of the "free trapper" most accurately entailed the Jacksonian drift.

In American culture and history the greatest status in mountain man society has been assigned to the "free trapper." Irving became the first to distinguish this class of trapper:

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., pp. 10, 19.

> The free trappers are a more independent class ... [who] come and go ... when and where they please; provide their own horse, arms, and other equipment; trap and trade on their own account, and dispose of their skins and peltries to the highest bidder ... There is perhaps, no class of men on the face of the earth ... who lead a life of more continued exertion, peril, and excitement, and who are more enamored of their occupations, than the free trappers of the West. No toil, no danger, no privation can turn the trapper from his pursuit. His passionate excitement at times resembles a mania. In vain may the most vigilant and cruel savages beset his path; in vain may rocks, and precipices, and wintry torrents oppose his progress; let but a single track of a beaver meet his eye, and he forgets all dangers and defies all difficulties ... Such is the mountaineer, the hardy trapper of the West; and such as we have slightly sketched it, is the wild, Robin Hood kind of life, with all its strange and motley populace, now existing in full vigor among the Rocky Mountains.[58]

Irving's mountain men heroes were distinct from foreign and even earlier American fur trade men. Most importantly, Irving's heroes marked a departure from the days of strict dedication to a company into a time of strict self-interest. Their literary depiction reflected the social and economic trends of American society. The free trappers wore the most extravagant attire, rode the finest horses, and owned the best rifles. They could out-brag, out-fight, and outlive any other men because they were the most self-sufficient and ruggedly independent frontiersmen.[59] To quote Robert Cleland, they were a "reckless breed of men." [60] These mountain men were the quintessential "American Adam" under Irving's hand. At the same time, Irving portrayed them as leaders of national westward expansion and as men who

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[58]Ibid., pp. 68-69, 11-12.

[59]Ibid., pp. 69-71.

[60]The term is from the title of Robert Glass Cleland, *This Reckless Breed of Men: The Trappers and Fur Traders of the Southwest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950).

overcame barriers of Indians, terrain, and climate to further the country's economic destiny.[61]

Irving's mountain men became Far West heroes by undergoing what Owen Wister later required of the cowboy. It has been said that Wister's Virginian was "a cowboy without cows," and in similar fashion, Irving's mountain men were trappers engaged in adventurous enterprise and exploration, but who seldom pursued trapping.[62] Irving divorced the trapper from history and made him something he seldom was: appealing. That Irving exploited the mountain men, made them national heroes, and made them suitable for popular consumption by "extending some facts, touching up others, enriching and embellishing" says much about Irving's ability to understand the social and literary currents of the nation and apply his talents accordingly in manufacturing an American hero.[63]

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[61]In contrast to Irving's depictions of the mountain men, the real mountain men possessed unsavory reputations, and occasionally their crudities prevailed in reports and stories about them. Many existed at very primitive levels, and some had even practiced cannibalism. As such, they were not the sort likely to be romantic or heroic icons. See for instance, Dale L. Morgan and Eleanor Towles Harris, eds., *The Rocky Mountain Journals of William Marshall Anderson, The West in 1834* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1967), p. 32; Cornelius J. Brosnan, *Jason Lee, Prophet of the New Oregon* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 60; Rev. Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour beyond the Rocky Mountains* (Ithaca, New York: Mack, Andrus, and Woodruff, Printers, 1840), pp. 35, 54, 78-80; John Kirk Townsend, *Across the Rockies to the Columbia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978 [1839]), p. 123; LeRoy R. Hafen, "Mountain Men: Big Phil the Cannibal" *Colorado Magazine* 13 (March 1936): 53-58.

[62]J. Frank Dobie, *Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*, rev. ed. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1981), p. 124; see also McDermott, *The Western Journals of Washington Irving*, pp. 19-20, in which Irving describes trappers as men marked of "adventurous passage."

[63]Washington Irving quoted from Pierre Irving's *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, II, p. 302; Irving, *Astoria*, pp. xvi-xvii.

It seems doubtful that Irving would have portrayed the mountain man as he did, or even written about him, were Americans not receptive to such a frontier figure. When Irving discovered society's attraction to things western he also found the mountain man a viable source of inspiration and profit, and depicted him with the literary market in mind. Understanding what attracted readership, Irving portrayed the mountain man hero as a romantic, heroic, and appealing figure. In contrast, the memoirs of various mountain men have clearly revealed the dramatic limitations of the trapping life, a fact confirmed by the mundane doings in Osborne Russell's *Journal of a Trapper.*[64] Such a life was obviously dirty, cold, and hard. Irving's use of heroic and romantic imagery and the spirit of adventurous enterprise in constructing his mountain man hero secured himself a niche among the early writers of the frontier. And he reaped handsome profits doing so.[65]

Critics from progressive schools viewed Irving as the perfect example of greedy Jacksonianism, eager to manipulate his readers and sacrifice his art for gain.[66] Yet Irving's industry seems not so flagrant when one considers that his fur trade works were attempts to turn the literary marketplace into an arena of American culture having its own unique form and to convey the currents of American thought and national identity through American

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[64]Aubrey L. Haines, ed., *Journal of a Trapper* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1955). This work best represents the actuality of trapper life — the tedium and hardness of it — without the tampering of romantic imagination.

[65]Robert Edson Lee, *From West To East: Studies in the Literature of the American West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), p. 68.

[66]Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, 2 vols (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), II, pp. 203-212; Anteles, p. xiii-xv.

literature. His works were not only part of a literary trend fueled by Jacksonian economics, but were measured expressions of economic expansion, with the central figure being his mountain man hero. Irving created a distinct cultural icon of the mountain man hero. The succeeding phase of American expansion during the remaining antebellum years enlarged the mountain man's heroic image.

In the 1840s there emerged a form of expansion labeled "Manifest Destiny." It implied that westward expansion was prearranged by the Almighty, and carried forward by his favored people.[67] The ideology of Manifest Destiny sanctioned two factors: one geographical (the expansion of national holdings), and one ethnic (Anglo-American superiority). Both factors specifically contributed to the mountain man's portrayal in American culture, and both added to his heroic construct during the 1840s and 1850s.[68]

The philosophy of Manifest Destiny embraced the exploration of the American West as an integral part of national policy. The controversial government explorer Captain John C. Frémont influenced the destiny of the American West when his official reports of his expeditions were prepared and published to encourage public interest in settling the Far West. Frémont's official reports were well-written, well-known, vivid accounts spiced with incidents of mountain man life. They bestowed a new identity to the mountain man, casting

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[67]John L. O'Sullivan, in his own literary journal, *The Democratic Review*, coined the phrase "Manifest Destiny" in 1845. See Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, pp. 24-27.

[68]Ibid., pp. 31-33. See also Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxionism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952), pp. 133-136.

him as a scout or guide, and a effectual agent of Manifest Destiny.[69]

Frémont wrote extensively about mountain man Kit Carson, making Carson the best known hero of the West. In 1842, Carson joined Frémont's first expedition, as a scout. His continued service on Frémont's ensuing expeditions led to a lifelong friendship between the two men, and to Carson becoming a national legend and symbol.[70] In his *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44*, which became essential reading for west-bound emigrants, Frémont made Carson a hero. American readers and would-be settlers devoured Frémont's work. Frémont's report staged Carson as the guide at the forefront of the opening of the West to settlers. His depictions of Carson embellished the scout image to the mountain man hero construct. Frémont also refined Carson's language and habits, creating in him a virtuous and manly figure in American culture.[71] Like previous authors, Frémont distinguished his hero by race.[72] He also singled out Carson's equestrian abilities by commenting that "mounted

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[69]Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, pp. 232-33, 240-250; Kent Ladd Steckmesser, *The Western Hero in History and Legend.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), pp. 17-20; Harvey Lewis Carter, *'Dear Old Kit' The Historical Christopher Carson* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), pp. 5-10.

[70]Steckmesser, *The Western Hero in History and Legend*, pp. 17-20; Carter, *'Dear Old Kit'*, pp. 5-10.

[71]John C. Frémont, *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-44* (Washington DC: Gales and Seaton, 1845), hereafter cited as *Report*. The *Report* later became Volume 1 in the D. Appleton & Company's *Library of Popular Reading* and cost twenty-five cents. A number of publishers continued to reprint Frémont's *Report* for years after, keeping it a best-seller in western works until the Civil War. See Carter, *Dear Old Kit*, p. 6.

[72]Frémont, *Report*, pp. 17-18.

on a fine horse, without a saddle, and scouring bareheaded over the prairies, Kit was one of the finest pictures of a horseman I have ever seen."[73] Throughout the work, Carson and other mountain men possessed "quick and sure action," and the "courage and professional skill" necessary for such a life.[74] Frémont's writings made Carson the Rocky Mountain equivalent to Natty Bumppo. Besides endowing his hero with proper skills, blood lines, and intelligence, Frémont suppressed details about Carson's true character and appearance, and purified Carson's image.[75] Frémont intended to give his hero qualities that appealed to American readers while solidifying Carson's role in opening the West.

Frémont enhanced the image of the mountain man as a guide by making Carson and other mountain men essential to the process of geographical expansion.[76] The report of Frémont's second expedition revealed the importance of the Carson figure as a mountain man guide, for it was Carson who successfully guided the expedition across the snow-choked Sierra Nevadas. But Carson received Frémont's greatest praise when he recovered some stolen horses and took revenge on Indians who had attacked the expedition. It was a action related by Frémont that also embodied the race conquest part of Manifest Destiny thought. In one of western literature's most well-known accounts Frémont wrote:

> In the afternoon a war-whoop was heard, such as Indians make when returning from a victorious enterprise; and soon Carson and Godey appeared, driving before them a band of horses, recognized by Fuentes as part of those

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[73]Ibid., p. 9.

[74]Ibid., pp. 9, 65, 262-63.

[75]Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, p. 24.

[76]Frémont, *Report*, pp. 5, 35.

> they had lost. Two bloody scalps, dangling from the end of Godey's gun, announced that they had overtaken the Indians as well as the horses ... The time, place, object, and numbers considered, this expedition of Carson and Godey may be considered among the boldest and most disinterested which the annals of western adventure, so full of daring deeds, can present. Two men, in a savage desert, pursue day and night an unknown body of Indians into the defiles of an unknown mountain — attack them on sight, without counting numbers--and defeat them in an instant — and for what? To punish the robbers of the desert, and to avenge the wrongs of Mexicans whom they did not know. I repeat: it was Carson and Godey who did this — the former an American, born in Boonslick County in Missouri; the latter a Frenchman, born in St. Louis — and both trained in western enterprise from early life.[77]

Though Frémont liked and admired the French trapper Godey, he patronized the American readership by focusing on the Anglo-American Carson instead. Frémont's characterizations of Carson created a type-figure of the mountain man that added the image of scout, so much so that in a few years Lewis Garrard in his *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail* (1850) labeled him the "renowned Kit Carson, so celebrated as the companion and guide of Colonel Frémont."[78] Carson advanced his own image as guide and man of Manifest Destiny, by joining Frémont's bloodless conquest of California, carrying news of it east, and guiding General Stephen Watts Kearney's column to California.[79] In 1848, he accompanied Lieutenant George Brewerton on a trek from Los Angeles to Taos with Brewerton

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[77]Ibid., pp. 262-63.

[78]Lewis H. Garrard, *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail: or, Prairie Travel and Scalp Dances, With a Look at Los Rancheros from Muleback and the Rocky Mountain Campfire*, new ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955). p. 240.

[79]Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, pp. 250-257; M. Morgan Estergreen, *Kit Carson, A Portrait in Courage* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), chapters 9-10.

subsequently bolstering Carson's already heroic image in an article for *Harper's Magazine.*[80]

John C. Frémont championed Thomas Fitzpatrick, Joseph Walker, and Jim Bridger as archetypal mountain men.[81] Frémont especially distinguished Fitzpatrick, saying:

> Mr. Fitzpatrick, whose name and high reputation are familiar to all who interest themselves in the history of this country, had reached Laramie in company with Mr. Bridger; and the emigrants were fortunate enough to obtain his services to guide them ... [and] the influence of "the Broken Hand," as they [the Indians] called Mr. Fitzpatrick, (one of his hands having been shattered by the bursting of a gun,) at length prevailed, and obtained for [the emigrants] an unmolested passage ... from all that I have been able to learn, I have no doubt that the emigrants owe their lives to Mr. Fitzpatrick.[82]

But Carson emerged as the quintessential scout hero-type with American readers, if for nothing more than being the man who guided "the Pathfinder."

Later writers exploited the mountain man-guide image to suit their purposes, notably Lansford W. Hastings, who hoped to gain political power in California by aiding in its settlement. His heavily read tract, *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* (1845), influenced many who went west, including the tragic Donner-Reed Party. Hastings established authenticity with his readers by using "mountaineer" guides in the text. In the opening chapter Hastings introduced them to the "trappers of the Rocky Mountains," who

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[80]George D. Brewerton, "A Ride With Kit Carson," *Harper's Magazine* (August 1853), 307-345. Brewerton produced later articles of his trek for *Harper's Magazine* which continued to depict Carson and other mountain men as guides with heroic qualities. See for instance George D. Brewerton, "Incidents of Travel in New Mexico," *Harper's Magazine* (April 1854), 578-583.

[81]Frémont, *Report*, p. 65.

[82]Ibid., pp. 57-58.

had the skills and knowledge essential to the survival of any Oregon-bound caravan.[83] Hastings capitalized on the popular figure of Thomas Fitzpatrick, who guided his caravan west from Fort Bridger. Most importantly, Hastings championed Fitzpatrick as "eminently qualified as guide."[84]

Similarly, newspapers, including the St. Joseph *Gazette* and the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, urged westbound emigrants to employ good guides, preferably mountain men, in the belief that such men could ensure safe passage.[85] Other newspapers recommended the purchase of guidebooks such as *What I Saw in California* (1848) by Edward Bryant, or Rufus B. Sage's *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains* (1846). Both works featured mountain men as the key and necessary figures guiding the west-bound emigrants.[86] The image of the

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[83]Lansford Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* (Cincinnati: George Conclin, 1845), pp. 8-9; John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 59.

[84]Hastings, *The Emigrants' Guide*, p. 5.

[85]St. Joseph *Gazette*, 3 December 1847; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, 13 March 1844. See also Unruh, *The Plains Across*, p. 57, 109-111.

[86]Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California: Being the Journal of a Tour, by the Emigrant Route and South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, Across the Continent of North America, the Great Desert Basin, and Through California, in the Years 1846, 1847* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1848), pp. 14, 145, 354-357, 413. The work underwent numerous printings, and later reprinted in 1885 as *Rocky Mountain Adventures: Bristling with Animated Details of Fearful Fights of American Hunters with Savage Indians, Mexican Rancheros, and Beasts of Prey* (New York: Hurst and Company, 1885); Rufus B. Sage, *Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas, and the Grand Prairies; Or, Notes by the Way, During an Excursion of Three Years, With a Description of the Countries Passed Through* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846). Like Bryant's book, Sage's went through a number of printings and a few title changes. Reprinted with original title in 1854, but in 1855

mountain man as guide became central to his characterization in popular literature and subsequently in the American mind.

The image of the mountain man hero as a figure of Manifest Destiny also acquired an additional facet, as an Indian fighter. Manifest Destiny involved not only exploring and acquiring western lands but also putting them to proper Anglo-American use. Indians, viewed as barriers to that end, were disposable, unredeemable, foredoomed to extinction, and dealt with accordingly. This race-based part of Manifest Destiny became part of the mountain man hero's image, as he became an Indian fighter to support the cause. His image carried the cultural baggage connected to that trait.

Writings about the mountain man before the 1840s contained moderate accounts of brushes with Indians, but works thereafter endorsed a more racist tone, and cast the mountain man as a righteous conqueror. Writers dropped current theories of race superiority and destiny into an aggressive expansionist rhetoric.[87] One example is George Ruxton's *Life in the Far West* (1849), derived from the young Englishman's peregrinations in the Southwest in 1846 and 1847.[88] He created a fictionalized history of mountain man life that followed the exploits of Killbuck and La Bonte (fictional names applied to actual mountain men), and

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was reprinted as *Wild Scenes in Kansas and Nebraska, the Rocky Mountains, Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas, and the Grand Prairies* (Philadelphia: GD Miller, Publisher, 1855). The piece was also printed as *Rocky Mountain Life; Or, Startling Scenes and Perilous Adventures in the Far West* (Dayton, Ohio: Edward Canby, n.d.). Both works capitalized on the popular image of the adventurous mountain man hero.

[87]Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, chapters 5, 7-9.

[88]George Frederick Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, edited by LeRoy R. Hafen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951).

their carefree companions. Ruxton's heroes were independent, enterprising, able men of American stock, and vanguards of American expansion.[89] As Ruxton put it: "To these men alone [was] due the empire of the West--destined in a few short years to become the most important of those confederated states which compose the mighty union of North America."[90] However, these mountain men viewed the Indian differently from their literary predecessors. Idyllic perceptions were gone, replaced by the race rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. Hence, the mountain man's heroic stature became analogous to how many Indians, "the natural foe of the white man," he could kill and scalp.[91] His superiority, "determination and resolve," "fixedness of purpose," and quick action stemmed from his Anglo-American heritage, which allowed him to "so infinitely surpass the savage Indian."[92] And if caught in any scrape with Indians, "two to one in mountain calculations [were] scarcely considered odds, if red skin to white."[93] Ruxton's mountain men eagerly lifted Indian scalps whenever possible; his book was among the first to substantially dwell on scalping.

The philosophy of Manifest Destiny foresaw the inevitable extinction of the Indian.[94]

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[89]Ibid., pp. 11, 19, 22, 50-52.

[90]Ibid., p 51.

[91]Ibid., p. 22.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Ibid., p. 39.

[94]Charles Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (New York: E. Bliss, Lippincott, Grambo, 1830), pp. 141-142; Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind, or Ethnological Researches: Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and Upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co.,

And this end would result because of what the Indian's "civilized persecutors entail[ed] upon them," since "with every [mountain] man's hand against them, they [were] drag[ged] onto their final destiny; and the day [was] not far distant" according to Ruxton, "when the American Indian [would] exist only in the traditions of his pale-faced conquerors."[95] Other writers about the mountain man depicted the Indians as less than human and further endorsed ending their obstruction to expansion. In David Coyner's *The Lost Trappers*, the "savage" and "degraded" Indians were no more than "links between human nature and the brute."[96] Kit Carson became representative of the Indian-fighting hero. Ruxton, who viewed Carson as the "paragon of mountaineers," also described him as the "incarnate devil in Indian fight, and [who] had raised more hair from head of redskins than any two men in the western country."[97] Carson's image in American culture became that of both guide and Indian fighter, and other mountain men were depicted in a similar manner.[98] Most other works of the day about mountain men held to this popular current, making for him the role of Indian

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1854), pp. 53-79. See also Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, chapters 7-9.

[95]Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, p. 100.

[96]David H. Coyner, *The Lost Trappers*, reprint ed. David J. Weber, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

[97]Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, pp. 183-184.

[98]Examples of Carson as the Indian fighter in popular literature include Charles Averill, *Kit Carson, Prince of the Goldhunters* (Boston: GH Williams, 1849); Emerson Bennett, *The Prairie Flower; Or, Adventures in the Far West* (Cincinnati: Stratton and Barnard, 1849); Perhaps the best-known of dime novel types, and one of the earliest dime novels, is Edward S. Ellis, *The Fighting Trapper; Or, Kit Carson to the Rescue* (New York: Frank Starr and Co. Of the American News Company, 1874). The image of Carson as the blood-and-thunder hero is examined in Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, chapter 4.

fighter a main part of the mountain man hero's identity.[99] Consequently, the Indian fighter image became a main part of the mountain man hero.

Stories about mountain man life occasionally appeared in magazines, including *Scribner's Monthly* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. These publications catered to popular tastes and conveyed already prevalent images of the mountain man. His role in the process of Manifest Destiny was never questioned, never doubted. He remained the adventurer, a symbol of national character, fulfilling his destiny in the West. Magazines transmitted the mountain man's heroic image to a wider readership and provided vicarious adventures for Eastern readers.[100]

A readily appealing heroic mountain man figure appeared in popular paintings and lithographs, reflecting his treatment in literature. That is to say, the mountain man's first appearances in popular art were visual embodiments of Manifest Destiny ideals. Themes primarily exhibited Indian fighting or scouting. Influential art and literary critic Henry

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[99]Other works depicting the Indian fighter type include popular works as Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 7, 51-52; Lewis H. Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail*, pp. 68, 123-124; Emerson Bennett, *The Border Rover* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1857), pp. 63-66; Emerson Bennett, "Rocky Mountain Perils," *Wild Scenes on the Frontiers; Or, Heroes of the West* (Philadelphia: Hamelin and Company, 1859), pp. 232-237.

[100]Examples include George D. Brewerton, "Incidents of Travel in New Mexico," 517-583; "Fur Hunting in Oregon," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (February 1856), 340-346; "Story of James P. Beckwourth," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (September 1856), 455-172; "The First Overland Trip to California," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (June 1860), 80-93; George MacDonald, "The Wonders of Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* (May 1871), 2.

Tuckerman urged artists to promote the mountain man as scout and killer.[101] Artists followed Tuckerman's advice.[102]

Three early painters of the mountain man hero, artists Charles Deas, William Ranney, and Arthur F. Tait, depicted him as a paramount figure in fulfilling the nation's Manifest Destiny. Their works influenced popular impressions about the mountain men when transmitted to a broad audience through popular prints.[103] These artists recreated the mountain man hero by exhibiting him conquering Indians or safeguarding emigrants. Many became well-known prints and lithographs that were mass produced and sold widely through

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[101]Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists: American Artist Life Comprising Biographical and Critical Sketches of American Artists, Preceded by an Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of Art in America.* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1867: reprinted ed. New York: James F. Carr, 1966), p. 425. Tuckerman was a contemporary of the mid-1800s who felt Far West subjects employed by artists could speak of the nation's future.

[102]David C. Huntington, *Art and the Excited Spirit: America in the Romantic Period* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1972), pp. 1-30; Nancy K. Anderson, "Curious Historical Artistic Data: Art History and Western American Art," *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 1-10, 18-19. Alfred Jacob Miller's numerous paintings of the mountain men are not included here because they had virtually no influence on the mountain man's popular image during the nineteenth century. They had very limited exhibition and most pieces either hung in Sir William Drummond Stewart's Scottish castle or were tossed into a drawer in Miller's portrait studio. Only since the mid-1940s because of the efforts of Bernard DeVoto have Miller's paintings become popular, and an influence on twentieth century perceptions. See Ron Tyler, ed., *Alfred Jacob Miller: Artist on the Oregon Trail* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1982), pp. 3-6; Vernon Young, "The Emergence of American Painting," *Art International* 18 (September 20, 1974): 14-17; Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947).

[103]Peter Hassrick, Ron Tyler, Carol Clark, Linda Ayres, Warder H. Cadbury, Herman J. Viola, and Bernard Reilly, Jr., *American Frontier Life: Early Western Paintings and Prints* (New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1987), pp. 9, 11, 19.

the American Art-Union or by companies like Currier and Ives.[104] Others became customary magazine illustrations. The number of such pieces only confirmed popular perceptions about the mountain man.

According to historian John Francis McDermott, Charles Deas was "probably the best known and most highly appreciated of western artists" of the 1840s.[105] Deas' artistry, influenced by his inner feelings and desires, was infused with ideological currents about the frontier, and national destiny and identity in American culture. This included a passion for mountain man life. Deas felt his artistic essence might best be served if he visited "the scenes of nature's own children, to share the repast of the hunter, and taste the wild excitement of frontier life."[106] He traveled west and lived the mountain man life in order to unleash his creativity. While out west Deas acquired the name "Rocky Mountains" (a title he fancied) from the mountain men he associated with, because he dressed "like a fur hunter" and because of his "free-spirited habits."[107] But Deas also assumed the mountain man's dress

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[104]Peter Hassrick, *American Frontier Life*, p. 19; Jay Cantor, "Prints and the American Art-Union," in *Prints in and of America to 1850*, ed. by John D. Morse (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1970), pp. 297-326. The American Art-Union was the first organization to promote and popularize artistic works about the American frontier and frontiersmen by encouraging such art and printing them in numbers for popular consumption.

[105]John Francis McDermott, "Charles Deas: Painter of the Frontier," *Art Quarterly* 13 (Autumn 1950): 293.

[106]Peggy and Harold Samuels, *The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 130.

[107]Lieutenant J. Henry Carleton, *The Prairie Logbooks: Dragoon Campaigns to the Pawnee Villages in 1844, and to the Rocky Mountains in 1845*, ed. Louis Pelzer (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1943), p. 28.

and manners to distance himself from "civilization" and to create his own sense of identity. Though an outlet for artistic expression, the West also provided an escape from the pressures of civilization for Deas — both external and internal — for he was committed to an asylum not long after returning to the East.[108] His legacy included two popular mountain man pieces. His highly praised *Long Jakes, the Rocky Mountain Man* (1844) caused a sensation at the American Art-Union, and inspired an essay by Henry William Herbert titled "Long Jakes, the Prairie Man," published in the *New York Illustrated Magazine*, accompanied by an engraved copy of Deas' *Long Jakes.*[109] Deas' second notable work was his *The Death Struggle* (1845), which portrayed a mountain man and an Indian fighting while plummeting over a cliff. His paintings spoke directly to the mountain man hero image. With *Long Jakes* especially, Deas elevated the mountain man hero's cultural status. He accomplished this in part by depicting the mountain man hero astride his horse, an artistic custom usually reserved for depicting military heroes or heads-of-state. Art history scholars interpret Long Jakes as resembling Jacques-Louis David's familiar Napoleon Crossing the Alps (1800) with all its heroic conventions too closely, which reveals much about how Deas intended to portray the

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[108]Carol Clark, "Charles Deas," in *American Frontier Life: Early Western Paintings and Prints*, chapter 3.

[109]Henry William Herbert, "Long Jakes, The Prairie Man," *New York Illustrated Magazine* (July 1846), 169-174. One of the highly favorable reviews of Deas' Long Jakes was in The Broadway Journal, 4 January 1845, which described the mountain man Long Jakes as "from the outer verge of our civilization ... [and] as wild as any characters in Froissart's pages, or Salvator Rosa's pictures. But [in] "Long Jakes" ... there are [also] traits of former gentleness and refinement ... [and] is not a picture to be forgotten. His red shirt and his honest face will live in many a mind's eye, during the next generation." See also Carol Clark, "Charles Deas," p. 60; and J. Gray Sweeney, *Masterpieces of Western American Art* (New York: Mallard Press, 1991), p. 32.

mountain man. Deas' art gained national acclaim not only for himself, but also for the mountain man hero.[110]

Deas contributed much to the mountain man's image, and to the image of ensuing western icons. He presented a mountain man who embodied the American values of independence and bravery, a Jacksonian man on his destined errand. His mountain man hero rose in popularity in the 1840s and its influence continued into the twentieth century. He popularized the lone mounted trapper image, and it became (and remains still) a potent cultural symbol. It personified the Anglo-American national spirit and became the *beau ideal* frontiersman image. Deas' depictions of the lone in-the-saddle mountain man also became the model for later western heroes. Anyone even remotely familiar with Remington, Russell, and other western artists should see the resemblances appearing in their works.[111]

The exploits of mountain men also interested artist William Ranney who depicted them as both Indian fighters and scouts.[112] Ranney traveled through the Southwest but painted all his mountain men heroes from his Hoboken, New Jersey, studio built to resemble a frontier cabin.[113] Like Deas' works, Ranney's depictions of the mountain men were

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[110]Dawn Glanz, *How the West was Drawn: American Art and the Settling of the Frontier* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), p. 145.

[111]Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, "The Absent Other: Women in the Land and Art of Mountain Men," Jules David Prown, William Cronon, et al., *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 161.

[112]Francis S. Grubar, *William Ranney, Painter of the Early West* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1962), p. 7

[113]William H. Goetzmann, *The Mountain Man* (Cody, Wyoming: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1978), p. 27.

distributed to a broad audience through popular prints.[114] In his *Advice on the Prairie* (1853), *The Old Scout's Tale* (1853), and *The Scouting Party* (1851) the central figure is a mountain man — a free trapper type, independent, acting as a guide and providing information or aid to attentive emigrants. The race struggle side of Manifest Destiny was depicted in his *The Trapper's Last Shot* (1850) and *The Retreat* (1850). *The Trapper's Last Shot* became one of the most familiar mountain man images; it was distributed by Currier and Ives, and was copied by numerous unknown artists.[115]

Arthur F. Tait's paintings of mountain men depicted Indian fighter types. This was not surprising since many of his western works were commissioned and published as large folio prints by Currier and Ives who, understanding consumer tastes, encouraged such images. Tait never did see the American West that he painted. Instead he based many of his works on Ranney's and George Catlin's works. Still, Tait's reputation endured as one of the best artists of the American West and the mountain man.[116] His works included *The Prairie Hunter--One Rubbed Out!* (1852), *The Check* (1854), *Trapper Looking Out* (1852), *The Pursuit* (1855), and *The Last War Whoop* (1855). In all of his works, Tait's mountain men were never involved in trapping but were instead advancing national destiny on

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[114]Peter Hassrick, *American Frontier Life*, p. 19.

[115]See Frederic A. Cunningham, *Currier and Ives Prints: An Illustrated Check List*, new, updated edition. (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1983). Linda Ayres, "William Ranney," in *American Frontier Life*, pp. 79-107.

[116]Warder H. Cadbury, *Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait: Artist in the Adirondacks* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), pp. 28-34; Hermann Warner Williams, Jr., *Mirror to the American Past* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1973), p. 111.

horseback, always on the move. They provided romantic images that reflected the American mind of the time.[117]

Literary and visual images were inescapably linked to the tenets of national destiny, and became important to the mountain man hero's identity. They were simplified images, but they formed a stereotype embodying current cultural beliefs in which the mountain man personified a nation still looking forward. Most of the popular media of the day projected him in that light to a public which expected nothing less. But post-Civil War years brought changed national perceptions of the West. By century's end the West, once the symbol of the nation's rise, became emblematic of the nation's past. The mountain man hero changed too, becoming a figure of a passing national heritage and identity. His image no longer reflected a sense of progress, but an anxious nostalgia in turn-of-the-century American society.

Theodore Roosevelt and Frederick Remington adjusted the mountain man hero's image to fit society's altered views of the West. Roosevelt believed the West's heroes exemplified the proper character and social behavior which, if understood and followed, would keep American society from becoming weak and even help maintain its democratic institutions. In 1882, Roosevelt headed west to build himself physically up by working on

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[117]Peter Hassrick, *American Frontier Life: Early Western Paintings and Prints* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), pp. 51-129, 175-176; Harry T. Peters, *Currier and Ives: Printmakers to the American People* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1942), pp. 2-3, 24-26; Phillip Drennon Thomas, "The West of Currier and Ives," *The American West* (January-February 1982): 18-25; Warder H. Cadbury, "Arthur F. Tait," *American Frontier Life: Early Western Painting and Prints* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum; New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), pp. 109-129.

his Dakota cattle ranch. Reflecting later on his western experiences, he perceived changes in himself that he attributed to his immersion in the wilderness, or in his so called "strenuous life." The qualities he gained he ascribed to the cowboy and the mountain man types, who became role models as well as western icons. Seeing himself as a self-absorbed test case, Roosevelt projected that American society might well undergo a similar regeneration. Roosevelt believed that if society looked to its past western heroes as examples of proper character, it could regain the energy, manliness, self-reliance, and fundamental virtues he felt society was letting slip away.[118]

Roosevelt saw in the mountain men, those he called "the old race of Rocky Mountain hunters and trappers, of reckless, dauntless Indian fighters," the necessary but quickly-passing qualities society needed.[119] Though most of the actual mountain men no longer existed, those that remained were in Roosevelt's mind, "frank, bold, and self-reliant, ... generous and hospitable" and loyal, all as a result of frontier life.[120] Roosevelt noted that almost all were Americans (the purer the Anglo blood the better) who had furthered America's destiny as scouts and Indian fighters.[121] They remained unchanged over time,

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[118]G. Edward White, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience: The West of Frederic Remington, Theodore Roosevelt, and Owen Wister* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 60-67, 79-93; Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), pp. 36-42.

[119]Theodore Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," *The Century Magazine* (October 1888), 831; Reprinted in chapter 6 of Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (New York: The Century Company, 1904), p. 81.

[120]Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, p. 82.

[121]Ibid., p. 81

Roosevelt said, and for him were examples of proper American character.[122] The contradiction exists that few, if any, of those Roosevelt professed to have known were real mountain men. Most of the mountain men died before Roosevelt went West, a bygone era. Roosevelt did with the mountain men what many before had done. He tailored the mountain man hero image to suit present social and cultural currents. Roosevelt created from them heroic symbols of the nation's past, who embodied individualism, self-sufficiency, bully-manhood, and the strenuous life. Roosevelt portrayed the mountain men as prototypes to a society he believed was becoming soft, he upheld them as examples for American society to emulate.

Frederick Remington portrayed his mountain men heroes much like Roosevelt, but with visual images. The two men were friends and even collaborated, with Remington illustrating a number of Roosevelt's articles for *Century Magazine* which were published as *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*.[123] Remington gave the mountain men a strong identity that embodied the anxieties of a nation transforming. Consequently, he projected in his art what Roosevelt had put in words. Remington made the mountain men examples of rugged individualism and manliness in American culture. As a painter, sculptor, and popular illustrator, Remington developed the visual stereotype of the mountain man. Remington

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[122]Theodore Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," 831-832; see also Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, pp. 81-85.

[123]Peter H. Hassrick, *Frederic Remington: Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture in the Amon Carter Museum and the Sid W. Richardson Foundation Collections* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973), p. 23. See also Theodore Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," 831-832; and Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, pp. 81-85.

traveled west like Roosevelt, but to tend sheep. A latecomer to the West, chances were that Remington met none of the real mountain men his images represented. When he created his mountain men, he was depicting the past, not the present, and his images reflected it. Influenced by childhood exposure to romantic adventure stories, a rising western nostalgia, and concern to arrest the advancement of civilization, Remington resolved to record the "wild riders and vacant lands" as he saw fit, before they vanished.[124] In the case of the mountain men Remington arrived too late. But for the artist, time was no obstacle. He reconstructed the mountain men's image to match his preconceptions, seeing himself as the Far West's preeminent interpreter, and created a rugged icon that became more real than reality. Like Roosevelt, Remington believed that American society had become soft because of the frontier's passing, and that examples of frontier types could reinvigorate society and reconstruct its sense of identity. Remington therefore made his mountain men heroes look particularly rugged, individualistic, and self-sufficient. They personified the most elemental figure of the frontier from which progressed the Anglo-American spirit, being hardened men with unerring resolve to conquer the West.[125] His mountain men reflected the romanticism

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[124]Frederic Remington, "A Few Words with Mr. Remington," *Colliers* (March 1905), reprinted in Peggy and Harold Samuels, eds., *The Collected Writings of Frederic Remington* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), pp. 550-551.

[125]Nancy K. Anderson, "Curious Historical Artistic Data: Art History and Western American Art," pp. 19-23; Alexander Nemerov, *Frederic Remington and Turn-of-the-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 9-12; Bernard DeVoto, "The Easy Chair: The Visual Instrument," *Harper's Magazine* (June 1953), 49-52; Peter H. Hassrick and Melissa J. Webster, *Frederic Remington: A Catalogue Raisonne of Paintings, Watercolors and Drawings*, 2 vols. (Cody, Wyoming: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1996), I, p. 12.

that gripped the nation near the turn of the century.

The primitiveness of Remington's mountain men demonstrated his conscious effort to make them the antithesis of modern society. That is to say, he manufactured "authentic" images intended to serve as "real" and "traditional," but that were images in opposition to the transformation and modernization of America. Remington's mountain men were nostalgic figures. Though invented, many of Remington's mountain man images that appeared in popular publications were accepted by Easterners as true representations. They felt assured that if they went west they would find the mountain men there, "looking exactly as Mr. Remington has drawn them."[126] They were always fully buckskinned, bewhiskered, and engaged in some frontiering action, though never trapping. Through these images, Remington not only championed the mountain men as heroes, he became one of their major creators. His mountain men heroes were always well-hardened types, seasoned veterans in their final years, who reflected a sense of wisdom from experience. But mostly Remington's mountain men were men of action, exploring, guiding, hunting, and fighting Indians, and with horses usually present. For Remington, the mountain men were America's first great

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[126]William A. Coffin, "American Illustrations of To-Day," *Scribner's* (March 1892), 348. See also L. Logan, "The Geographical Imagination of Frederic Remington: The Invention of the Cowboy West," *Journal of Historical Geography* 18 (January 1992): 75-90, which is about Remington's cowboys but easily applies to his portrayals of the mountain man. Some of Remington's best known mountain man images in magazines include "The Old Trapper," *The Century Magazine* (October 1882), 835; "A White Trapper," *Harper's Monthly* (May 1891), 853; "On the Way to the Platte" and "Water," *The Century Magazine* (November 1890), 112, 115; and his most recognized "I Took Ye for an Injin" *The Century Magazine* (November 1890), 124. Other images appeared in books like "A Trapper and His Pony," in Henry Inman, *The Old Santa Fe Trail* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1897); or "An Old-Time Mountain Man With His Horse," in Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail.*

horseback heroes, and as previously mentioned, horses granted an air of superiority to their riders. Horses were Remington's forté, and he had said more than once he wanted his epitaph to read: HE KNEW THE HORSE. One might even consider Remington's western heroes as decorations for his horses. But whatever the case, his mountain men were products of imagination, not observation, and were his salutes to a fictive yesteryear.[127] These seasoned western hero types became what Americans then (and even today) believed mountain men to be. Remington's art conveyed far more than an image.

Remington's images personified much that earlier treatments of the mountain man symbolized — he was a man of action, who extolled the virtues of individuality, and was a masculine, Anglo-American icon. The accuracy or inaccuracy of his image is of little importance because the mountain man hero has became a figure rooted in American culture, a part of the national mythology. The mountain man hero evolved over seven decades during the nineteenth century. Remington, no less than his predecessors, constructed the mountain man's image from various "types." These types were idealized inventions that embodied matters of their time whether a Jacksonian man, a man fulfilling the nation's Manifest Destiny, or a figure of the nation's frontier heritage. But though "invented," the various images of the mountain man have become interwoven to form a conceptual monolith in American culture. Why? How did invention become tradition?

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[127]Frederic Remington, *Pony Tracks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. xvii; Brian Dippie, "The Moving Finger Writes: Western Art and the Dynamics of Change," Jules David Prown, William Cronon, et al., *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 106.

Three factors were necessary for invention to become tradition: First, the mountain man's images or the ideas about him needed to (or had to pretend to) possess some "truth" that the collective culture recognized. Second, his images had to be conveyed repetitively. And third, the ways or means for circulating those images had to be accessible to the masses.[128] Throughout the nineteenth century, every time the mountain man hero appeared, these factors prevailed. The mountain man hero progressed from a figure embodying a nation newly rising, to one newly matured, to one anxious about its direction. Over that same time period, the mountain man hero acquired the heroic traits that have since defined him in American history and culture.

The utility of the mountain man hero as symbol allowed for his evolution. That utility also allowed for his persistence in American culture. That is to say, the mountain man's image became a diverse one widely used in American culture. Where and how the mountain man's image has existed and what its manifestation reflects about American culture and society are the focal points of the remaining chapters.

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[128]These propositions come from L. Logan, "The Geographical Imagination of Frederic Remington," 84-85.

## CHAPTER TWO

## HISTORY, CULTURE, AND THE MOUNTAIN MAN HERO

The mountain man hero has persisted in American culture partly because of how historians have studied and portrayed him. The heroic mountain man who emerged during the nineteenth century has remained virtually unchanged throughout the twentieth century in various parts of the historical profession, such as in books, museums, documentaries, and professional organizations.[1] Historians have not taken the lead in unpeeling the layers of myth to find out who the mountain man really was. Even when historians have depicted the mountain man as dirty and uncivilized, they have kept him a popular western hero. Hence, the historical mind assisted in elevating the mountain man's mythic stature by making him one of the nation's principal western figures.

Abundant scholarship devoted to the mountain man has added little to our historical understanding of who he really was. Most of this scholarship has been influenced by myth and depicted the mountain man as a hero. Wallace Stegner once noted that "like any other

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[1]Most works written in the nineteenth century about the Far West fur trade and the mountain men — published memoirs included — were histories. The list is long but include works like Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail; Being Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life* (New York: AL Burt, n.d.), Lewis Garrard's *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail*; Francis Fuller Victor, *The River of the West* (San Francisco: R. J. Trumbull and Co., 1870); and Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926).

part of a human tradition, history is an artifact ... not truly remembered until it has been vividly imagined."[2] The delineation between fact and myth in history is unclear. If history and fiction (or myth) are intertwined, then the assertion that historians contribute to popular imagery is valid and logical. As such, history, as it regards the mountain man, may be viewed as a vein of popular culture. The resulting mountain man hero bestows on American culture one of the most recognized, yet misrepresented, figures of American history.[3]

Historical contributions to popular imagery become particularly evident when one examines heroes of the American West. The mountain man, as well as the cowboy, soldier, and other Western heroes, provided subject material for abundant and detailed scholarship. This scholarship perpetuated the popularity of these figures and lent scholarly validation to their heroic stature.[4] Historians tended to write about the mountain man simplistically, promoting a stereotype and thereby transforming his history into mythology.

Despite intense examination, the sum of scholarship afforded the mountain man has not advanced our understanding of him.[5] The lack of a comprehensive and accurate portrait

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[2]Forward by Wallace Stegner in A.B. Guthrie, Jr., *The Big Sky*, Bantam Books edition (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. viii.

[3]Howard Lamar, *The Trader on the American Frontier: Myth's Victim* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), pp. 16-17, 34-41, outlines how myth has influenced the historical portrayal of the mountain man. See also William Gwaltney, "The Fur Trade in Myth and Reality," 4-7.

[4]Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, p. vii.

[5]Representative of such efforts include Hafen, *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, 10 vols; Carl P. Russell, *Firearms, Traps, and Tools of the Mountain Men* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967); and *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* (Chadron, Nebraska: Museum of the Fur Trade, 1964-).

relates to the inherent problems of studying a subject so rich with mythic particularities. That we know so little about the historic mountain man has benefitted his image. Myth helped sustain his heroic stature and popularity, the premise being the more detail that is known about someone, the smaller their chance of becoming a cultural icon.[6]

Historians helped create, perpetuate, and confine the mountain man to a heroic state. In academic studies of the mountain man, the complexities of social and historical experiences of authentic trappers appeared simplified and compressed into the actions of representative figures. Of course, professional writers and other purveyors of popular culture, by doing likewise, contributed to the mountain man's popularity. Perpetuating the mountain man myth suits their literary goal of retailing his image, but exhibits little in common with the historical profession. Non-academic readers often choose such works and thereby reinforce legend over pedantic treatments. But historians — whose professional obligation entails dispelling myths — utilized and maintained the mountain man's popular image, regardless of historical theories used.

One of the earliest frontier or western historians who used the mountain man's heroic image to support his historical viewpoint was Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner included the mountain man hero in his seminal essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," as he linked his conceptions of the past to his paradigm for the present. Turner used the mountain man to exemplify what he believed to be the superior American qualities

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[6]The tendencies of cultures to perceive their heroes as extraordinary is discussed by Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 245-246, 318-321.

created by the frontier.[7] Turner portrayed the mountain man hero possessing a resolve to conquer and open the wilderness. He then solidified the mountain man's mythic stature by depicting Kit Carson, a major frontier hero in American culture already, as representative of all mountain men, and exploiting Carson's kinship to the great backwoodsman Daniel Boone. Using Carson's heroic image, Turner projected the mountain man through a theoretical prism that suited his ideals about American institutions, character, and the opening of the frontier for succeeding waves of Americans. Turner's theory about the importance of the frontier revolutionized American history, while elevating the mountain man to American distinctiveness.

Popular images and personal ideals influenced historians' depictions of the mountain man. Turner, influenced by the popular image of the mountain man, committed to certain assumptions when writing about him. Reality and myth became intermingled as Turner pursued his own agenda and vision of American life.[8] Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt utilized the mountain man hero's image to support his views about American character, nationalism, expansionism, bully manhood, and to strengthen his "strenuous life" ideals based on the American frontier experience. Influenced by the literary style and tradition of American historian Francis Parkman, Roosevelt wrote about the mountain man as a part of

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[7]Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), pp. 14-15, 18-19.

[8]Smith, *Virgin Land*, pp. 292-293.

a heroic saga of American conquest and courage.[9] But the historian most influential to the mountain man's heroic image was Hiram Martin Chittenden, often considered the father of American fur trade history. In his *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (1903), the first study of the life and character of the mountain men emerges. His approach set a precedent for ensuing generations of scholars who studied mountain men.[10]

Chittenden's historical vision combined the older romantic approaches of Irving and Parkman with newer Darwinian, economic, and frontier interpretations that explained history as a progressive process.[11] The result depicted the fur trade a romanticized, economic, and imperialistic movement, an important stage in the nation's development, with enterprising Anglo-Saxon mountain men as the advanced guard in the progress of national mission and

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[9]Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 25-26, 149-151; Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Adventures in the West* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), pp. 4-5, 25-26; The persistence of such imagery by Roosevelt appears seventeen years later in his *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, pp. 81-83; Theodore Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," 830-843. Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life," in *American Ideals; The Strenuous Life; Realizable Ideals*, vol. 13, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, national edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 336, 338, 359. Though Roosevelt's association with the cowboy is more prominent in his writings, the mountain man makes a fair showing. See also Michael Collins, "Theodore Roosevelt," in *Historians of the American Frontier: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. John R. Wunder, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 547-557.

[10]Hiram M. Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, 2 vols., reprint (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), remains the standard treatment on the American fur trade and the mountain man. Originally published in 1903, and reprinted a number of times, it demonstrates how much and how little is known about the mountain man. See also Don D. Walker, "Philosophical and Literary Implications in the Historiography of the Fur Trade," *Western American Literature* 9 (Summer 1974): 82.

[11]David W. Noble, *Historians Against History: The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), chapter 3.

destiny. Chittenden was a full-fledged Anglo-Saxon imperialist, and he viewed the fur trade men as important contributors to American character and democracy. American fur men were not bound to maintain a social station and instead ventured to the West to pursue economic opportunities. But Chittenden was interested mainly in the romantic aspects of history, and he admired the heroic and adventurous mountain men, who exemplified nineteenth-century American industry and aggressiveness. Chittenden's vision of the mountain men was one of romantic individualists, heroic agents, and model citizens who forwarded the nation's "course of empire."[12]

Of the Far West fur trade and the type of men who were involved in it, Chittenden wrote:

> The nature of this business determined the character of the early white population. It was the roving trader and the solitary white trapper who first sought out these inhospitable wilds, traced the streams to their sources, scaled the mountain passes, and explored a boundless expanse of territory where the foot of the white man had never trodden before. The Far West became a field of romantic adventure, and developed a class of men who loved the wandering career of the native inhabitant rather than the toilsome lot of the industrial colonist. The type of life thus developed ... [into] a distinct and necessary phase in the growth of this new country. Abounding in incidents picturesque and heroic, its annals inspire an interest akin to that which belongs to the age of knight-errantry. For the free hunter of the Far West, was, in his rough way, a good deal of a knight-errantry. Caparisoned in the wild attire of the Indian, and armed cap-a-pie for instant combat, he roamed far and wide ... leading a life in which every footstep was beset with enemies and every moment pregnant of peril ... All in all, the period of this adventurous business may justly be considered the romantic era of the history

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[12]Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, I, p. xxvii; and, pt. 1, chapters 1, 7-8; I, pt. 2, chapters 1, 3-4, 8; Gordon B. Dodds, "Hiram Martin Chittenden," in *Historians and the American Frontier*, pp. 183-190.

of the West.[13]

Chittenden propelled the mountain man to mythical heights, not only in his characterization of the lifestyle and importance of the fur trade, but also by comparing the mountain man to the romantic knight-errant warrior hero.[14] Moreover, he limited the Far West fur trade era, and subsequently the heroic capacities of those involved, to the rendezvous' years (1825-1840).[15]

Chittenden viewed the roles of certain mountain men as keys in shaping national history. A number of chapters in *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* dealt with specific individuals and strengthened their heroic statures.[16] Chittenden's romanticism, his focus on Anglo-Saxon fur trade men as superior, and his concern with the exploits and adventures of heroic individuals rendered a narrative and biographical flavor to his work. In many ways Chittenden was a follower of the dramatic, narrative, heroic approaches of Irving, Parkman, and even Roosevelt. More importantly, the way he wrote about the

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[13]Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, I, p. vii.

[14]The knight-errant was a knight who traveled around seeking adventures in which to "exhibit military skill, prowess, and generosity." Definition from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, (1983), s.v. "Knight-errant."

[15]Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, I, pt. 2, chapter 17; II, pt. 4, chapter 8; II, pt. 4, chapter 10. According to Chittenden, the heroism of the mountain men and the fur trade seemingly ended with the last rendezvous and the building of Ft. Bridger, although some historians have shown it survived well beyond. See Ibid., II, p. 945. Also, John E. Sunder, *The Fur Trade on the Upper Missouri, 1840-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965).

[16]Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, I, pt. 2, chapters 4-13, 15-25; II, pt. 4, chapters 2, 8, 10.

mountain man and the Far West fur trade influenced later scholars and led to biography eclipsing all other types of American fur trade history.[17]

Chittenden substantially influenced succeeding generations of American fur trade historians. Later historians merely combined Chittenden's (and Irving's) romantic vision with historical interpretations of the day. Most followed Chittenden's biographical and narrative pattern. Historians have generally written about mountain men by using narrative histories, mostly biographies, to cast their subjects as heroic agents of expansion. Most histories, by emphasizing biography, ignored the economic, environmental, and social aspects of the American fur trade.[18] Though historians often address the business details of the fur trade, such discussion usually serves to chronicle the adventures of an individual rather than provide a strict analysis of the trade's economics. Chittenden's influence on

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[17]Chittenden's biographical approach to fur trade history, that is, using great man history, has been a dominant and debated means of tracing history through heroic men of action. Thomas Carlyle put forth the clear expression of great man history in 1841, in his volumes on heroes and hero-worship. See Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Hero in History*, new ed., with notes and introduction by Michael K. Goldberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Eric Bently, *A Century of Hero-Worship*, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 34-67. A few prominent examples from the numerous mountain man biographies include Dale L. Morgan, *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953); John E. Sunder, *Bill Sublette: Mountain Man* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959); Cecil J. Alter, *James Bridger, Trapper, Frontiersman, Scout and Guide: A Historical Narrative* (Salt Lake City: Shepherd Book Company, 1925); LeRoy R. Hafen, *Broken Hand: The Life of Thomas Fitzpatrick, Mountain Man, Guide, and Indian Agent* (Denver: The Old West Publishing Company, 1931). See also Gordon Dodds, "Hiram Martin Chittenden," pp. 187-188

[18]Richard E. Oglesby, "The Fur Trade as Business," in *The Frontier Re-Examined*, pp. 111-127; Wilbur R. Jacobs, "Frontiersmen, Fur Traders, and Other Varmints: An Ecological Appraisal of the Frontier in American History," *American Historical Association Newsletter* 7 (November 1970): 5-11.

American fur trade history parallels Herbert E. Bolton's influence on the study of the Spanish Borderlands or Walter Prescott Webb's influence on the study of the Great Plains.[19] Chittenden contributed greatly to the romanticizing the mountain man hero.

Historians of the American West have long enjoyed an amicable relationship with a reading public partial to dramatized versions of history and, much to the chagrin of other historians, have been rewarded with prolific books sales.[20] Fur trade historians, intentionally or not, benefitted by satisfying a popular interest in entertaining history.[21] The appeal of fur trade and mountain man histories exists because these works rarely employ the types of analysis other historical disciplines have embraced.[22] Mountain man enthusiasts prefer biographies because the subjects celebrate historical, heroic individuals. Biographers usually render both facets in concert, but in doing so render a few heroic individuals as

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[19]Dale L. Morgan, "The Fur Trade and its Historians," *Aspects of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the 1965 North American Fur Trade Conference* ed. Russell W. Friley (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967), pp. 3-8.

[20]William W. Savage, Jr., "The New Western History: Youngest Whore on the Block," ***AB** Bookman's Weekly* (October 4, 1993): 1242.

[21]George Laycock, *The Mountain Men* (New York: Lyons and Burford, Publishers, 1996), p. ix. Fur trade historians' penchant for narratives is mentioned in William H. Goetzmann, "A Note on `Stereotypes' of the Mountain Man," *Western Historical Quarterly* 6 (July 1975): 295; and Morgan, "The Fur Trade and Its Historians," 3-6.

[22]Laycock, *The Mountain Men*, p. ix; see also Harvey Lewis Carter, "A Reply," *Western Historical Quarterly* 6 (July 1975): 301, wherein Carter concludes that in fur trade history the mountain man hero image is the most prevalent. See also Harvey Lewis Carter and Marcia Carpenter Spencer, "Stereotypes of the Mountain Man," *Western Historical Quarterly* 6 (January 1975): 17-32.

representative of all mountain men.[23] The popularity of the mountain man hero has attracted novelists who have sought to capitalize on the mountain man's image, rather than yield to historical accuracy. Claiming artistic freedom as their justification, they dramatize and exaggerate individuals and events.[24] They have added little to our understanding of the mountain man, only strengthened his mythical stature. The availability of such works in bookstores, discount stores, and even supermarkets reveals the public's preference for such entertainment.[25]

With regard to wordsmiths, agreement persists among historians regarding the influence of Bernard DeVoto's *Across the Wide Missouri*, the best known and most widely read narrative on the fur trade. The book portrayed the fur trade as one of the West's great moments and depicted the mountain men with romantic and dramatic intensity. The critical

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[23]The inherent dilemma with biographical writing is that most biographies are to some degree hero-worship and the popular figures they depict are merely heroes created by popular demand. Each biography is subject to the currents of the dominant culture that influence the author as well as the author's unique research, habits of thought, and bias. The issues and dilemmas about biography are discussed by Gerald W. Johnson, *American Heroes and Hero-Worship* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), chapter 1; Michael Goldberg in his introduction to Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, pp. xxxvi, l-lvi; Bentley, *A Century of Hero-Worship*, p. 61; Bernard DeVoto, "The Skeptical Biographer," in *Forays and Rebuttals* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), pp. 179-203.

[24]DeVoto, "The Skeptical Biographer," pp. 193-197; Morgan, "The Fur Trade and its Historians," 6.

[25]Examples include Stanley Vestal, *Adventures of Kit Carson, Frontier Hero* (Girard, Kansas: Halseman-Julius Publications, 1927); Stanley Vestal, *Jim Bridger, Mountain Man: A Biography* (New York: W. Morgan and Company, 1946); Winfred Blevins, *Give Your Heart to the Hawks: A Tribute to the Mountain Men* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Company, 1973);and Winfred Blevins, *Charbonneau, Man of Two Dreams* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Company, 1975).

popularity of DeVoto's work was evident; he received both the Bancroft and Pulitzer prizes for it in 1948.[26] *Across the Wide Missouri* appeared on the heels of A. B. Guthrie, Jr.'s novel, *The Big Sky*, generating a fruitful year for mountain man literature. Marketed much like *The Big Sky*, with remunerative sales, DeVoto's work revealed the public's affinity for the mountain man hero.[27] Persistent in reprints, including a late-1980s History Book Club appearance, *Across the Wide Missouri* revealed a loyal following of readers. Though a journalist, DeVoto aspired to be a historian. He attacked academia for not embracing history as art, and told scholars how they should write history. He preferred the narrative, viewing history primarily as processes of individuals. DeVoto also believed American history to be particularly romantic.[28] And as Wallace Stegner said of him, he "applied the methods of impressionistic fiction to history, mounting upon the scrupulous gatherers of facts the storyteller skilled in mass entertainment."[29] DeVoto made mountain man history entertaining by weaving the lives of rugged individuals into the broader history of the Far West fur trade. He selected individuals who played out their heroic roles in the salient business of the trade

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[26]Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*; "2 Win Columbia Awards," *The New York Times*, 22 July 1948, p. 21; "Sketches of Those Added by Columbia to the Roll of Pulitzer Prize Winners," *The New York Times*, 4 May 1948, p. 22.

[27]*Publishers Weekly* (September 27, 1947): 1380-1381, 1557; Wallace Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair: A Biography of Bernard DeVoto* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1974), p. 278.

[28]Bernard DeVoto, "How Not to Write History: A Note on the Workings of the Literary Mind," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 168 (January 1934): 199-208; DeVoto, "The Skeptical Biographer"; Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, pp. 263-264, 287-289; William L. Lang, "Bernard DeVoto," in *Historians of the American Frontier*, ed. John R. Wunder, 241-248.

[29]Stegner, *The Uneasy Chair*, p. 245.

that helped win the West. His work and its success exemplify how the historical mind maintains the mountain man hero image as both symbol and myth.

DeVoto promoted the heroic mountain man figure significantly by writing in the "great-man history" vein. DeVoto's "quintessential" protagonists included "the great Jedediah Smith," Thomas Fitzpatrick, James Bridger, and Kit Carson.[30] True to heroic image, they were men of action, who underwent personal struggle and triumph, refined by the violence and hardships of the "Rocky Mountain College" that produced their type.[31] DeVoto romanticized the rendezvous, describing it as "the mountain man's Christmas, county fair, harvest festival, and crowned-slave carnival of Saturn."[32] DeVoto's use of Alfred Jacob Miller's idyllic paintings as illustrations enhanced his idealized treatment of the fur trade.

In describing his intentions, DeVoto claimed, "I have tried to describe the mountain fur trade as a business and as a way of life, ... what its characteristic experiences were, what conditions governed [it], how it helped shape our heritage, what its relation was to the Westward expansion of the United States, and most of all how the mountain men lived."[33] But he merely promoted the mountain man hero, albeit in a rougher, less civilized vein,

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[30]DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*, p. 12.

[31]Ibid., p. 168; Walker, "Philosophical and Literary Implications in the Historiography of the Fur Trade," 94-98; Wecter, *The Hero in America*, p. vii.

[32]DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*, p. 226.

[33]Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

which reflected his romantic view of American history.[34]

The popularity of *Across the Wide Missouri* inspired other publishers to churn out similar mountain man histories. Publisher Alfred A. Knopf likened its *This Reckless Breed of Men* (1950) to DeVoto's work. Bobbs-Merrill suggested that retailers promote *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West* on a par with *The Big Sky,* to capitalize on the mountain man's rising popularity.[35] Metro-Goldwyn-Mayereven acquired the option to buy the screen rights to DeVoto's work, contemplating Spencer Tracy as their lead.[36] Mountain man history, marketed as entertainment, and printed in numbers expecting and reflecting popular consumption, was fraught with the heroic stereotypes that permeated mountain man history from its beginning.

The mountain man's image in historiography remains a collage, mired in an intermingling of myth, symbolism, and reality. The public prefers heroic icons. Rather than dispelling the myths, historians have followed suit. In their defense, however, historians encountered substantial difficulty expanding their inquiries, because most trappers did not

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[34]Ibid., pp. 28-30.

[35]*Publisher's Weekly* (January 28, 1950): 510; *Publishers Weekly* (September 26, 1953): 1351; Cleland, *This Reckless Breed of Men*, pp. 3-9; Morgan, *Jedediah Smith*, pp. 7-10; The most recent addition to this trail of works is Robert M. Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous: Mountain Men and the Paths to the Pacific* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1997) which says nothing new about the mountain man. Utley's book was offered through the History Book Club in 1998, showing the continued popularity of the mountain man.

[36]Thomas Brady, "Metro has Option on DeVoto Story," *The New York Times* 8 December 1947, p. 35.

leave written evidence of their experiences. Very few kept journals or wrote memoirs.[37] Those few who published — Jim Beckwourth, Warren Ferris, and Joseph Meeks — became representative mountain men because their widely available, often reprinted works generalized mountain man life.[38] And many writings were produced long after their creators retired from the trade. Most were written from memories stretched over time and embellished with imagination. Many evolved from ulterior motives such as Joseph Meek's biography *River of the West*, which was written for profit and to promote Meek's political positions in Oregon.[39] Thus, the mountain men themselves lent their own creative hand to their mythic image.[40]

The American fur trade history remains a field that has progressed little since Chittenden's time. Methodologies used to examine other historical issues developed slowly in this area, and many have yet to be applied rigorously to the study of the mountain man.

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[37]Don D. Walker, "The Mountain Man Journal: Its Significance in a Literary History of the Fur trade," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 5 (July 1974): 307-318, discusses the value and types of journals mountain men produced.

[38]T. D. Bonner, ed., *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth, Mountaineer, Scout, and Pioneer and Chief of the Crow Nation of Indians* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856); Warren A. Ferris, *Life in the Rocky Mountains* ed. by LeRoy R. Hafen (Denver: The Old West Publishing Company, 1983); Francis F. Victor, ed., *The River of the West*. All three sources are often used by writers of history and fiction.

[39]Harvey E. Tobie, "Joseph L. Meek," in *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen, I, p. 334.

[40]William Gwaltney, "The Fur Trade in Myth and Reality," 5-6. The greatest exponent of mountain man life was Jim Beckwourth, whose tales stretched truth to extremes. Still, he appears in many scholarly works. See Bonner, *Beckwourth*; and "Story of James P. Beckwourth," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, June-November, 1856, 455-472. See also Goetzmann, *The Mountain Man*, p. 25.

Since the 1960s, a few works were produced, not loyal to the Chittenden philosophy yet not dealing with the mountain man or his unique society or culture specifically.[41] The typical portrayals persisted and upheld the mountain man hero. Debate has made possible the emergence of contrasting views regarding the mountain man's character and image. These debates revealed the persistence of the mountain man's heroic image among historians and how little we really know about him as a historical figure.

Ray Allen Billington stripped some romanticism from the mountain man's image and was among the first of scholars to do so. In resuscitating Turner's "hypothesis," Billington depicted an intrepid, adventurous, free-spirited but also more degraded and primitive mountain man. For Billington, the mountain man exhibited the "corrosive effect of the wilderness environment" where the "untamed forces of nature cast off the artifacts and institutions and habits of civilization," representing the first stages of progression where

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[41]These include Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Jennifer L. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in the Fur Trade Society in Western Canada* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), none of which include the mountain man. Those few that do are David J. Weber, *The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade on the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); Janet Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: Society on the High Plains, 1832-1856* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978); and Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West 1807-1840: A Geographical Synthesis*. The latter has more to do with the systems the mountain men operated in than with the men themselves.

savagery and civilization collided.[42] "Divorced entirely from traditional patterns of civilized life," Billington's mountain men were the most primitive stage of pioneers who occasionally slipped below the "savage" Indian.[43] But though Billington depicted mountain men as more uncivilized than the established popular image, he did not imply they were non-heroic. Rather, Billington's mountain men maintained their heroic stature as gritty and undeviating vanguards of westward expansion.[44] For Billington, a particular facet of the facade changed, but the general type remained.

Other historians tried reshaping the mountain man's image. Influenced by historian Richard Hofstadter, William Goetzmann outfitted the mountain man with Hofstadter's "Jacksonian Man" paradigm of "an expectant capitalist . . . for whom enterprise was a kind of religion."[45] Cast in this light, the mountain man became an "average" working man, pursuing a common end, a "*genus Homo americanus*" by Goetzmann's definition. It was not an entirely original perspective, because Irving visited it previously, however romantically. Goetzmann avoided the mountain man's nineteenth-century romantic bandit stereotype, as well as the more recent hedonistic descriptions. The concept gained an audience, and became part of Goetzmann's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Exploration and Empire*.[46] But

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[42]Ray Allen Billington, *The Far Western Frontier 1830-1860* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 44.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., pp. 41, 44.

[45]Goetzmann, "The Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man," 405; Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, pp. 55-59.

[46]Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, pp. 106-108.

Goetzmann did not intend to topple the mountain man's heroic stature, but appropriated it to the Jacksonian man paradigm.

Goetzmann's work revealed the research potential in mountain man history, if not obstructed by the image of the mountain man hero. That is to say, a historical conservatism existed concerning the mountain man's hollowed place in history, regarding any views attacking the mountain man's heroic stereotype as disparaging or, even worse, revisionist. This attitude denotes a persistent bias in the interpretation of expanded inquiries such as Goetzmann's. Goetzmann's challenge to the popular stereotype did not go unchecked by those wishing to maintain the status quo. Historians Harvey Lewis Carter and Marcia C. Spencer retaliated with a belated article assaulting Goetzmann's hypothesis, asserting instead the legitimacy of the romantic, brave, and adventurous type, formulating their conclusion based on the hero-worship approach to history.[47] Incensed by opposing views, Carter counseled historians to shun Goetzmann's "Jacksonian man" approach, in spite of its acceptance among most historians.[48] This precipitated a brief ideological skirmish between Goetzmann and Carter in the *Western Historical Quarterly*. Goetzmann responded with an article, "A Note on 'Stereotypes of the Mountain Man,'" wherein he reaffirmed his Jacksonian man view, criticized Carter and Spence on many points of their research, and

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[47]Carter and Spencer, "Stereotypes of the Mountain Man," 17-32. Carter and Spence's criteria of personal combat and wayfaring (based upon the Homeric epics) is what determined their heroic mountain man stereotype. This compares with what scholars of hero-worship in America have outlined with personal struggle and action as the determining characteristics of a "minor hero and hero types" in America folklore. See Wecter, *The Hero in America*, pp. vii-viii

[48]Carter and Spence, "Stereotypes of the Mountain Man," 32.

called their study "confusing"and"irrelevant."[49] *The Western Historical Quarterly* allowed Carter to write "A Reply," wherein Carter upheld the mountain man's heroic image and again encouraged historians to reject Goetzmann's views. Carter's argument relied on the assumption that the mountain man should not be studied other than in a generally receptive light.[50]

The Goetzmann and Carter debate reached an impasse. Goetzmann regarded Carter's remarks as a "put-up job," and nothing to be taken seriously because he believed Carter was "never much of a historian."[51] Carter continued to champion the romantic stereotype.[52] In July, 1993, he was active in a symposium sponsored by the Kit Carson Historical Museums in Taos, New Mexico, to counter a revisionist trend of debunking Carson's heroism by depicting him as a genocidal killer.[53] Though very ill in health, Carter

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[49]William H. Goetzmann, "A Note on 'Stereotypes of the Mountain Man," 295-300.

[50]Harvey L. Carter, "A Reply," 301-302. The basic stereotypes debated by Carter and Goetzmann are outlined in Hague, "Some Views of the Mountain Man," 81-92.

[51]Letter, William Goetzmann to author, 16 September 1999.

[52]Marc Simmons and R.C. Gordon-McCutchan, *The Short Truth About Kit Carson and the Indians* (Taos, New Mexico: Kit Carson Historic Museums, 1993), pp.1-3. See also Harvey Lewis Carter and Thelma S. Guild, *Kit Carson: A Pattern for Heroes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

[53]"Taos Journal: In Defense of a Hero of the West," *The New York Times* 10 August 1993, sec. A, p. 12; The symposium, titled "Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer?," focused on the revisionist work Clifford Trafzer, *The Kit Carson Campaign: The Last Navajo War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990; 1982), which attacked Carson's heroic image. See also Simmons and Gordon-McCutchan, *The Short Truth About Kit Carson and the Indians;* and R.C. Gordon-McCutchan, ed., *Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer?* (Niowot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1996).

made the journey from Colorado Springs to give one of the speeches at the symposium entitled "Kit Carson: Indian Fighter or Indian Killer?"[54] He died only a few months later.[55] The organization of such a well attended symposium corroborates the conservatism that sustains the mountain man's heroic image.

William Swagerty contributed a statistically-based attempt to define the mountain man.[56] He cautioned that "one must be wary of the stereotyping and compartmentalizing of the mountain men," typical of their presentation.[57] Swagerty's mountain men are, as historian Howard Lamar put it, "a variety of human beings living in a fascinating world which combined the scavenger-hunting lifestyle with mercantile capitalism."[58] In other words, they existed in a world of cultural variety and flexibility where they assumed a middle road, which meant they were neither degenerate nor given to romantic persuasions. Swagerty characterized the mountain men as cultural go-betweens. By doing so Swagerty did just what he cautioned against; he compartmentalized the mountain man image. Though Swagerty avoided the descriptive "hero," a tidy substitution is implied by this "unique

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[54]Skip Miller (Kit Carson Museums Curator) interviewed by author, telephone interview, 20 September 1999.

[55]Obituary, *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph* 22 January 1994, p. B4.

[56]William R. Swagerty, "Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders," *Western Historical Quarterly* 11 (April 1980): 159-180.

[57]Ibid., p. 176.

[58]Howard R. Lamar, *The Trader on the American Frontier: Myth's Victim*, p. 24.

cadre's" ability to operate between two worlds.[59]

Historians accommodated the mountain man's historical obscurity and heroic stature through the blended terms "mountain man" and "free trapper." Usually "mountain man" refers to anyone in the Far West fur trade. Not only has the true mountain trapper been labeled so, but also the trader, the financier, the British factor, and others of fur trade society, including those who antedate and postdate the rendezvous era.[60] Such oversimplification created a conceptual fallacy, demonstrating the difficulty in Western history with labeling businessmen. William Sublette, who, besides being a mountain man and fur trader, later involved himself in the mercantile business, land speculation, politics, investments, cattle, mining, farming, and banking, is a prime illustration.[61] Trapping only afforded an economic rite of passage for Sublette. The same scenario applies to Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, Thomas Fitzpatrick, and others.[62] In light of this occupational diversity, how are they identified as

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[59]Swagerty, "Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders," 180.

[60]LeRoy Hafen, one of the most prominent fur trade historians, admits to this. See "Introduction," *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, I, p. 14. See also Hague, "Some Views of the Mountain Man, " 82. Perhaps the most famous recent invention in American popular culture this way is the Jeremiah Johnson figure of the film *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) starring Robert Redford, inspired by Vardis Fisher's *Mountain Man* (New York: Pocket Books, 1967). This cultural icon, which is viewed as the quintessential mountain man type, is based on the historical character John Johnson (or Johnston), who had nothing to do with the rendezvous era trade, but came after it. See Raymond W. Thorp, *Crow Killer: The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1958).

[61]See for example Sunder, *Bill Sublette: Mountain Man.*

[62]See for example Alter, *Jim Bridger*; Estergreen, *Kit Carson*; Hafen, *Broken Hand.*

mountain men? It is by the historian's label. Influenced by his research, the historian takes the complexities of social and historical experiences and simplistically classifies such a man, thus creating a conceptual monolith. Fur trade scholars viewed him as a mountain man, presented him as such, and fixed his image. Therefore, if a man trapped in the Rockies, regardless of what else he did in life, he was identified as a mountain man.

Overly-romanticized by scholars and purveyors of popular culture alike, the term "free trapper" developed meaning beyond its economic definition. Historians have yet to give precise definition to the term, but seem to perpetuate its ambiguity.[63] Because historians viewed the mountain man as a heroic figure, they defined him as more than a mere laborer, by labeling him as a "free trapper."[64] The self-made, free-spirited individualistic image satisfied popular notions for an American hero. As the number of mountain man histories grew, so did the spread of his heroic image. Historians thus invented levels of freedom in fur trade society. Eventually, the definition of free trapper grew so broad that the terms "mountain man" and "free trapper" became nearly synonymous.[65] It is a rare work, historical or otherwise, that does not identify the mountain man, at least a first-rate one, as a free trapper, thereby making him a major icon of rugged individualism and freedom. In reality,

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[63]Don D. Walker, "The Mountain Man Journal," 318.

[64]Frederick E. Voekler, "The Mountain Men and Their Part in the Opening of the West," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, III (1947): 151-162.

[65]Degrees of the free trapper class are suggested by Everett Dick, *Vanguards of the Frontier: A Social History of the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountains from the Fur Traders to the Sod Busters* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1941), pp. 39-40; See Billington, *The Far Western Frontier*, pp. 44-46.

only a few mountain men lived as free trappers in the strictest sense. Most of the men, even if they considered themselves "free," were in some company's debt. Despite this fact, the free trapper image became elemental to the mountain man monolith, owing in part to the role of historians.

The matter of demographics is one facet of the historiography of the mountain man that reflects the speculative nature associated with his study. Conjectural discussions of the issue persisted, offered as historical fact, and accepted without proof. Mountain men contemporaries did not trouble themselves with census-taking, and company owners were seldom concerned with keeping employee records, except on fiscal matters.[66] Despite the dearth of information, historians proffer estimates from about 1,000 to over 3,000 mountain men, quite a stretch in figures. Harvey Lewis Carter and Maria C. Spencer proposed 3,000, while William H. Goetzmann maintained that he surveyed 446 mountain men, or "45 percent of the total [men] engaged in this pursuit," which figures to be 991 men, approximately one-third of Carter and Spencer's estimate.[67] Both numbers lack supportive evidence, yet each became accepted by many historians. The historians' inabilities to define among themselves

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[66]The average mountain man or trapper seemed an intangible aspect that the local newspapers rarely mentioned, favoring instead the trade's business elite. For examples of this see the *Missouri Republican*, St. Louis, June 5, 1822-March 8, 1827; the *St. Louis Enquirer*, St. Louis, April 13, 1822-August 30, 1824; or the *Missouri Advocate*, and *St. Louis Enquirer*, St. Louis, October 8, 1825-March 11, 1826. The ad-hoc recruitment of men can be seen in the *Missouri Gazette & Public Advertiser*, St. Louis, February 13, 1822.; *Missouri Republican*, St. Louis, January 15, 1823; and in Charles L. Camp, ed., *James Clyman, American Frontiersman* (Portland, Oregon: Champoeg Press, 1960), p. 7.

[67]Carter and Spencer, "Stereotypes of the Mountain Man," 22; Goetzmann, "The Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man," 408.

just who should and should not be considered a mountain man result in such deviations. To be sure, mountain men were necessary to the trade, but less important than the furs they procured. It was hardly crucial or feasible for anyone to keep track of the mountain men. The result is that no one really knows how many mountain men existed.

What then provided a basis for these estimates? Carter and Spencer cited their source as historian LeRoy R. Hafen, a long-time friend of Carter. Carter merely asked Hafen's opinion on the matter, and Hafen's conjectural response became the accepted tally in Carter's article.

Goetzmann's total appears equally suspect. His accounting selectively suited his classification of a mountain man. Goetzmann excluded American Fur Company men, even those who trapped. He maintained that of those who trapped, "a large percentage were killed."[68] One fails to understand why Goetzmann excluded some trappers because they died, inasmuch as death was a constant occupational hazard of the trade. Goetzmann's failure to include American Fur Company men in his estimates becomes even more puzzling, since, in 1835 alone, between two and three hundred trappers were "constantly in and about the mountains, engaged in trading, hunting and trapping," and "assembled at [the] rendezvous ... bringing in their furs, and taking new supplies for the coming year."[69] Goetzmann believed his conclusions to be the most accurate, though they are the most questionable. When numbers are needed, his figures along with Hafen's are the numbers

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[68]Goetzmann, "The Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man," 408-409.

[69]Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, pp. 79-80.

many scholars readily apply.[70] Their numbers provide excellent examples of what David Hackett Fischer calls the fallacy of prevalent proof. That is to say, they are statements made, and widely believed, but never established by empirical evidence.[71] Such discrepancies also demonstrates the deficiencies of mountain man studies by the historical mind.

Besides maintaining the heroic image of the mountain man, historians have circulated that image in various ways. In books, museums, documentaries, historical societies, and the Internet, historians have projected the stereotype image of the mountain man hero to a public that prefers him that way.

The number of books written about the mountain man suggests that quantity does not necessarily reflect quality. Most works on the mountain man reflect a general disparity between the study of the fur trade and other historical fields. With this consideration, other historians deemed the mountain man a subject unworthy of critical attention. As a result, the number of studies on mountain men dropped in the last three decades, and seemingly reflects the profession's willingness to accept the hero image and disregard them further.[72]

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[70]Studies that perpetuate Goetzmann's figures include Swagerty, "Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders," 159; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 413; Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 5th ed. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1982), p. 784.

[71]David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 51-53.

[72]A random sampling of 225 books about mountain men printed this century reveals the field is well past its heyday of the 1950s and 1960s, with scholars showing little interest in the last three decades (published works on the subject have declined nearly 80 percent).

"New" Western historians gave little attention to the mountain man because the mountain man embodied what this school of historical thought deemed deplorable about the West: white male exploitation of the environment and native peoples. According to a study by Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University, the "new" Western historian, from the Baby Boom generation, has "generally become more cynical about heroes," and with whom debunking seems to be all the rage.[73] Hence the mountain man was, at best, ignored by these historians. However, mountain men, as exploited laborers, lived a perilous existence as "mere slaves to catch beaver for others."[74] "New" Westernists are uncertain how to interpret this contradictory figure presented by the mountain man.[75]

The mountain man's heroic image has appeared in many history textbooks from

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[73]Thomas Hargrove and Guido H. Stempel III, "Heroism: Something We Used to Believe In," *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 August 1994, p. 34A.

[74]F. G. Young, ed., "The Correspondence and Journal of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth 1831-36: A Record of Two Expeditions for the Occupation of the Oregon Country, with Maps, Introduction and Index," *Sources of the History of Oregon* 1 (Oregon: University Press, 1899), p. 140.

[75]Patricia N. Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987); Patricia N. Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991). Both works demonstrate the neglect the mountain man suffers at the hands of the "new" Westernists and indicative of their intolerance to subjects outside their perceived historical world. The only "new" work to concede the dichotomy of mountain man life is a cursory rendering in Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 46-48, which is questionable because it applies liberally conclusions about Eastern and Canadian fur trade history upon the mountain man with no consideration for cultural, economic, or social differences. In turn, this implies that the frontier is the shaping force which goes contrary to the "new" westernists' anti-Turnerian bent. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, p. 106, hints about the trapper being an exploited group, but goes no further.

elementary to college levels. They provide a stereotypical image of a determined individual, a fearless adventurer, and a daring but degraded type who opened the West for settlement. For most students, these heroic images summarized all that is ever learned of the mountain man. When students encountered truths about the mountain man in textbooks, they are astonished to learn that not all were white, beards were not always the fashion, and that a trapper's life was usually very dirty and difficult, with freezing and starving alternately the norm. Thus textbooks contributed greatly in promoting the mountain man hero image.[76] In the past couple of decades the mountain man appeared less frequently in textbooks, a trend which corresponds with the historical profession's willingness to disregard him.[77] Consequently, the mountain man's mythic construct persists unchallenged, even at the basic

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[76]The two dominant images of the mountain man hero found in textbooks have been the romantic, fearless adventurer, and the daring but degraded type. The rougher but heroic image is in George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), p. 537. On the other hand, the more romantic view is in Dexter Perkins and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The United States of America: A History to 1876*, 2nd ed., (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 514-517; or in Robert Divine, T.H. Breen, George Fredrickson, R. Hal Williams, *America: Past and Present*, 3d ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1991); or in the more recent John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, Susan H. Armitage, *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, Brief 2d ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1999).

[77]More recent textbooks that mention the mountain man briefly, and sometimes not at all, include Bernard Bailyn, Robert Dallek, David Brion Davis, David Herbert Donald, John L. Thomas, Gordon S. Wood, *The Great Republic: A History of the American People*, 3d ed., vol. 1 (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1985); Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993). Gary B. Nash and Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society* (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, Inc., 1998). The decreased appearance of the mountain man in such texts also reflects historians' diminished interest in the mountain man.

levels of historiography.

Historiographical trends influenced mountain man history. In fur trade historiography, increased interest in black history surfaced during the late 1960s. With only two black individuals, Jim Beckwourth and Edward Rose, ever mentioned, black trappers represented a tiny minority of the fur trade. Historical regard for their place in fur trade society was understandably peripheral. Heightened interest emerged only with the Civil Rights movement and a rising interest in ethnic studies. Acceptance over this sudden emergence of inquiry, which seemed more rooted in social trends and finding black western heroes than as models of scholarship, causes concern.[78] The keen interest focused on the few blacks that were mountain men, as opposed to the many who undoubtedly contributed to the fur trade industry, albeit in less glamorous roles, further substantiates the influence of historiographical trends on the mountain man image.

Historians understood the mountain man's popularity in society, partially explaining the prevalence of narrative and biographical histories on the subject. Historians succumbed

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[78]See Harold W. Felton, *Jim Beckwourth: Negro Mountain Man* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1966); Elinor Wilson, *Jim Beckwourth: Black Mountain Man and War Chief of the Crows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972); Harold W. Felton, *Edward Rose, Negro Trail Blazer* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1967). These works are all biographical and merely exalt the heroic individual in an attempt to create ethnically acceptable frontier icons. There were also timely reprints of T. D. Bonner's *The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth* (New York: Arno Press, 1969); and one retitled *Mountain Man, Indian Chief; The Life and Adventures of Jim Beckwourth* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968). The trend has been renewed with the emphasis on minorities of the "new" Western history, but the images remain. See Roger D. Hardaway, "Black Mountain Men," *Blacfax: A Journal of Black History and Opinion* 8 (Fall 1994): 26-27; and Beverly Lauderdale, "In Search of Jim Beckwourth and His California Trail," *Persimmon Hill* 25 (Winter 1997): 42-43.

to the mountain man's great appeal when opportunities arose to interject him, even though such loose references proved cursory and revealed little about him. The mountain man routinely garnered attention in overpriced coffee-table books on the West and in serial publications, such as Time-Life Books' vinyl-clad *The Old West* series.[79] The mountain man supplied standard fare for popular consumption media about the West. And his depictions in such works sustained the heroic image readers expected. But these works were commercial publications as opposed to scholarship, intended as popular entertainment. Hence, they contained a few pages of text accompanying familiar images that reinforced the romantic stereotype and assured readers about the mountain man's heroic place in the American experience.[80]

Historians contributed to the mountain man's mythic stature in documentary films. Production and use of documentaries, both for classrooms and television, increased over the past two decades, significantly affecting the mountain man's popular image. More than any

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[79]The most recent of this type of book is *The Wild West* (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1993), the companion volume to the television series hosted by Kenny Rogers; See also *Story of the Great American West* (Pleasantville, New York: The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., 1977); Bill Gilbert, *The Trailblazers*, 3d printing, (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1979), and Keith Wheller, *The Scouts*, 2d printing, (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1980). Both Time-Life titles reflect how the mountain man is commonly portrayed, not as the trapper he was. For youthful audiences there is Evan Jones, *Trappers and Mountain Men* by the editors of American Heritage Pub. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961). The sources which these texts are based upon are the major historical works that promote the heroic image like Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*; DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*; and Irving, *Bonneville.*

[80]Sandra Dallas, "History of the West Told in Entertaining Doses," *The Denver Post*, 22 September 1996, A sec., p. G-13.

other medium, documentaries impart a sense of immediacy and "being there," that elicits deeper emotional responses than written history. For this reason, the documentary becomes a more manipulative form of communication than printed words and static illustrations. It combines narration, music, and powerful, moving visuals to stimulate the senses, thus amplifying and intensifying the response elicited by the filmmaker. In its ability to capture emotions, it is an ideal forum to romanticize and heroize an image.[81] Hence, the documentary is not too dissimilar from its Hollywood cousin. The general public usually views documentaries uncritically, accepting them as informative entertainment and accurate representations. Documentarists did little to revise current historical interpretation, relying instead on the existing popular image of the mountain man hero and bolstering his stereotype image by focusing on his heroic qualities. In *Legacy of the Mountain Men*, narrator Will Geer (the grandfather on the television series *The Waltons*) asserted that "life in the mountains required tough, hardy men, men as wild and free as the country in which they

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[81]For a exhaustive examination of the mountain man and his heroic depictions in documentaries see Patrick McCarthy, "The Characterization of the Mountain Man as Depicted in Documentary Film," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 1985). See also Patrick McCarthy, "Documentary Film as History: Re-Creating Mountain Man Jedediah Strong Smith on Celluloid," *The Pacific Historian* 31 (January 1987): 4-15; R. C. Raack, "Clio's Dark Mirror: The Documentary Film in History," *The History Teacher* 6 (November 1972): 109-118. Ken Burns' series *The West* exemplifies this brand of historical depiction. See Joanne Ostrow, "When the West was Wild," *The Denver Post*, 15 September 1996, A sec., p. D-01. See also Bob Fenster, "How the West Was Done: Imax Movie Recounts History in Dramatic Fashion," *The Arizona Republic*, 20 November 1997, p. 31, about the film *The Great American West* which depicts adventurous mountain men heroes on three-story screens at Imax theaters nationwide.

lived."[82] These documentaries failed to reveal the complexities and multiple dimensions of individual character. Instead they flatten, reduce, and condense images to celluloid stereotypes, more easily absorbed by the mass audiences. Once more the historian fosters the hero.

Museums strengthened and preserved the celebration of the mountain man hero. They exhibited his image at restored historical sites, turning places like Bent's Fort into Western equivalents of Colonial Williamsburg. To the general public, museum displays and historic sites seem fact-filled and historically authentic, but the message conveyed at such places is "more experiential and less analytical," and what visitors encounter with the mountain man is the heroic stereotype.[83] Such places perpetuated the mythic image, "perhaps as much as the western novel, television, and movies, these institutions have shaped our understanding of western history."[84] Institutional and political restrictions, inherent in the establishment and function of museums, provided an inherent support mechanism that promoted stereotypical imagery.[85]

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[82]*Legacy of the Mountain Men*, (Brigham Young University Productions, 1980). A more recent documentary *Mountain Men* (A&E Television Networks, 1999) portrayed the mountain man similarly and relied on the great-man history approach by focusing on well-known figures.

[83]James William Miller, "Museums and the Academy: Toward Building an Alliance," *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Summer 1989): 4.

[84]Carrol Van West, "History and Interpretation at the Western History Museum," *Journal of American Culture* 12 (Summer 1989): 7.

[85]Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History and Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. xii-xiv, xviii-xx, 73. Curtis M. Hinsley, "Collecting Cultures and Cultures of Collecting: The Lure of the American Southwest, 1880-1915," *Museum Anthropology* 16 (February

Museums catered to the preservation of the mountain man myth because the donors or local communities who kept such institutions afloat and who determined what was politically acceptable and popular, were biased toward the preservation of Western heritage and its icons. Financially, museums relied on tourists, or consumers, to whom traditional and stereotypical imagery appeals. Hence, museums catered somewhat to the public's desire to be entertained, and so they relied on the legacy of hero-worship (which museums in American have done since their inception) by romanticizing figures such as the mountain man — cleaned up and coated in saccharin[86] The history profession directly influenced museum depictions of mountain men, since museums' exhibits were created by drawing on the images historians presented.[87] Museums thus composed their own sense of reality with displayed images. The result created a mythologized and dehistoricized mountain man,

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1992): 15, 17-18. Museums that present the mountain man hero run the gamut from The Whitney Gallery of Western Art at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, or the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City, to the Jefferson National Expansion Museum at St. Louis, to the Museum of the Mountain Man in Pinedale, Wyoming, which is a prime example of the "Institutions'" monetary efforts to preserve the myth. J. W. Carlson, "Historic Sites and Museums," *The Book of Buckskinning IV*, ed. William H. Scurlock, (Texarkana, Texas: Rebel Publishing Company, Inc., 1987), pp. 213-258, deals specifically with places that display the mountain man hero. *Prisimmon Hill*, the publication of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center, occasionally promotes the mountain man hero image. See for instance M.J. Van Deventer, "Frontier Rendezvous: A Trek into America's Past," *Persimmon Hill* 19 (Winter 1991): 26-27; and the entire *Prisimmon Hill* 25 (Winter 1997) which is dedicated to fur trade and exploration topics and imagery. See also *Bent's Old Fort* (Colorado Springs: The State Historical Society of Colorado, 1979).

[86]Miller, "Museums and the Academy," 2-3; Van West, "History and Interpretation at the Western History Museum," 7.

[87]Leon and Rosenzweig, *History and Museums in the United States*, pp. xii-xx; Van West, "History and Interpretation at the Western History Museum," 7.

encased in glass or rendered on canvas, and packaged for popular consumption.[88]

Another venue of popular culture — the Internet — illuminated the mountain man hero. Those seeking information about the mountain man via this rapidly-growing medium have done so with minimal effort and have been rewarded accordingly. What was presented to Internet users in both writing and pictures has been a mountain man manifestly heroic and stereotypical, but more superficial. The many sites devoted to the mountain man are supported mainly by the same historical organizations or people who perpetuated his popular image elsewhere. Site affiliation with museums, re-enactors, or documentary producers generated an authoritative impression and impact. A promotional agenda designed to attract consumers (tourists or buyers), necessitated the mountain man's heroic depiction.[89]

The federal government, through its many national park and historic sites, became one of the most prominent promoters of the mountain man image on the Internet. As an example, Internet users who "clicked" their way through a cyber tour of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial site encountered the heroic mountain man figure, the rugged individual who was the vanguard of the nation's westward expansion. At such a site, his

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[88]Hinsley, "Collecting Cultures and Cultures of Collecting," 15, 17-18; Van West, "History and Interpretation at the Western History Museum," 8.

[89]A quick keyword search in any Internet browser will list a number of these sites. Online images and texts can be found in the Buffalo Bill Historic Center's site http://www.TrueWest.com/BBHC/miller.html, and at the Museum of the Mountain Man's site http://199.190.151.145:80/mmmuseum. The Ken Burns PBS documentary series *The West* has its own web site too at http://www3.pbs.org/weta/thewest/. The problem of gleaning truth from myth, the meaningful from the meaningless, in cyberspace is discussed by Steven Conn "Inhabiting History: Learning from the City," *The Long Term View: A Journal of Informed Opinion* 4 (Spring 1998): 66.

image held a federal stamp of approval for those who encountered it.[90]

Conservatism on the subject of the mountain man's stature and place in the American experience produced organizations devoted to maintaining this romantic hero. One such group, the Jedediah Smith Society, founded in 1957, as an affiliate of the California History Foundation, stated its goal as "to further extend the records of [that] great man."[91] The Jedediah Smith Society sustained their hero's image by publishing articles in the California History Foundation's quarterly, *The Pacific Historian*. Amateur historians and buffs dominated the Society's membership, while high-profile historians remained aloof. Honorary induction seemed the only way to connect them to the society.[92]

The Society extolled Jedediah Smith, paying homage to him through articles published in *The Pacific Historian* and by Society gatherings called, oddly enough, "rendezvous."[93] The Society even proffered a resolution requesting that the California State

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[90]See http://www.nps.gov/jeff/mus-mtnmen for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial's mountain man segment of its Internet-based "Westward Expansion Tour." The use of biographies in the "Tour" only sustains the hero-worship tradition with the mountain man figure.

[91]"Jed Smith Society," *The Pacific Historian* 1 (August 1957): 1, 4.

[92]"Jedediah Smith Society Roster," *the Pacific Historian* 4 (February 1960): 20. The Society decided to induct Dale L. Morgan, Gloria Griffith Cline, Charles Camp, and Carl Wheat — familiar names to mountain man history — into their ranks.

[93]The traits of heroes and their ascension to sainthood are discussed by Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, pp. 354-356; Smith deification by the Jedediah Smith Society was a twentieth-century creation by his hero worshipers. Smith was known to carry a Bible, but this never constituted holiness. Articles praising Smith's virtues include Frederick C. Gale, "Jedediah Smith Meets Indians and Visa Versa," *The Pacific Historian* 10 (Spring 1966): 34-38; Donald C. Peattie, "Jedediah Smith-Trailmaker Extraordinary," *The Pacific Historian* 10 (Autumn 1966): 3-5; Don M. Chase, "Was It Jedediah Smith," *The Pacific Historian* 15 (Summer 1971): 3-10. See also *The Pacific*

Superintendent of Schools calendar an annual Jedediah Smith Day. They demanded that educators instruct students about Smith's importance, owing to his heroic traits of "bravery," "keen intellect," "uprightness of character," "loyalty," and "tenacity of purpose."[94] Even should the mythical mountain man image be questioned in the historical mainstream, the Jedediah Smith Society preserved a strong continued presence on its periphery through popular support and lobby for his maintenance.

Mountain men justifiably own a place in the nation's cultural and economic past, and warrant adequate historical treatment. Unfortunately, the historical mind currently reveals little about the individuals who became mountain men; the existing record is mostly statistical. Generally, young trappers, adept in frontier skills, ranged from fifteen to twenty-five years of age; came from Canada, Missouri, Kentucky, or Virginia; minimal attendance at one rendezvous; and marriage (a large percentage to Indians and Spanish-Americans).[95] These interesting statistics provided only a skeletal portrait of the mountain man, leaving many details to be discovered. Many possibilities invite the historical mind regarding future studies of the mountain men. These possibilities include examining their influence on Native Americans and the environment, studying the many Iroquois, Delaware, and Hispanic

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*Historian* 10 (Autumn 1966): 7-13 about the society's "rendezvous."

[94]"Resolution," *The Pacific Historian* 6 (May 1962): 84-85.

[95]Swagerty, "Marriage and Settlement Patterns of Rocky Mountain Trappers and Traders," 160-171. The ages derived by Swagerty find consensus with George W. Pierson, "The M-Factor in American History," *American Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1962): 281. See also John Richard Fehrman, "The Mountain Men — A Statistical View," in *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West*, ed. LeRoy R. Hafen, X, pp. 9-15; *Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser*, St. Louis, February 13, 1822;

mountain men, and analyzing the rendezvous beyond its usual account as a trade fair. Investigating the mountain man community and the accompanying institutions of culture and society should point the way to greater historical accuracy about mountain man life, as would the study of intercultural affairs.[96] A broadened historical perspective exists in understanding the motivations or the "push and pull" factors -- be they economic, social, or environmental (physical and psychological) -- that led young men to pursue the life of a mountain man.[97] Many more potential topics for research in mountain man history might be more aptly pursued by scholars if the heroic image of the mountain man were not constantly impeding the process. Purveyors of popular culture added much to the mountain man's romanticized image. But scholars deserve some of the responsibility for maintaining the cultural status quo in various ways, rather than challenging and repealing it.

The wealth of attention afforded the mountain man through historical study and projection commemorated his heroism and assured his continued place in the American consciousness. But the heroic mountain man as a symbol and myth in American culture extends beyond historical treatment.

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[96]Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties* is about the Canadian trade but may offer a model for examining the various quarters of the Rocky Mountain trade. Walter O'Meara, *Daughters of the Country: The Women of the Fur Traders and Mountain Men* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1968) deals with the Indian woman-trapper relationship in somewhat superficial terms, and reveals the need for further studies on Indian-trapper interaction.

[97]See for instance Roger G. Barker, "The Influence of Frontier Environments on Behavior," in *The American West: New Perspectives, New Dimensions* ed. Jerome O. Steffen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), Pierson, "The M-Factor in American History," 275-289; 61-93; Ray Allen Billington, *America's Frontier Heritage* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), chapter 9.

## CHAPTER THREE

## PLAYING MOUNTAIN MAN

In 1782, J. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur, the French visitor in America, noted that there must be something superior about primitive society. "Great numbers" of Europeans took "refuge among the Indians ... through choice and inclination," de Crevecoeur observed, "whereas we never hear[ed] of any Indians becoming civilized Europeans" by choice.[1] What Crevecoeur recognized was a part of American culture that scholars have termed as "primitivism" or "nostalgia," which remained a general phenomenon with two parts: chronological, relating to time; and cultural, relating to place.[2] Both types reflect the discontent with civilization of the civilized and their belief that a life far simpler and less sophisticated is better.[3] Primitivism is a reaction against the lost sense of identity at individual and collective levels caused by modernization or social upheaval.[4] Hence,

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[1]Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur, *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America; More "Letters From an American Farmer,"* eds. Henri Bourdin, Ralph Gabriel, and Stanley Williams (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), pp. 193-194.

[2]Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1935), p. 1; Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), pp. vii-viii

[3]Lovejoy and Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*, p. 7.

[4]Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects and Modern Lives,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp 185-187; Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, p. x, chapter two.

primitivist activities often attempted to revive lost traditions or revive those endangered.[5] Such actions are searched among past persons and places in an effort, according to Fred Davis, "to bestow meaning upon persons and places of the present."[6]

American primitivism focused on the nation's mythic frontier heritage and often on the persona of a western hero with cowboy-and-Indian images the most prevalent.[7] But the mountain man hero also invited primitivist attention that allowed his image to appear extensively and its components to fall broadly on American culture's various landscapes. Those who imitated these American icons idealized them as patriotic, heroic, and exemplary of proper values, heritage, and lifestyle.

For over a century, playing mountain man has been manifested in American culture in varying ways and degrees. Over time the mountain man's portrayal reflected what Americans wanted him to be and what Americans wanted him to reveal about themselves. Consequently, those who assumed the mountain man's persona manipulated his image and

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[5]Marianna Torgovnick, *Primitive Passions: Men, Women, and the Quest for Ecstacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), pp. 5, 17.

[6]Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, p. vii.

[7]The *Foxfire* books are popular primitivist how-to manuals for living a pre-modern life. See for instance *The Foxfire Book: Hog Dressing, Log Cabin Building, Mountain Crafts and Food, Planting by the Signs, Snake Lore, Hunting Tales, Faith Healing, Moonshining, and Other Affairs of Plain Living* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1972); and *Foxfire 5: Ironmaking, Blacksmithing, Flintlock Rifles, Bear Hunting, and Other Affairs of Plain Living* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1979); See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Savage, *The Cowboy Hero*, chapter four; and magazines like *Cowboy and Indians: The Premier Magazine of the West*; *Cowboys and Country*; *Guns of the Old West*; and *Whispering Wind: American Indian Past and Present.*

contributed to the mountain man's mythical stature. Beneath this act of primitivism lies the exegesis of certain anxieties, political beliefs, and cultural baggage in American history.[8] Though playing mountain man appeared mostly in the twentieth century, it stems from nineteenth-century influences. The West offered artists and writers sources for constructing a cultural identity for the nation during the 1800s and Romanticism, to which primitivism was inextricably linked, influenced many who did. During the last two-thirds of the 1800s, a few well known individuals played mountain man. Their actions bear closer examination

Perhaps the first person to play mountain man was Sir William Drummond Stewart. Stewart, from one of Scotland's oldest and wealthiest families, became best known for his peregrinations into the Rocky Mountains with mountain men as guides and tutors. On his first trip to the 1833 rendezvous, he paid five hundred dollars to fur trade company partners, William Sublette and Robert Campbell, to tag along with their caravan. During the journey, Stewart experienced mountain man life. And once at the rendezvous, he arranged for an Indian woman to make him a buckskin outfit.[9] Stewart attended subsequent rendezvous, six in all. In 1837, he hired artist Alfred Jacob Miller to record his adventures on canvas, to hang on the walls of Murthy Castle in Scotland.[10]

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[8]Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, pp. 3-8, 185-187; Michael Bell, *Primitivism* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1972), pp. 1-3.

[9]Mae Reed Porter and Odessa Davenport, *Scotsman in Buckskin: Sir William Drummond Stewart and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1963), pp. ix, 3-65; Bil Gilbert, "Thar was Old Grit in Him," *Sports Illustrated*, (January 17, 1983), 58-62, 66-71.

[10]Porter and Davenport, *Scotsman in Buckskin*, chapters 16-18; DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*, chapter 12; see also Alfred Jacob Miller, *The West of Alfred Jacob*

Stewart's grandest attempt at playing mountain man came with his last visit to the Rockies in 1843, when he organized what has been called "the first dude ranch trip" to the West.[11] He pioneered providing the services of modern day dude ranches and outfitters that offer wilderness experiences to those willing to pay. That is to say, he offered a western adventure with the comforts of home. He organized and led the trip (aided by William Sublette) for leisure. Stewart assembled about thirty young, inexperienced, but well-to-do American "gentlemen." He intended to give them a frontier adventure, but one well-stocked with luxuries. Stewart created a fantastic version of mountain man life. He led his guests to his favorite lake in the Wind River Mountains of today's Wyoming, and created his own version of the rendezvous. Stewart invited the remnants of mountain men and the local Indian tribes to his gathering. The guests hunted, rafted, fished, and solicited intimate encounters with Indian women. The result was a romanticized version of the rendezvous where imitation and entertainment prevailed, not trade and celebration. For Stewart and his guests, the journey embodied primitive liberation from civilization, an escape into a mythic world.[12] The adventure had great significance for Stewart. It represented his last "release

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*Miller (1837); From the Notes and Water Colors in the Walters Art Gallery, With an Account of the Artist by Marvin C. Ross* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951). The romanticism of Stewart's mountain man adventures is evident in Miller's paintings, many of which Stewart dictated scene and sense, and in Stewart's own writings about the mountain men. See William Drummond Stewart, *Edward Warren* (London: G. Walker, 1854) and his *Altowan* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1846).

[11]Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., "First 'Dude Ranch' Trip to the Untamed West," *American Heritage* 7 (February 1956): 8-15.

[12]Ibid., 201-245; Josephy, "First 'Dude Ranch,'" 9-10. Gilbert, "Thar was Old Grit in Him," 71-72. On this trip, Stewart hired Matthew C. Field, assistant editor of the

from restrictions imposed on him by his life in Scotland" from which he could never permanently escape.[13] By playing mountain man, Stewart escaped from his life's social and cultural restrictions momentarily, and found a sense of identity that his aristocratic heritage did not provide.

Writer Francis Parkman went west and experienced mountain man life. Parkman, the son of a prominent Boston family, was a well-educated, well-to-do inheritor of a complex social order.[14] He doted on the works of Sir Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, which caused him to seek simpler and less restricted worlds in his writings and life adventures. Primitivism moved Parkman, and the West intrigued him. His "thoughts were always in the forest, whose features possessed his walking and sleeping dreams, filling him

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New Orleans *Picayune* to record the expedition. Under the pen name "Phazma," Field published a number of stories about Stewart's adventure in the *Picayune* and the St. Louis *Missouri Republican*. Field believed the trip would supply him the means to eclipse Irving, Lewis and Clark, and other writers in describing the West. His untimely death precluded that. See Matthew C. Field, *Prairie and Mountain Sketches*, collected by Clyde and Mae Reed Porter, edited by Kate L. Greeg and John Francis McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957). Stewart was only one of numerous Europeans to seek an American wilderness experience. See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 49-66. Another British adventurer who ventured off to play mountain man for a time was Frederick Ruxton. Ruxton later noted that "the very happiest moments of my life" were when living the primitive life of the mountain man. See Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, pp. 227-228.

[13]Porter, *Scotsman in Buckskins*, p. 211.

[14]Frederic Cople Jaher, "The Politics of the Boston Brahmins: 1800-1860," in Ronald P. Formisand and Constantine K. Burns, eds., *Boston 1700-1980: The Evolution of Urban Politics* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 59-86, provides a good description of Boston Brahminism--the urban gentry class that dominated the city's political, economic, cultural, and philanthropic institutions.

with vague cravings impossible to satisfy."[15] Parkman headed west for health reasons, as a preparation for writing *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, and because of his brand of masculine nostalgia that drew him to the outdoorsmen who were so different from effete Bostonians.[16] Parkman chronicled his own mountain man adventure in *The Oregon Trail.* He tested his abilities in the mountain man's world and rubbed shoulders with a few trappers. His ideal mountain man type was Henry Chatillon, who guided Parkman on this journey back through time and place. By playing mountain man, Parkman fulfilled his own primitivist notions and his own search for identity outside of Boston's salons.[17]

Among distinguished individuals, who donned the mountain man image in the 1800s, was Theodore Roosevelt, who in doing so, promoted the mountain man's mythical stature.[18] For Roosevelt the mountain men were "a distinctive class with a peculiar and important position in American life."[19] He wanted to be identified with them before they vanished as a recognized class, and so Roosevelt sought to assume the mountain man persona. A part

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[15]Francis Parkman, *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, 2 vols., ed. Mason Wade (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), I, p. 53.

[16]Lewis, *The American Adam*, pp. 165-169.

[17]Ibid., pp. 166-167.

[18]Roosevelt depicted the mountain man hero type in various writings found in his *Works* including *The Winning of the West*, VIII, p. 363; and *Hunting the Grisly and Other Sketches*, III, pp. 39, 248-296. See also *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, pp. 81-88 and Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," 830-843. He believed this class of Rocky Mountain men existed for the first 75 years of the nineteenth century, being on their last leg just as he arrived to link his image to theirs.

[19]Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter* in *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, executive edition, 16 vols. (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1889), vol 2, pp. 20-21.

of his own effort to become a Westerner, Roosevelt traveled to Dakota in 1884, to fulfill "a boyish ambition" at "playing at frontier hunter in good earnest."[20] Shortly after arriving in Dakota, he informed frontier companion Lincoln Lang that he was "most anxious to get a buckskin suit."[21] To Roosevelt, buckskins were "the most picturesque and distinctively national dress"; acquiring one would accommodate and complete his mountain man self image.[22] So Roosevelt asked a Mrs. Maddox of Sand Creek, Dakota, to fashion him some buckskins. The outfit became a favorite of Roosevelt's, and he wore it for years afterwards when occasion permitted.[23] Enamored with the image, Roosevelt took his buckskins with him when he returned to New York for the Winter of 1885-86; and then, as Hermann Hagedorn described:

> he solemnly dressed himself up in the buckskin shirt and the rest of [his] elaborate costume ... and had himself photographed. There is something hilariously funny in the visible records of that performance. The imitation grass not quite concealing the rug beneath, the painted background, the theatrical (slightly patched) rocks against which [Roosevelt] leans gazing dreamily across an imaginary prairie ... with rifle ready and finger on the trigger, grimly facing dangerous game which is not there.[24]

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[20]Quote from a letter by Roosevelt to his elder sister Anna Roosevelt Cowles, June 23, 1884, in Theodore Roosevelt, *Letters from Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, 1870-1918* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 59.

[21]Quote taken from White, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western Experience*, p. 83.

[22]Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, p. 81.

[23]Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt in the Bad Lands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), pp. 95-96; Theodore Roosevelt, "The Ranchman's Rifle on Crag and Prairie," *The Century Magazine* (June 1888), 201, 206, 208; John R. Sweet, "Ultimate Mountain Men: Coursing Cats and Bears," *Hunting* (September 1999), 104-105, 107.

[24]Hagedorn, *Roosevelt in the Bad Lands*, p. 235.

The imaginary landscape and the imagined dangers in the photograph well-suited the inventive image that Roosevelt assumed by dressing up like a mountain man. Roosevelt insisted this same photograph be the frontispiece to his *Hunting the Grisly and Other Sketches*, attesting to the importance of the image for Roosevelt.[25] Roosevelt's playing mountain man represented a personal retreat to heroic and masculine figures of the West. It also became part of his applause of primitive virtues to a nation that he viewed as becoming emasculated by progress. Roosevelt's actions reflected his growing concern in America about modernity, and his belief in emulating frontier icons to sustain the country.

At the turn of the century, increasing numbers of Americans turned "back to nature" in various ways, including playing mountain man.[26] Primitivist programs existed for American boys including Daniel Carter Beard's *Boy Pioneers*. Beard used the heroic mountain man image to promote the Boy Pioneers' nativist and masculine tenets by submitting them, and other frontier types, as models for youth to "emulate ... in lofty aims and character."[27] According to Beard, imitating the mountain man was necessary in ridding American society of "molly coddles."[28] Beard delighted in donning his own buckskin outfit

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[25]Roosevelt, *Hunting the Grisly and Other Sketches*, frontispiece.

[26]See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chapter 9; See also Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

[27]Daniel C. Beard, "Dan Beard's Own Page for Boys," *Woman's Home Companion* 34 (August 1907), 33.

[28]Ibid. See also Daniel C. Beard, *The Buckskin Book of the Boy Pioneers of America*, (n.p.: Pictorial Review, 1912), p. 3. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), chapter 4.

often. In his *Buckskin Book*, the handbook for the Boy Pioneers, Beard used the mountain man to teach "the gospel of out-door life" and encouraged "excursion[s] in[to] the pure wilderness."[29]

Part of the "back to nature" movement included Boy Scouting, and in subtle forms, playing mountain man appeared in early Scouting. The frontier and the frontiersman were primary to Scouting's formation in England in 1908.[30] When Scouting crossed the Atlantic, its frontier tenets and use of frontier icons suited America's pioneer heritage. Scouting represented a dichotomy of progressive and regressive philosophies. It combined a zeal for bureaucracy and organization while promoting morals and traits associated with the past and individuals adept in nature. Its intended purpose to reform or redirect American boys, built character by linking them to the nation's frontier heritage, including the mountain man hero.[31]

The Boy Scouts eventually absorbed Beard's Boy Pioneers and Beard became a prominent national leader in Scouting, infusing many of his Boy Pioneer ideals into

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[29]Schmitt, *Back to Nature*, p. 108; Beard, *The Buckskin Book*, p. 5.

[30]Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 3-28.

[31]Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism 1885-1914* (2d ed.,Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Both works reveal much about what led to Scouting. American society's back-to-nature response, including scouting, is dealt with in Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature* pp. 107-113; and Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chapter 9; and David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: the Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982) pp. xiv-xv, 9-10.

Scouting.[32] Insisting that troops associate themselves with frontiersmen like the heroic mountain man, Beard wrote in the 1914 Boy Scout manual:

> Wilderness is gone, the buckskin man is gone, the painted Indian has hit the trail over the Great Divide, the hardships and privations of pioneer life which did so much to develop sterling manhood are now but a legend in history, and we must depend upon the Boy Scout Movement to produce the MEN of the future.[33]

Beard revealed a Scouting program that embraced the mountain man hero and viewed itself as the mountain man's modern legacy. The cover of the 1927 Scouting handbook strengthened such popular notions when it portrayed Boy Scouts surveying the West with the spirits of frontiersmen, like the mountain man, at their side.[34] Scouting ideals extended popular thought in American society concerning national rejuvenation by turning to the frontier West. Scouts, viewed as modern custodians of Western tradition, were expected to develop frontiersman-like character, strength, and masculinity, qualities adults believed youth needed to achieve proper manhood. With leaders in early Scouting like Beard and Theodore Roosevelt (Roosevelt sat as Honorary Vice-President on the Boy Scouts national council ) who believed the mountain man captured the essence of the American character,

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[32]Schmitt, *Back to Nature*, p. 112; Allan R. Whitmore, "Beard, Boys and Buckskins: Daniel Carter Beard and the Preservation of the American Pioneer Tradition," Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1970, pp. 452-454; Henry S. Curtis, *Play and Recreation for the Open Country* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1914), pp. xii-xiv, 141-153.

[33]Quote taken from Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), p. 169.

[34]Boy Scouts of America, *The Official Handbook for Boys* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1927), front cover.

the philosophies of manliness, self-sufficiency, imperialism, and even militarism in early Scouting are not surprising.[35] By using such icons, the Boy Scout manual asserted:

> No set of men showed spirit of chivalry more ... [than those who] dressed in buckskin, ... clear[ed] the forest of wild animals, suppress[ed] the outlaws and bullies and thieves of their day and enforce[d] a proper respect for women. Like the old knights they often were compelled to do their work amid scenes of great bloodshed. These American knights and pioneers were generally termed backwoodsmen and scouts and were men of distinguished appearance, of athletic build, of high moral character ... They were noted for their staunch qualities of character ... [and] knew all the things that a scout ought to know.[36]

In addition, Scouting reflected the day's recapitulation theory.[37] The model of a boy's primitivism and subsequent advancement in the stages of civilization, thus repeating his own race history, is almost entirely Turnerian.[38]

The mountain man hero endured in varying degrees in Scouting. During the Boy Scout movement's first thirty years, its *Handbook* ranked among the nation's best-selling works (second only to the Bible), and was chiefly responsible for disseminating the ideals

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[35]Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 147-148; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, Chapter 1.

[36]Boy Scouts of America, *The Official Handbook For Boys*, 1911, pp. 239-240.

[37]The recapitulation theory was part of the "child study" movement in turn-of-the-century America as an educational theory used to study children. It was the idea that the child in its development rehearsed the history of its ancestry, and that in consequence its nature could be inferred from the course of human evolution. See for instance Alexander F. Chamberlain, *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man*, 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), chapter 8; and Percey E. Davidson, *The Recapitulation Theory and Human Infancy* (New York: Columbia University, 1914), Introduction.

[38]Boy Scouts of America, *The Official Handbook for Boys* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1911), pp. x-xii, 3-9; Curtis, *Play and Recreation for the Open Country*, pp. 147-149.

of frontiersmanship to Scouts and developing a nationally accepted self-image of young boys. The book perpetuated the mountain man hero myth, inasmuch as millions of boys, on countless backwoods outings, mimicked the rugged figure championed in the *Handbook*.[39]

Over recent decades, Scouting's focus shifted. Urbanization and technology drew Scouting's emphasis away from the frontier. Consequently, the mountain man and other frontier icons in subsequent editions of the Scout *Handbook* figured less and less in matters of character and instruction.[40] Yet, the mountain man still appeared in Scouting and youngsters assumed his rugged persona in various ways, if only through a merit badge or a troop patch on a sleeve.[41] But there have been other available means afforded the modern Scout to play mountain man. Scouts can hike historical trails that trace the wanderings of fur trade men, for example.[42] Since 1993, Scouting includes muzzle-loader shooting and "buckskin games" (where Scouts throw tomahawk, start fires with flint and steel, tan hides, and make leather clothing) in its National Jamboree experience, with the mountain man

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[39]Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, p. 148; Schmitt, *Back To Nature*, p. 111.

[40]A glance at succeeding editions of the Boy Scout Handbook should spill the beans on this matter.

[41]Name association tends to have priority in scouting with numerous councils and troops adopting freely from mountain man images including Kit Carson and Jim Bridger. R. J. Sayers, ed., *Scouting Collectibles* (Florence, Alabama: Books Americana, 1984), pp. 262-279.

[42]Dick Pryce, "Historic Trials," *Boy's Life* (July 1970), 42; A list of trails for scouts to hike, including those named after or related to the fur trade are found in Boy Scouts of America, *Nationally Approved Historic Trails* (n.p.: 1991) and include trails named after Charles Carpenter and Manuel Lisa.

image playing a central role in these activities.[43]

More intensified opportunities for Scouts to play mountain man take place at several Scout camps. Most notable is Philmont Scout Ranch near the Carson National Forest in Northern New Mexico. Philmont heavily promotes the mountain man history of the region. The notion that Scouts and the mountain men, though separated by 150 years, are of one piece support Philmont's appeal. Mountain men are defined as "that rough-and-ready type" who embody "the spirit of America's western frontier," who were "clever, fearless, and willing to risk their lives to help each other or anyone who might be in danger in the Philmont country."[44] And Scouts are led to believe that they may acquire such character through "the ultimate in outdoor adventure" of Philmont's "Mountain Men Treks."[45] These expeditions take Scouts into the Southern Rockies for three to five days, where they experience wilderness living and learn "mountain man lore."[46] The Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch in West Texas, provides a similar experience. Scouts spend a week playing mountain

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[43] Promotional Literature, "2001 Nation Scout Jamboree" (Irving Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1999); Brent Schultz, "He's Loyal, Trustworthy, Brave--and On Vacation!," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minnesota) 11 September 1997, p. 2E. See also both the Rifle Shooting and Shotgun Shooting merit badges which now include sections on muzzle-loaders. *Rifle Shooting* (Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1990); *Shotgun Shooting* (Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1989).

[44] William B. McMorris, "Philmont's Mountain Men," *Boys' Life* (December 1998), 56; see also William B. McMorris and Jack Unruh, "Time Travel at Philmont," *Boys' Life* (November 1998), 50-55; Tony Farrell, "Expedition 710-I," *Boys' Life* (February 1999), 24.

[45] McMorris, "Philmont's Mountain Men," 56; Boy Scouts of America, *Philmont Training Center Family Guidebook* (Cimarron, New Mexico: Boy Scouts of America, 1992), p. 14.

[46] Boy Scouts of America, *Philmont Training Center Family Guidebook*, p. 14.

man, and at the end they "rendezvous" around a campfire, exchange "Mountain Man gifts," and receive their "Mountain Man names."[47] These rendezvous afford a primitivist extension of the already ritualistic campfire gatherings in Scouting, but with the mountain man hero as the central figure.[48] Many other smaller Boy Scout camps offer mountain man activities, to "experience that way of life" and "heritage," as part of earning merit badges.[49] But what Scouts encounter during such enterprises are the mythical figures that they then believe themselves to be like.[50]

The *Frontiersman* adventure, which encourages Varsity Scouts (Scouts sixteen to eighteen years old) to dress up and play mountain man, provides the most intensive arena for Scouts to play mountain man. Utah's Scouting councils developed the *Frontiersman* adventure from the more common adult activity of playing mountain man. Adult leaders created the program to "challenge [Scouts'] mental and physical abilities" and help develop

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[47]Buffalo Trail Council, *Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch 1999 Summer Camp Troop Guide* (November 1998), p. 19.

[48]Jay Mechling, "The Magic of the Boy Scout Campfire," *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (January-March 1980): 35-56.

[49]See for instance *Last Frontier Council Leaders Handbook* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Boy Scouts of America, 1999), "Frontiersman" section, about the mountain man activities offered at Slippery Falls Scout Ranch near Tishomingo, Oklahoma. See also "Living History," *Boys' Life* (April 1997), 16-17; and "Trappers' Rendzvous," *Scouting* (November 1992), 36.

[50]Ibid. Also, scouting offers a variety of books espousing the survivalist-primitivism ideology and skills with the mountain man image as a vehicle. For example see David Montgomery, *Mountain man Crafts and Skills* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers Inc., 1979); Larry J. Wells, *Leather Makin': A Manual of Primitive and Modern Leather Skills* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers Inc., 1991); Richard L. Jamison, *Primitive Outdoor Skills* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers Inc., 1981).

their character and manhood.[51] Scouts learned the history and skills of the mountain man, turning to primitivism to instill feelings of self-sufficiency, independence, and identity. Most of what Scouts learn is mythical, at best impractical, like speaking a mountain man dialect or making buckskin outfits. But in Scouting, character, rather than utilitarian skill, retain the focus, and it is the heroic mountain man image that is used to mold character. As a result, the *Frontiersman* experience culminates in troop gatherings that attempt to re-create rendezvous, positing a historical continuity between the past and present for participants, but with all the mythic imagery and Scouting's decorum in place.[52]

American youth engaged in other ways to play mountain man. Influenced by the mountain men heroes of television, movies, comic books, and other forms popular culture, youngsters took to their own backyard wildernesses to play out their fantasies. Such play invariably pitted adolescent mountain men against Indians, Mexicans, or villains in neighborhood games, a trope that has been a longstanding institution of American youth

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[51]Councils involved in creating the *Frontiersman* adventure are replete with mountain man imagery and included the Jim Bridger and Cache Valley councils which in 1993 combined to create the Trapper Trails council — a title created by adult leaders as well. See the *Frontiersman Guidebook* (Irving, Texas: Boy Scouts of America, 1991). Similar activities in scouting emerged in the mid-1980s throughout the West, some troops being solely dedicated to the matter. See Wayne Stringfellow, "The Development of the Buckskinning Movement as a Recreational Activity," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, East Texas State University, 1995), pp. 73-74.

[52]Besides activities involving the mountain man image, scouts have been reminded periodically over time in official scouting publications of their supposed heirship to the mountain man. See for instance scouting novels like Percy K. Fitzhugh, *Westy Martin in the Rockies*, in *Out West With West Martin* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, reprint of 1925 edition); or in lighter reading of scouting's monthly picture magazine *Boy's Life* with articles like Pryce, "Historic Trails," 42; or "The Mountain Men," *Boy's Life* (May 1995), 22-25.

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Television series such as the syndicated *The Adventures of Kit Carson* (1951-1955) starring Bill Williams (whose Carson hero differed little from a host of television Western heros as a cowboy detective type), or Walt Disney's multi-episode *The Saga of Andy Burnett* (1958) starring Jerome Courtland (under the "Frontierland" banner and intended to be Disney's mountain man equivalent to *The Adventures of Davy Crockett*), or NBC's *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (1977-1978) starring Dan Haggerty, provided viewing for youth to see their mountain man heroes in action.[53]

Comics such as *The Adventures of Kit Carson*, *Frontier Fighters*, and *Ben Bowie and His Mountain Men*, as well as numerous children's books, exhibited the mountain man hero to young readers.[54]

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[53]Richard West, *Television Westerns: Major and Minor Series, 1946-1978* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 1987), pp. 13-14; "Obituaries," *The New York Times*, 25 September 1992, p. A22; "The Saga of Andy Burnett--Davy Crockett Retold," *TV Guide*, 22 February 1958, 6; *Walt Disney Presents*, Disney Channel, rebroadcast 3 October 1999, which promoted *The Saga of Andy Burnett* with Fess Parker singing and praising mountain man Andy Burnett as the successor to Disney's Davy Crockett; "Viewers Follow Grizzly Adams," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 July 1977, sec 4, pp. 17-18; *TV Guide*, 5 February 1977, 7, 76-77; West, *Television Westerns*, p. 66.

[54]Examples of mountain man comic heroes include *The Adventures of Kit Carson*, 112 Classics Illustrated; *Kit Carson, Indian Scout*, Avon Periodical; and *Ben Bowie and His Mountain Men*, Dell Publishing Company. Examples of juvenile literature include Gertrude Hecker Winders, *Jim Bridger, Mountain Boy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955); Evan Jones, *Trappers and Mountain Men*; James Henry Daugherty, *Trappers and Traders of the Far West* (New York: Random House Inc., 1952); Rod Gragg, *The Old West Quiz and Fact Book* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986) chapter 2; John Logan Allen, *Jedediah Smith and the Mountain Men of the American West* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1991); Andrew Glass, *Tall Tales of Mountain Men* (New York: Doubleday Books for Young Readers, 2000).

In classrooms children watched the mountain man hero in film strips, or played mountain man through interactive learning programs.[55] Such sources kindled adolescent imaginations by providing youth with heroic models to identify with and imitate, while conquering their backyard frontiers.[56]

Kit-Carson-labeledknifes, six-shooters, BB-guns, fur caps, and neckerchiefs helped children in their mountain man fantasies. Fringed leather jackets advertised as having "all the rugged authenticity [a] young adventurer appreciates" furthered the image.[57] At variety and toy stores, highway truckstops like Loves, museum gift shops like at Fort Hall, Idaho, or Fort Bridger, Wyoming, tourist traps like Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, and Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and frontier theme parks such as Silver Dollar City, near Branson, Missouri, an array of coonskin hats, moccasins, frontier cap rifles and pistols, knives, powder horns, leather pouches, miniature traps, furs, and other mountain man paraphernalia, available to children has revealed the persistence of such play in American culture. The historical validity of the mountain man lends realism that has made him easy to impersonate. These economic and historical factors ultimately contributed to the ease of playing mountain man, while making the fantasy more genuine.

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[55]Two examples of filmstrips on mountain men are *Mountain Men of the Rockies* (Idaho Falls, Idaho: M. Quinton, 1979); and *Pathfinders Westward* (Chicago: Society for Visual Education, 1970). A program for playing mountain man in school is Bill Lacy, *Skins: A Simulation of the Mountain Men and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade, 1826-1838* (El Cajon, California: Interaction Publishers, 1975).

[56]Louis Breger, *From Instinct to Identity: The Development of Personality* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), p. 184.

[57]Advertisement in *New York Times Magazine,* 11 December 1966), p 66.

Rel's Toys manufactured a Kit Carson Western Set during the 1960s with wagons, attacking Indians, and buckskinned mountain men. But Rel's Kit Carson Western Set was only a spin-off of Marx Toys' Fort Apache playset which has been called the "staple of all western playsets."[58] The Fort Apache playset was manufactured from 1955 to 1977, in forty-six variations, and sold by the nation's leading retailers. Its western figures included buckskinned and bearded mountain men fighting Indians.[59] In 1991, Playmobil created a mountain man figure complete with a camp set-up, canoe, and an Indian sidekick. Whether the Indian was friend or foe, children created their own fantasies of the mountain man's West with such playsets.

Youngsters carried television mountain men heroes to school, their lunch boxes emblazoned with heroes like Kit Carson, Zeb McCahan (James Arness' mountain man character in *How the West Was Won)*, or Grizzly Adams (Dan Haggerty's bearded hero on a log cabin-shaped box promoting the *Life and Times of Grizzly Adams*). Youngsters proudly toted such articles around because they were "symbolic affirmations of their young owners."[60] "In the blackboard jungle" these luchboxes "reflect[ed] one's identification" with the mountain man hero that one intended to emulate.[61] Hence, the buckskinned hero, a

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[58]Jay Horowitz, *Marx Western Playsets: The Authorized Guide* (Sykesville, Maryland: Greenberg Publishing Company Inc., 1992), p. 87.

[59]Ibid., pp. 32, 35-36, 86-87, 90-91.

[60]Scott Bruce, *The Fifties and Sixties Lunch Box* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1988), p. 7. See also Larry Aikins, *Pictorial Price Guide to Metal Lunch Boxes and Thermoses* (Gas City, New Jersey: L-W Book Sales, 1992), pp. 38, 46, 62, 150.

[61]Bruce, *The Fifties and Sixties Lunch Box*, p. 7.

feature of American youth culture, influenced play and dictated fashion among American youth.

Playing mountain man existed primarily for the instruction and amusement of children, however, it often carried deeper implications for adults. The mountain man fantasy was not limited to youth, and his image extended from childhood and adolescence into adulthood. For adults, the easiest way to play mountain man was by dressing the part. Periodically, western attire became a preoccupation with arbiters of fashion, who endorsed it as some new direction for the fashion conscious.[62] Mountain man-inspired clothing occasionally figured into these trends. Manufacturers and retailers understood the appeal of such attire and advertised it under pretenses that one would "feel the frontier spirit" by wearing it. Those fancying such garb perhaps intended being part of the mythical frontier and are desired to "live the romance of the West," by shelling out some money and slipping into costume.[63] Western fashion enthusiasts, designers, and retailers attended gatherings like the annual Western Design Conference or Michael Martin Murphey's WestFest in Vail, Colorado, to promote and catch up on the latest trends. There they may have discovered New York models in mountain-man-inspired attire, and find fringe, fur, and coonskin caps

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[62]"The Western World," *The Discount Merchandiser* (April 1993), 48.

[63]Fringed buckskin jackets and other mountain man styled apparel have become a common article of western fashion in the 1990s. See advertisements in *Cowboys & Country* (Summer 1999), 13; Cowboys *& Indians: The Premier Magazine of the West* (September 1999), 3-4, 94; (May 1997), 53, 79-80, 119; *Cowboys & Indians: A Magazine For Western Enthusiasts* (Winter 1993/94), 3, 23, 27, 55; *Western Style* (October 1994), 5, 10, 25.

in vogue.[64] On occasion, the mountain man's influence crept into international shows and high-priced boutiques like Billy Martin's of New York City and West Hollywood.[65] Such fashions held little practicality for outdoor life, but they fulfilled romantic conceptions about the West. They provided status symbols that hung in the closets of the well-to-do. But mountain man inspired clothing could be purchased from western clothiers and department stores, and proved that, for a price, anyone might indulge in nostalgic fantasies.[66]

The meaning of fashion extended beyond merely assimilation into one's surroundings or seeking status or individual self-concept. In the twentieth century it portrayed a part of American culture. Fashions revealed a social psychology that ran much deeper than the vestments worn. Fashion developed into a "social institution," capable of influence beyond transforming the outward appearance. It created a "cultural-creative force" that affected the modes of human expression, thought, and action. In this light, perhaps those who put on the

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[64]M. J. Van Deventer, "Western Design Conference," *Cowboys & Indians* (Winter 1993/94), 66-67; Lillian Ross, "WestFest Keeps 'em Coming Back," *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 25 August 1996, p. 3T; Tyler Beard, *100 Years of Western Wear* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publishers, 1993), pp. 10, 20, 126-127;

[65]Martha Baker, "Fall Fashion: The Wild Ones," *New York* (August 26, 1991), 46-61; *American Cowboy* (September-October 1994), 10, 11, 73;

[66]In 1992 the author attended a Christmas symphony at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute and Ski Resort. Usually considered black-tie affairs, this particular gathering instead became a deluge of wilderness influenced designer fashions, and indicative of the imagery Redford and the crowd he runs with acquaint themselves with. Moreover, a stroll through western resort towns like Santa Fe, Jackson Hole, or Vail will reveal an array of mountain man influenced fashions. See also Beard, *100 Years of Western Wear*, pp. 132-133, 140-141. Such "genuine" clothing can be purchased from retailers like Sheplers or Sears to help wearers "Tame [their] own frontiers." See *Sheplers Catalog* (Holiday 1999), p. 91; *Sears Holiday Wish Book*, (1999), p. 255.

mountain man's image exposed a deeper connotation to "playing" mountain man.[67]

American society, in establishing a link with its frontier past, spans adolescent to adulthood fantasy, continually reinforced by popular culture. Occasionally the mountain man ideals associated with the frontier were imported to other, seemingly disparate circumstances and served to lend a sense of familiarity in alien situations. The Vietnam War offers an example.

Thousands of American soldiers carried their adolescent ideas of the frontier and its heroes, gleaned largely from television, into the larger, very real and deadly world of Southeast Asia's jungles. There, many wove the Vietnam conflict with their own frontier imagery, rhetoric, and mimicry, including those qualities associated with the mountain man hero. Many soldiers likened themselves to the frontier heroes they had grown up imitating. For instance, one member of a LURPS (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) team viewed his troop's actions as being like those of frontier "scouts" or "Kit Carson."[68] He was not alone in this sentiment. Some units even carried out these beliefs in their fighting, with men taking scalps or cutting off the ears of the enemy. Some Navy Seals cut the liver out of their victim and took a bite out of it, behavior resembling that of the historical Jeremiah "Liver-Eating" Johnson. Such excessive actions in imitation reflect a cultural state of mind in

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[67]René König, *A La Mode: On the Social Psychology of Fashion*, trans. F. Bradley (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 40; Sidney Packard and Abraham Raine, *Consumer Behavior and Fashion Marketing*, 2d ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company Publishers, 1979), pp. 173-216.

[68]Harry Maurel, *Strange Ground, Americans in Vietnam 1945-1975, An Oral History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), p. 188.

American thought that reflects the pervasive and venerated status of the mountain man.[69]

Fascination with the mountain man has long been part of American society's infatuation with the mythic frontier. In adulthood, the role-playing fantasy exposed some new dimensions. People who wanted to play mountain man could seek the services of wilderness outfitters who provided escape from everyday life through excursions into the remote regions where historic mountain men once trapped. Some catered expressly to the enthusiast hoping to hunt big game with muzzle-loaders "like a mountain man."[70] Many took vacationers along "scenic trails first explored by ... fur trappers ... and mountain men of long ago," which further immersed the vacationer in the nostalgia.[71] A day's journey often concluded with fireside readings from mountain man journals describing the area, which provided vacationers with a sense of camaraderie with the historic trapper through wilderness

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[69]Frontier imagery in the Vietnam war is outlined in Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, pp. 453-533. There are numerous works about American experiences in Vietnam, many of which reveal the use of frontier imagery by American soldiers. See, for example, Al Santoli, ed., *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three American Soldiers Who Fought It* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982) and Mark Baker, *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Soldiers Who Fought There* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1981); Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore, USA (ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young* (New York: Random House, 1992). The life and legend of "Liver-Eating" Johnson is found in Raymond W. Thorp and Robert Bunker, *Crow Killer: The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1969). See also Eric Thane, *High Border Country* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942), p. 69.

[70]Advertisement in *Muzzle Blasts*, (July 1993), 71. See also promotional literature from *Idaho Sportsmen's Directory* (Boise, Idaho: Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, 1999), pp. 11, 18, 21.

[71]Promotional literature from Ron Dube's Wilderness Adventures, Cody, Wyoming, n.d.

osmosis. The idea behind the outing was not only to help the client "learn the rich history of [the] legendary wilderness but actually feel it in [their] soul."[72]

Outfitters understood the tourist's desire to experience a not-too-rough version of the mountain man's wilderness. The outfitters helped tourists retreat from civilization to experience the wilderness and feel a sense of communion with nature and history. The tourist wanted to believe they were part of a rare breed, but they also wanted the comforts of home close at hand. So outfitters provided luxurious wilderness camps.[73] Outfitters realized that the goal was not experience but fulfillment— making the tourist feel important. It was all part of what historian Hal Rothman calls "scripted industrial tourism," where the experience is already predetermined but is intended to give the tourist a "self-affirming authentic experience."[74] Thus, tourists could play mountain man and adhere to primitivist notions, but with the outfitter taking care of what maitre d' hôte once did.

There were others, however, who did not want luxuries or a scripted experience when they played mountain man in the wilderness. They wanted a very primitive experience. The Les Miserables Primitives, a group of Arizona hikers, reenacted such wilderness explorations. They attempted "to recreate [the] wilderness way of the nineteenth-century

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[72]Ibid.; Promotional literature from Missouri River Expeditions Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 1998; see also Michael Frome, *Whose Woods These Are: The Story of the National Forests* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), chapter 13.

[73]Promotional literature from Missouri River Expeditions; Dwight Schuh, "Riding High: Wyoming Packtrip Adventure," *Family Adventures* (Spring/Summer 1993), 53-58.

[74]Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargain: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998), p. 14.

mountain man."[75] They made their own primitive outfits, backpacks, and supplies and hiked historic routes once traveled by the real mountain men. It provided a primitivist activity intended to make one "feel closer to the environment" and helped one "develop more a sense of self-reliance" by putting off modern technology.[76] And currently, it is part of a growing trend in primitivist wilderness trekking nationwide.[77] These activities allowed individuals to assume the mountain man's persona and contributed to his mythical stature.

Yearnings to play mountain man have often stemmed from hunting interests and carried with it the need to purchase muzzle-loader firearms. A rifle, usually a Hawken, seemed essential to looking and playing the part. Thousands of hunters bought them yearly to take advantage of special state-sponsored black-powder hunts, eventually acting out some level of mountain man fantasy. Playing mountain man with real muzzle-loaders occasionally caused serious accidents, of course. Most Americans, including many of the muzzle-loader owners themselves, knew little about them. This often spur of the moment purchase by people who understood little if anything about loading and shooting a muzzle-loader, or their destructive capacities, provided a source of entertainment and often a prop, owing to their

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[75]Annette McGivney, "Trading Gore-Tex for Buckskin: These Wilderness Trekkers Don't Just Read History, they Relive the Old Ways," *Backpacker* (June 1996), 16.

[76]Ibid., p. 17.

[77]Annette McGivney, "The Wisdom of Abo Dude," *Backpacker* (September 1999), 46-54. See also the Coalition of Historical Trekkers website http://www.coht.org. The increased interest in historical mountain man trails is seen with Nathan Douthit, *A Guide to Oregon South Coast History: Traveling the Jedediah Smith Trail* (Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1999).

theatrical qualities of smoke and muzzle-flash and their antiquated appearance. Society viewed them as adult toys, and so most retailers displayed them between BB guns and bow-and-arrow sets, available at discount stores or from mail order outfits, accompanied by minimal federal regulations. Even convicted felons could own these guns without background checks or restrictions[78] That muzzle-loaders ably knocked many out of the saddle a century ago slipped past most observers and politicians.[79] Indeed, this gun proved crucial to playing mountain man as it became the single most important symbol of self-sufficiency and independence.[80] With it many who played mountain man took what was once a necessity — the frontiersman's means of food and protection — and transformed it into a symbolic artifact. Those who feigned mountain man life, an activity called "buckskinning," usually derived their interests from muzzle-loader hunting.[81]

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[78]*Cabela's Master Catalog* (Fall 1999), 426-435. Public Law 90-618 (the Gun Control Act of 1968) defines muzzle-loaders (originals and replicas) as "Antique Firearms." Federal agencies do not consider them a threat and place little restriction on their sale or ownership.

[79]The destructive capacity of muzzle-loaders is unquestioned. A quick glance at the ballistics of most .50 caliber muzzle-loaders will find them closely matched to that of a 30-30 or M-1 carbine. Any ballistics chart should reveal everything, but see Kenneth C. Ramage, *Lyman Reloading Handbook*, 46th edition (Lyman Products Corporation, 1982), pp. 33-34. See also Ed Hall, "Black Powder Loads for Whitetail Deer," *Fur-Fish-Game: A Magazine for Practical Outdoorsmen* (October 1999), 32-34, about the damage muzzle-loaders can inflict; and Jerome B. Robinson, "Starters Choice: Do Front-End-Stuffers Have You Buffaloed?" *Field and Stream* (April 1996), 30-31;

[80]John G. Cawelti, *The Six Gun Mystique*, 2d ed. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), p. 58.

[81]*Deer Hunter's Almanac 2000* (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 1999), chapter four titled "Muzzleloading Magic"; Keith McCafferty, "The Hawken: Hawken-Rifles of the Rendezvous," *Field and Stream* (February 1997), 38-40; "Both Ends of the Barrel: The Muzzleloading Debate" *Field and Stream* (November 1996), 45-51, 92;

Among the various ways to play mountain man, none has been more explicit in American culture than buckskinning, which is the dressing up in buckskins and attending modern rendezvous with other modern mountain men (and women).[82] Like the other types of playing mountain man, buckskinning is a primitive or nostalgia type of leisure activity with its character shaped by various trends and social currents. More importantly buckskinning fulfills the various psychological needs of those who practice it. Buckskinning is an escape, or at the least a diversion, from the constraints and changes of modern society, and one response to what Alvin Toffler calls "future shock."[83] Buckskinning offers a sense of freedom and identity to its participants by creating mythic enclaves or new environments that Toffler defines as "stability zones," myth-based primitive worlds where people reduce the barrage of decisions that confront them, if only for a few days.[84] The modern rendezvous, with ritualized emotions, beliefs, and morals, provide places where buckskinners live their invented versions of the past. Buckskinning's increasing popularity reflects society's growing interest in frontier heroes during the twentieth century, during which

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Jerome B. Robinson, "The Muzzleloading Boom," *Field and Stream* (August 1993), 42-43, 95-97

[82]Charles E. Hanson, Jr., "Some Thoughts for Buckskinners and Others," *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1978): 1-3. "Buckskinning" is a term that conveniently distinguishes modern mimicry from the real articles.

[83]Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 3-7, 290, 335, 346-47. Toffler argues that the pace of change in America (social as well as technological) has been accelerating to the point where people are becoming anxiety-riddled aliens within their own society. They are essentially inundated by change, disoriented and confused about their place in society, and struggle to cope within it.

[84]Ibid.

hundreds of thousands of Americans purchased muzzle-loaders and carried them in reenactments, parades, rendezvous, and other commemorations of frontier life.[85] As part of a broader current in twentieth-century America, distinguished by individuals donning primitive facades, taking forays into invented antimodern pasts, and seeking "authentic others" to imitate, while escaping "unauthentic selves," the history, character, and underlying currents of buckskinning deserve inquiry. [86]

Buckskinning began in the early-1930s, as a reaction to industrialization, the techno-slaughter of World War I, the Crash of 1929, and the Great Depression, which cumulatively revealed society's false security in progress. In the mountain man lifestyle, some individuals saw a superior existence and believed that by reenacting it they could revive the lost traditions and values of the frontier which seemed trodden under in the march of progress. Like other forms of entertainment of the day, buckskinning granted a means of escape from the Depression. In buckskinning one participated and assumed the heroic image of Kit Carson or a similar hero of western pulp magazines or Saturday B-feature westerns.

One of buckskinning's founders, Bill Large, traced his inspiration to frontier showman William F. Cody. As a boy, Large had gone to one of Cody's pre-show parades where, according to Large, Cody stopped his horse directly in front of him. Unable to resist

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[85]Robinson, "The Muzzleloading Boom," 43. See also "Customer Profile," Thompson/Center Arms *Sales Manual*, p. 2.

[86]John R. Kelly, *Leisure Identities and Interactions* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1983), pp. 5-14, 63. Another form of such escapism is the Hobbyist movement, which is playing Indian for the same reasons a playing mountain man. See Deloria, *Playing Indian*, pp.134-142.

the temptation, young Large reached out and touched Cody's foot. Cody looked down at Large and replied, "Son, you'll be a great shot."[87] Thus, from his viewpoint, buckskinning was born out of a scene approaching imagery of Biblical proportions; much like the Deity and the powers of the garment hem, the originator of buckskinning felt blessed by the master of frontier myth. From the 1930s on, buckskinning persisted as a means of primitivist escape.[88]

Buckskinning endured during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, but its growth was meager.[89] Its allure was still its primitivist foundation, and primitivism sustained a vogue trend in American popular culture during these decades.[90] Buckskinning's popularity escalated in the 1970s and 1980s, and continued to grow through the 1990s as part of a larger trend in historical reenactment.[91] Part of this increased popularity in buckskinning stemmed

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[87]Bill Large, "A Letter," *Muzzle Blasts* (February 1983), 26.

[88]Anderson, *Time Machines*, p. 136; Stringfellow, "The Development of the Buckskinning Movement as a Recreational Activity," pp. 10, 12-13.

[89]Stringfellow, "The Development of the Buckskinning Movement as a Recreational Activity," chapter 4; Erich V. Bucey, "Living the Dream: The History and Philosophy of Buckskinning," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Central Missouri State University, 1997), pp. 7-10.

[90]Perhaps no one capitalized more on this primitivist trend than Walt Disney. His numerous frontier and nature movies and his own Frontierland in Disneyland epitomized the unity of escapism and primitivism in American culture of the period. See Richard Francaviglia, "Walt Disney's Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 30 (Summer 1999): 155-182; Walt Disney, "Frontierland," *True West* (May-June 1958), 10-11; See also Deloria, *Playing Indian*, pp. 134-142.

[91]The number of modern day mountain men increased approximately 250% during the 1970s and 1980s, but witnessed its greatest growth during the years 1972-1977. This figure was derived from percentages taken from membership enrollment in the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association and from a readership profile survey conducted in

from the mountain man hero's appearances in other quarters of American popular culture. Some buckskinners recalled the initial influence of Disney's *Davy Crockett* (1954). Many more recalled films such as *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) and *The Mountain Men* (1980), or images from romanticized literature or history like A.B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky* (1947) or Vardis Fisher's *Mountain Man* (1965).[92] Heroic images from these sources shaped the buckskinners' imagination regarding the heroes they portrayed. *Jeremiah Johnson*, starring Robert Redford, became the single most influential popular culture source in spurring buckskinning's growth. The boost in buckskinning activity that closely followed the film's 1972 release leaves little doubt about the film's influence. Many buckskinners, who took up buckskinning in the 1970s and 1980s, related their fascination with the film to their

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1987. Membership in the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association has declined during the 1990s by about 30% according to NMLRA officials. This information obtained through a telephone Interview with Donna Gatlin, an NMLRA official, 5 October 1999. But the number of buckskinners has continued to increase, evidenced by the growth in the size and number of local, state, and national rendezvous. The percentage of buckskinners who belong to the NMLRA is approximately 32%, the remainder belong to local organizations or none at all. Information based on a survey conducted by the author in 1999, hereafter referred to as "Individual Survey" (see Appendix). The continued growth in buckskinning is discussed by Mark Hunter, "Rough 'n' Rendezvous: Outing Not for the Pampered," *The Denver Post* 13 July 1999, Denver and the West sec., p. B-04; Felicia Jordan, "Flintlock Firing Brings Flash of Old Days to Mountain Men," *The San Diego Union-Tribune* 24 April 1999, p. A-25; and Hank Burchard, "Muzzle-Bound Hunters," *The Washington Post* 29 September 1989, p. N56. See also Kimberly Miller, "Gender Comparisons Within Reenactment Costume: Theoretical Interpretations," *Family and Consumer Science Research Journal* 27 (September 1998): 36-37.

[92]Jim Fergus, "Mountain Man," *Outdoor Life* (March 1995), 42; William Poole, "Camping Out in the Past," *The San Francisco Chronicle* 30 December 1990, This World sec., p. 12.

pivotal interest in buckskinning.[93]

A "philosophy" of reliving their heroes' lives while experiencing a lifestyle that revives perceived frontier heritage (if only on occasional weekends) forges the fundamentally primitivist theory to which most buckskinners cling to. As one participant described it:

> Buckskinning is a reaching out to get a firm grip again on cherished traditions and institutions which the years have eroded and corroded. It is God Bless America in raunchy buckskins squatting in front of a tipi, a latter-day Bridger and his Hawken stepping up to a firing line; a striving for substance, something to stick to the ribs; in a nation turned into plastic and where most of life is but an imitation of life.[94]

Buckskinners feel that by reenacting the past they maintain a sense of duty, love of country, courage, self-sacrificing heroism, honesty, freedom, and individualism, traits that they believe fundamental to the nation's early existence.[95] Buckskinning also offers what Henry David Thoreau articulated as the need to "go off to some wilderness where [one] can

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[93]Twenty five percent of buckskinners surveyed attribute their interest in buckskinning directly to popular culture images, and the film *Jeremiah Johnson* is the most mentioned influence. Information from "Individual Survey." See also "Customer Profile," Thompson/Center Arms *Sales Manual*, p. 2, that discusses an unprecedented surge in muzzle-loader sales the year following *Jeremiah Johnson*; See also Russell W. Belk and Janeen Arnold Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consuming Fantasy," *Journal of Consumer Research* 25 ( December 1998): 222-223.

[94]House, "The Philosophy of Buckskinning," 2.

[95]Mike Stickney, "Buckskinning in New York," *The Conservationist* (July-August 1984), 10-15; See also Wigginton, ed., *Foxfire* 5, 208-436; Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1986; originally published in 1951), pp. 121-122. Webb discusses the dilemma of losing individuality in society and America's fixation with frontier life and the potential withdrawal from reality into fantasy to retain that fixation.

have a better opportunity to play life."[96]

Besides being influenced by romanticized images and primitivist nostalgia, buckskinning's rising popularity, especially during the 1990s, came from what scholars defined as a rising "recreational consumption" trend in American society in which one's identity becomes based upon their leisure activities.[97] The buckskinning rendezvous' leisure activities that are based on a mythic, romanticized, and a primitive past, require intense participation, or what may be called "serious leisure,"and which become the major focus of the time, money, and energy spent by those who participate. That is to say, the recreational consumption in buckskinning generates the major source of meaning, especially in gaining one's individual identity (by their outward appearance and the material items acquired) and therefore carries significant social and psychological baggage.[98]

Acquiring a sense of individual identity remains primary to buckskinning, and buckskinners hold on to this particular point of playing mountain man. Participants frequently require that those who join the undertaking at least don historically accurate frontier attire.[99] The perception lingers that proper artifacts contain some redemptive power,

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[96]Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen, eds., *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau* 14 vols. (Boston, 1906), VII, p. 519.

[97]Belk and Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consumption Fantasy," 218-252; A. Faut Firat and Alladi Venkatesh, "Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research* 22 (December 1995), 239-267.

[98]Belk and Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consumption Fantasy," 218-219.

[99]Pamela Selbert, "Mountain Men Will Rendevous Near Hillsboro," *St. Louis Dispatch* 9 September 1999, p. 3.

being from a more "authentic" stage of existence.

Since today's rendezvous serve as places for fantasy escapes and as places where one's alternative identity can exists, they are a form of adult playgrounds that provide a similar setting to the backyard wilderness of adolescent days.[100] And like the neighborhood sandlot, the rendezvous afford a place for grown-up show-and-tell, where the latest outfit or newly-acquired plaything are shown off to the awe or chagrin of all. This behavior suggests that age makes little difference regarding basic motivations for playing mountain man. The clothing may be more realistic, the "fofarrows" (accessories) more elaborate and costly, and the guns quite real, but essentially, the game remains the same as in childhood.[101] It also implies that buckskinning, for all its heritage rhetoric, provides a means of finding succor through materialism.

The perpetual show-and-tell of modern rendezvous holds more relevance to the occasion than acquiring bragging rights. It serves as one of buckskinning's underlying forces and represents the interaction among peers and their subsequent approval. Moreover, the competitiveness associated with owning the best costume, gun, tipi, or other artifact, as well as obtaining the most knowledge about mountain men, propels the motivation that sustains today's buckskinning. Such competition is also essential in creating a hierarchy in the

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[100]Virginia Baldwin Hick, "Back in Time: Buffs Keep Rendezvous with History--Regularly," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 17 May 1993, Zone West sec., p. 1; Leslie Sowers, "Back to Reality," *The Houston Chronicle* 10 May 1992, Texas Magazine, p. 8; Poole, "Camping Out in the Past," p. 3.

[101]The continuation of childhood fantasy through to adulthood is discussed by Dorothy G. Singer and Dr. Jerome L. Singer, *The House of Make-Believe: Children's Play and the Developing Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

buckskinning world. In most circles, individuals who sport the finest costumes, firearms, and goods and with the greatest knowledge about the historic mountain man are the leaders of the movement.[102]

In the 1970s and early 1980s, such competitiveness centered on fancier, more ornate costumes. But extreme authenticity has since become the measure by which participants are judged.[103] Unlike dude ranches, where profit is the driving force, rendezvous and buckskinning persists because of perpetual competition among adherents.[104] An entire industry has evolved to assist buckskinners in their pastime. To fulfill the need for information on obtaining or making historically accurate attire and artifacts, numerous "How To" books, Internet sources, and suppliers are available to help individuals establish their mountain man image; everything needed to make any fantasy as complete as possible.[105]

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[102]Bucey, "Living the Dream," pp. 10-11; Belk and Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth," 235.

[103]Hanson, "The Trader's Dress," 1-4. Bill Cunningham, *Rendevous: Back to a Simpler Time* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith Publisher, 1995), pp. 80-83. Ironically, increased rigidity about what constitutes acceptable costumes and behavior decreases displays of individual creativity and identity that buckskinning is all about.

[104]Nancy Marx Better, "Living Out Cowboy Fantasies on Vacation," *The New York Times,* 14 July 1991, p. F25; See also, "Western Dude Ranch Sampler," *American West: People and Places* (April 1988), 29.

[105]The "authenticity" emphasis is discussed in Charles E. Hanson, Jr., "The Trader's Dress," *The Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 26 (Spring 1990): 1-4; Examples of the "How To" source books include the numerous volumes of William Scurlock's, *The Book of Buckskinning,* 7 vols. There are also a handful of magazines that provide such information like *Muzzle Blasts*, *Muzzleloader*, and *Whispering Wind.* These same magazines are also choked with advertisements for suppliers and manufactures of buckskinning merchandise, the most household name being the Tandy Leather Company. See also Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* ( New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), which deals in part with the importance of

Still, the commercialism associated with buckskinning remains peripheral to portraying the image.[106]

The trend towards historical accuracy regarding buckskinners has led to a division in buckskinning. Up until the 1990s, buckskinning was highly recreative. Historical interest and historical accuracy were secondary to participants' desires for relaxation and fellowship. But with the emergence of the "living history" group in buckskinning, a more serious intellectual, research oriented style of participation has become evident.[107] These historical reenactors make every effort to be as accurate as possible in both appearances and language of the mountain man. Some consider themselves "experimental archaeologists," or buckskin-clad versions of Thor Hyerdahl, while traipsing around the backwoods as opposed to crossing Oceania. Despite that living historians include the term "historian" in their label, or assume airs of scholarship by calling themselves experimental "archaeologists," they do not expanded our knowledge of the mountain man. They merely perpetuate familiar romantic imagery. And these enthusiasts are important transmitters of the romantic image.

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authentic attire in reenactments.

[106]In buckskinning various social levels exist. The American Mountain Men, the nation's largest buckskinning organization, has a strict hierarchal structure based on rank advancements. In the broader buckskinning world there are two more simplistic levels. One is "naugha," short for naugha hide (which looks like leather but is not) and used to identify those unwilling to "give up parts of their other life." The other is "buckskinner." The distinction between the two is "whether you're playing the part or living it." See Joy Webster Barbre, "A Return to the 'Good Ole Days': An Ethnography of Buckskinning Muzzle Loaders," Honor's Thesis, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1984, p. 4.

[107]Susan Jennys, "The Great Buckskinner Debate," *Harper's Magazine* (March 1993), 23-24.

Most idealize the past, preferring it to the present, and consequently conveying that concept to onlookers at modern rendezvous or at historic sites such as Bent's Fort in Colorado.[108]

A large part of buckskinning's primitivist outlook is adopted from elements of Native American life and infused into buckskinning ideologies and practices, giving buckskinning a ritualistic nature. But such practices invent traditions that draw on the mythic and primitive past and create a sense of continuity between the present and the past, to fulfill the psychological and social needs of those who join in. The heavy use of Native American practices in buckskinning began during the 1970s and 1980s, the same years American society increasingly associated itself to Native American identities and values.[109] Buckskinning assumes a significant Native American character that is manifested widely at rendezvous.[110] At Rendezvous pseudo-Native American customs such as pipe ceremonies,

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[108]Jay Anderson, *Time Machines: The World of Living History* (Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1984), chapters 13, 16; Warren Leon and Margaret Piatt, "Living History Museums," in Leon and Rosenzweig, *History Museums in the United States*, chapter 3; William J. Rundorff, "In Pursuit of Experimental Archaeology," *Muzzle Blasts Online* 3 (June/July 1998), 1-4. The latter reveals how little one can do and still assume the role of experimental archaeologist.

[109]Torgovnick, *Primitive Passions*, 135-137; Deloria, *Playing Indian*, chapter 6. There is tremendous similarity between buckskinning and what is known as the Indian hobbyist movement in ideology, motivation, participation, social make-up, etc. See William K. Powers, "The American Hobbyist Movement in North America," *History of Indian-White Relations* volume 4 of *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), pp. 557-561; See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, pp. 590-591 for a brief outline of the popularization of the Indian-type lifestyle.

[110]Belk and Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth," 218-219, 225-226, 229-231; Marcia Victoria Ayarza, "Rendezvous Provides Taste of History," *The Tampa Tribune* 28 January 1999, p. 3; Ray Miller, "Muzzle Loading Events Have Many Attractions for Homesteaders," *CountrySide and Small Stock Journal* (July-August 1997): 80-81; Harry

friendship and honor dances, and give-aways are common. Rendezvous camps are filled with tepees painted in Native American motifs.[111] And rendezvous camps often have order-keepers called "Dog Soldiers."[112] Some buckskinners attempt to indulge further into Indian ritual by raising sweat lodges or even participating in the painful sundance ceremony.[113]

Indian-styled names and naming ceremonies are additional elements adopted from Native American ritual. All these ritual acts represent rites of passage that help the modern mountain man to separate himself from the modern world, as he enters the buckskinners' mythical world. Most buckskinners adopt a mountain man name that suits them to give them a unique, alternative identity. Some examples included "Two Smokes," "Many Rocks," "Dull Hawk," "Many Trades," "Dark Cloud," and "Powder-to-Burn."[114] Much like a child at play, who becomes the hero by assuming that hero's name, buckskinners acquire Indian names and thereby become more authentic in their play. Some even permanently discard their legal names for these *nommes de change*.[115]

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Gersteneker, "Buckskinner Lives Life of Indian Lore," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 29 May 1989, p. 1i.

[111]Cunningham, *Rendezvous*, pp. 10-11, 28-39, 62-63, 72.

[112]Belk and Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth," 227. The historic Cheyenne Dog Soldiers warrior society is described in Donald J. Berthrong, *The Southern Cheyenne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 68.

[113]Oral interview with Jim Horn, August 15, 1998; Oral interview with Hardy Calaway, April 11, 1994.

[114]See for example Jordan, "Flintlock Firing Brings Flash of Old Days to Mountain Men," p. A-25; Cunningham, *Rendezvous*, p. 7

[115]Approximately 50% of buckskinners have a frontier name, and most render an Indian connotation, "Individual Survey." At the Ft. Bridger rendezvous the author once

In their philosophy, buckskinners also utilize the popular concept of upholding the Native American as the ultimate environmentalist. The matter of wilderness conservation that has become popular and politically correct since the early 1970s was adopted by buckskinners into their play.[116] The modern-day mountain men view themselves as being true to the "Indian lifestyle," believing such a life to be superior. Buckskinners claim that the historical mountain man detested wasting natural resources and consciously understood his impact on the environment. Under these assumptions, buckskinners add an ecologically oriented conservationist spin to their portrayal. Such redefinition, however, merely restyles the mountain man and makes him socially fashionable and thus sustains his heroic stature.[117]

As buckskinning identifies with the frontiersmen of Anglo-American stock, it is a mostly a middle-class, white, male-oriented undertaking.[118] Thus, buckskinning is primarily

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met a gentleman who called himself "Two Eagles" and then presented his driver's license to prove it.

[116]The ecology trend that began in American society around 1970, and that buckskinning adopted, is outlined in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, pp. 237-256.

[117]The environmental vigilance of modern day mountain men is discussed by Dick House, "The Philosophy of Buckskinning," in *The Book of Buckskinning*, vol. 1 (Texarkana, Texas: Rebel Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 10-12. This environmental-minded mountain man image, however, fails to portray the real mountain men, who exploited the land's resources for profit. See David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West 1807-1840*, pp. 31-37, 87, 65-66, 137.

[118]Buchey, "Living the Dream," p. 52; Kimberly Miller, "Gender Comparisons Within Reenactment Costume," 38-39; Males comprise approximately 85% of buckskinners, "Individual Survey." The greater percentage of men to women in buckskinning is also evident in John D. Baird, ed., *Who's Who in Buckskins* (Big Timber, Montana: The Buckskin Press, 1973). The overtly masculine orientation and appeal of western imagery is alluded to by Cawelti, *The Six Gun Mystique*, 2d ed. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), pp. 16-19, 42; and in

a masculine endeavor, and its growth over the last few decades seemed a response to more recent social-psychological tensions experienced predominantly by white men from the lower-middle and working classes. "For in modern ... society, these groups are," as John C. Cawelti says, "constantly subjected to the pressures of social change in such a way that their sense of masculine independence is continuously threatened ... and a basic threat to the individual's ego" and identity.[119] Those who play mountain man emulate their heroic he-man icon of the past by donning an image (real or mythic) that embodies powerful virility. For many buckskinners such primitivism is a form of "Higher Masculine Sentimentality," because men usually practice it in pursuit of independence and the moral simplicity that a culturally unfettered life offers. The nature of primitivism proposes an existence where strength and physical ability count more than sentiment and wit, and therefore, it appeals more to men. Thus, many buckskinners seek notions of strength, ferocity, and hardiness combined with innocence and an innate nobility in their role-playing. Such behavior becomes a passionate commitment. Some enthusiasts are so enthralled with its romantic ideals or overcome with an inability to live in society, that they leave civilization to live their wilderness fantasy permanently.[120] This adaptation of the mountain man hero suggests that

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Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American*, p. 168. Approximately 82% of buckskinners are from rural or suburban areas.

[119]Cawelti, *The Six Gun Mystique*, pp. 10-11.

[120]See Harold Peterson, *The Last of the Mountain Men: The Story of a Living American Legend* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), about a man, Sylvan Hart, who lived a Robinson Crusoe-like life near the headwaters of the Salmon River in Idaho, including his own nuclear fall-out shelter. But living such a life as unchosen reality has also existed in isolated portions of America well into the twentieth century. See Thad

certain modern men sense the structural foundations of traditional manhood slipping away amidst the flood of technology, the malaise of global corporate systems, and the gender integration of the workplace. As a response, they seek to define themselves through an invented past of heroic physical action. As a recreated or invented form of masculine play, buckskinning typifies what Michael Kimmel calls "masculinity as recreation."[121] Thus, buckskinners create a male world and reject effeminate influences using the appropriate symbols and props that keep women in their presumed place. They create a realm with differing behavioral expectations for men and women, including a dominant patriarchal system.

Consequently, buckskinning functions as a middle-class fraternity wherein a strong sense of "brotherhood" abides and where women are allowed in so long as they prescribe to proper gender roles and behavior. Throughout the 1970s, the formation of many groups were advertised as "buck only," meaning just for men.[122] An organization known as The American Mountain Men harnesses stricter customs. Their world maintains a homosocial preserve for experiencing manly company, and they demanded that their institution should exist without fear of women's domesticating influence getting in the way and ruining things.

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Sitton, *Backwoodsmen: Stockmen and Hunters Along a Big Thicket River Valley* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Such an unfettered life is also part of the image associated with riding Harley Davidson motorcycles and at the yearly gathering of bikers at Sturgis, South Dakota. See Carlton L. Bonilla, "A South Dakota Rendezvous: The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and Races," *South Dakota History* 28 (Fall 1998):123-143.

[121]Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 117.

[122]Bucey, "Living the Dream," p. 33.

They are a womanless, wifeless, motherless band of "brothers," a masculine parish with patriarchal form. Like other fraternities, it provisions its own initiations and rites of passage through rank advancement, allowing men vigorous ways to demonstrate their manhood. And a man is not fully an American Mountain Man until he "grows up" in his new family of brethren by such activity.[123] This form of "male bonding," is also found in the actions and concepts of the more recent "hairy-chested men's movement" that espouses back-to-nature ideals long a part of buckskinning. Indeed, certain parallels exist between buckskinning and the more recent men's movement. Both focus on wilderness retreats, mythology, faux traditionalism, and include things perceived as Native American: tepees, drums, whooping, council fires, initiations, and ritualism. Both movements emphasize male bonding, and both provide rites of passage for men. And in both "lies a language that sounds more like [a] recovery movement than the strenuous life."[124] With buckskinning men adopt the mountain man image to the extent that it becomes self-defining. Men in buckskinning extend their rituals of manhood to boys. Male children in buckskinning society perform difficult tasks of fortitude. They prove themselves by going off on their own, away from their family and living in the wilderness for a time in a sort of modern contrived vision quest where they prove their rugged independence, strength, endurance, courage, confidence, and self-reliance

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[123]Barbre, "A Return to the 'Good Ole Days,'" p. 6; The primary focus of the American Mountain Men (AMM), the nation's largest mountain man organization, is to create a "brotherhood of men." The organization started as a survival club known as "The Brotherhood of American Mountain Men," but has since become the quintessential organization for those playing mountain man. Information obtained from AMM's internet page, www.xmission.com/~drudy/amm/ammorg

[124]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 317.

By this effort their manhood is assured, and their successful passage is marked by piercing their left ear with a leather punch. Girls in buckskinning are not allowed any part of the ritual.[125] Perhaps, then, buckskinning is the predecessor of the men's movement. [126]

Women have participated in buckskinning. Yet, when they enter this male-dominated realm, they often acquire an implied "second-class status," being kept to gender specific roles, and, as one observer noticed, "tolerated only as long as they [kept] the stewpot simmering."[127] Such a patriarchy structure in buckskinning reveals some anxiety among male buckskinners about their sense of identity. They attempt to maintain the men's place in their mythical society by keeping females (who personify domesticity and socialization) in check.[128] Such a conclusion might be considered absurd if not for its persistence in popular thought and culture (mostly in Western literature and films), as supported by what

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[125]Barbre, "A Return to the 'Good Ole Days,'" pp. 70-74; David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 11-12; Ray Raphael, *The Men from the Boys: Rites of Passage in Male America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), introduction; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 309-328.

[126]Belk and Costa, "The Mountain Man Myth," 241; See also Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men*, Vintage Books edition (New York: Random House Inc., 1992); Doug Stanton, "Inward, Ho! Men Gone Mad: A Return to the Forest of the Mind," *Esquire* (October 1991), 113-122; L. R. S., "In Search of A Masculine Mystique," *Fortune* (January 14, 1991), 46-48; Dirk Johnson, "In Search of the Male Just Right for Today: Rocky Mountain Men's Conference; Men's Movement," *The New York Times* 25 October 1991, p. A10.

[127]Deborah Prager, "Sons of Davy Crockett," 61; see also Hunter, "Rough 'n' Rendezvous," p. B-04.

[128]See Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), p. xvii.

Leslie A. Fiedler defined as "The Myth of the White Woman with a Tomahawk."[129] Women in the buckskinner's world are viewed as inherently determined to destroy the male wilderness fantasy by bringing civilization and domesticity to it. Women engage in the activities, only so long as they contribute to the male fantasy. Similar to what is witnessed in American society in general, women in buckskinning have been identified as sex objects with their station well-defined by these supporters of an all-male pastime, and at times noted that any "violators [would] be prostituted."[130] Men impose their unwritten dominance and chauvinist mind-set to safeguard their play and self-identity. This brand of male domination, though not new in American culture, runs contrary to buckskinning's philosophies of equality, family, and womanly virtue. A male dominance is fundamental to playing mountain man, analogous to youthful play as when boys try to keep girls out of their games.

All the time, money, and energy buckskinners invest in their hobby culminates in their attempted recreations of yesteryear's fur trade rendezvous. But merely gathering is not sufficient in many cases. Location is often imperative. Attempts to relive the mountain fairs as authentically as possible and give the fantasy maximum realism has led to holding several

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[129]Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American*, p. 51. This dichotomy between past and present, between the freedom-loving, roving man and the civilizing woman in western fiction and the Western is also discussed by Wallace Stegner, *The Sound of Mountain Water* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 195-196.

[130]The ditsy, overly-endowed woman was a common image in buckskinning's major periodical *The Buckskin Report*. See for instance *The Buckskin Report* (March 1975), 38; and *The Buckskin Report* (May 1975), 41; Bucey, "Living the Dream," p. 33.

modern gatherings at historic rendezvous sites. Gathering at these places creates a sense of historical continuity between past and present. The gap between then and now becomes blurred in the minds of the participants, and they believe themselves and their nineteenth-century counterparts to be all of one piece.[131]

Like the modern mountain man who retains little commonality with the real article, the contemporary rendezvous provide mythical renditions of yesteryear's trading events. A modern rendezvous takes what was a difficult and often deadly existence and portrays it as an idyllic life.[132] Modern gatherings often become frontier craft fairs, with the mountain man portrayed as a skilled artisan. Artisan work and pioneer crafts understandably fascinate a society caught in the rush of high technology and mass production. And both the mountain man and the frontier craftsmanship embody a charming romantic past. Many buckskinners blend some artisan skill into their mountain man portrayal with this sense of enchantment. The resultant image is a popular but deceitful view of the historical trapper, and of the real rendezvous.[133] Modern rendezvous are mythic aberrations of a historical, yet romanticized truth which reveals and magnifies the wealth of fallacies that pervade buckskinning.[134]

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[131]See *Legacy of the Mountain Man*; Dick House, "The Philosophy of Buckskinning," 1-12;

[132]Paul Jones, "Mountain Rendezvous: Traveling by RV," *Trailer Life* (July 1984), 66-68.

[133]Hanson, "The Trader's Dress," 1-4; Cunningham, *Rendezvous*, pp. 53-55, 74-75, 86. A description of the historical rendezvous by a contemporary of the mountain men is found in John Kirk Townsend, *Across the Rockies to the Columbia*, pp. 82-84.

[134]There appears tremendous similarity between buckskinning and what is known as the Indian hobbyist movement in ideology, motivation, participation, social make-up, etc. See William K. Powers, "The American Hobbyist Movement in North America,"

Buckskinners represent part of a "sub society" in America that utilize nostalgia to fulfill their fantasies, identities, and escapist tendencies. Their lifestyles at once reflect the social fragmentation that occurs in progressive cultures and the mythic panaceas in which people imbibe to flee reality. Buckskinners then symbolize simultaneously both nonconformists *and* people who strive to comply with two cultural codes. They are "confident actors in an organic world of tradition and successful denizens of modernity."[135] Buckskinning is a fantasy, remote in time and space from past or present reality. While buckskinners depend upon it to sustain their own psychological needs, it is dependent upon the physical and psychological resources of those who practice it to be sustained.[136]

In its entirety, the interest in playing mountain man contributes to the preservation, or rather, perpetuation of the mountain man's heroic and romantic image in American culture. Playing mountain man carries the myth along, even augmenting and enhancing it. To discuss playing mountain man analytically addresses the symbiotic relationship between myth and fantasy. The nature of myth encourages desires to play mountain man, which in turn, reinforce the mythological foundation of the mountain man's popular image through repetitious play.

Playing mountain man has nurtured primitivist tendencies that have long been a part

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*History of Indian-White Relations* volume 4 of *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), pp. 557-561.

[135]Deloria, *Playing Indian*, p.147.

[136]The subculture of buckskinning has become significant enough that some universities offer studies and workshops on it. See "A Modern Rendezvous," *Persimmon Hill* (Winter 1997), 40.

of our cultural past. From frontier advocates to American youth, in fashion and in scouting, from the nineteenth century to the present, in many quarters of American society, the primitivist ideal has been attached to playing mountain man. When observed, the images and myths associated with playing mountain man reveal a unique history of their own that is as viable as the history of the "real" mountain men. Those who play mountain man are not part of a lunatic fringe. Their quest for diversion and retreat reveal a part of American culture. The fact that so many people have appropriated this image to one degree or another makes the argument for searching for its history even more persuasive.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## A MARKETABLE MAN

The American mountain man, while a heroic figure of the nation's frontier heritage, emerged in American culture as a consumer item. From his beginnings the mountain man hero, his image and the characteristics it embodied, has been an item for popular consumption, perpetuated from the exceptional efforts of the profit minded. In this quarter of American culture the mountain man has been manufactured, packaged, promoted, and peddled, and provided much of society's perception of him.

The origins and popularity of the mountain man hero in American culture began with the profitability of his image in literature. Writers like Timothy Flint, Washington Irving, and Emerson Bennett created the mountain man hero in the spirit of American entrepreneurship. These early writers, and those since, utilized the mountain man primarily with the market in mind. Artists including Charles Deas and Arthur Tait chose the mountain man as subject due to the profitability of his image.[1] American society in the mid-nineteenth century developed an appetite for western or expansion-oriented material in both literature and art.[2] A few thousand trappers became recognized as vanguards of the westward

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[1]Carol Clark, "Charles Deas," in *American Frontier Life*, pp. 51-77; Warder H. Cadbury, "Arthur F. Tait," in *American Frontier Life*, pp. 109-129.

[2]Peter Hassrick, "Introduction," *American Frontier Life*, pp. 9-20.

movement. Opportunists and expansion propagandists used popular literature and art to transform the mountain men into pioneers of empire, exploiting them as representative figures of Manifest Destiny. Though the historical mountain men seemed unaware of their influence, an American public, caught up in the enthusiasm of Manifest Destiny, embraced this media-enhanced hero. Thus, purveyors of popular culture during this era used the mountain man to advance ideologies of national destiny and social superiority, while netting profitable returns from marketing a heroic figure.

David H. Coyner, in his book *The Lost Trappers*, published in 1847, advocated national expansion and settlement of the West by embellishing the deeds of mountain men through popular literature. Coyner understood the appeal of the West and the mountain men to readers. In his introduction to *The Lost Trappers* he noted Americans to be "much moved and stimulated by western enterprise ... [and] deeply interested in things far beyond" civilization.[3] Coyner believed his book "would be interesting to the great majority of readers" because it detailed "the trials and difficulties" of the mountain men "adventurers," and thus would be "read with avidity."[4] To make his mountain men appealing Coyner depicted them as adventurous types who were "fond of excitement, ... fond of trials and hardships and dangers," who lived lives of "sleepless vigilance, [and] of constant toil and danger."[5] They were the ones, according to Coyner, who helped open the "secrets" of the

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[3]David H. Coyner, *The Lost Trappers*, ed. David J. Weber (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), p. 1.

[4]Ibid., p. 2.

[5]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

Far West that brought about American settlement of California and Oregon.[6] Although *The Lost Trappers* was a fictionalized and romanticized adventure story that contributed to the mountain man myth, it was intended to promote the American settlement of Oregon and California. Coyner used the book to champion California's and Oregon's climate for its healthful qualities and agricultural potential.[7] To play upon the public's interest in westward expansion the book also contained a "Way Bill to Oregon," a landmark guide for moving West, delineating the Overland Trail as a simple trek.[8] *The Lost Trappers* followed the peregrinations of Ezekiel Williams, who, in 1807, allegedly led a trapping expedition of twenty men up the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers and into the Rocky Mountains, and who chanced (suspiciously) to be the expedition's only survivor. Though Coyner claimed the tale was true, historians determined *The Lost Trappers* to be an "ingenious creation."[9] The adventures and depredations Coyner's mountain men encountered intended to make the mountain men heroic and to captivate readers and promote book sales. But it was the book's praiseworthy descriptions of the West that were intended to boost public interest in westward expansion.

*The Lost Trappers'* publishers, J. A. and U. P. James of Cincinnati, understood the mountain men's popularity, using it to promote sales of other publications. Most notable

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[6]Ibid., pp. 2-4.

[7]Ibid., chapter 17. Coyner derived much of this chapter from Hastings, *Emigrant's Guide*

[8]David H. Coyner, *The Lost Trappers* (Cincinnati: J. A. and U. P. James, 1847), pp. ix-xv, 202-218, 243-255.

[9]Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, II, p. 648.

were the advertisements in the back of *The Lost Trappers* that promoted J. A. and U. P. James' own emigrant guide.[10] Such guidebooks and westward narratives contained counsel for greenhorns heading west that often included bits of mountain men wisdom. These booklets glorified mountain man life, and therefore appealed to the more adventurous-minded males in American society who saw such frontiersmen as models of manhood. Thus, the mountain men in expansionist literature, as in *The Lost Trappers*, promoted not just westward expansion but also masculinity to men who read this literature. According to historian John Mack Faragher, men who chose to emigrate to the Far West did so in part because they sought to emulate the frontiersmen that "they imagined their fathers and grandfathers to have been ... [and] longed for a similar test of their own masculinity."[11] Thus men attracted to such literature and the possible experiences of the overland emigration sustained a belief that "on the trail they would be following, as it were, the blazers of previous masculine generations."[12] To whatever degree of intention, writers and publishers of expansionist literature played to male consumers and encouraged such thought through

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[10]See advertisement on the back leaf of Coyner's *The Lost Trappers* for Joel Palmer, *Journal of Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, To the Mouth of the Columbia River; Made During the Years 1845 and 1846: Containing Minute Description of Oregon Territory; Its Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Productions, Etc., Etc.; A List of Necessary Outfits for Emigrants; And a Table of Distances From Camp to Camp on the Route* (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James, 1847).

[11]John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 182.

[12]Ibid., pp. 182-183.

the tone, ideals, and heroic examples of frontier types like the mountain men in their books.[13] Thus, the mountain men became marketable figures as heroes and masculine icons, and as sources of wisdom in the business of expansion. Writers and publishers seeking their share of the commerce capitalized on the mountain man's image.[14]

Literature, especially inexpensive fiction sold and distributed during the nineteenth century, remained the principal way to sell the mountain man. In no other quarter of nineteenth-century America popular culture was the mountain man hero more marketed than with the blood-and-thunder dime novels that provide sensational literature that appealed to the sense of adventure and emotions of the mass audience. They were intensely patriotic and nationalistic. Many early dime novels focused on the struggles, hardships, and adventures of pioneer life in a mythic West, intended to entertain, titillate, and produce profits. One of the common heroes of early dime novels was the mountain man. Writers and publishers

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[13]E. Anthony Rotund, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1700-1920," *Journal of Social History* 16 (Summer 1983): 26; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Sex as Symbol in Victorian Purity: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Jacksonian America," in *Turning Points: Historical and Socialogical Essays on the Family*, eds. John Demos and Sarane Spence Boocock (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 5239-5240.

[14]Examples of mountain man endorsed emigrant guides include Joseph E. Ware, *The Emigrants' Guide to California* (St. Louis: J. Halsall, n.d.); Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw In California* (New York: 1848); and Lansford W. Hastings, *The Emigrant Guide to Oregon and California* (Cincinnati: George Conclin, 1845) that led the Donner-Reed party to its tragedy in the Sierra-Nevadas. The narrative approach is typified in Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler; a Hand-book for Overland Expeditions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1859) which contains numerous references to the "mountaineer[s]" and their "secrets" for surviving in the West. Such literature was part of the day's masculine culture tied to the overland emigration. See Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail*, pp. 118, 182-183.

understood the marketability of the mountain man hero, taking great effort to make him enticing to an increasingly literate population. While trying to outdo one another and make their mountain man more enticing to readers, writers of dime novels included the following elements to characterize their hero: he was a deft Indian fighter, a frontier guide or scout, a frontier detective, he had encounters with beautiful women, and he was a consummate woodsman, he had a fearless demeanor, an untarnished character, and he was an Anglo-American. Dime novels were the major form of escape fiction easily available to the masses. Technological improvements in production and distribution of this popular entertainment only exposed this mountain man hero image more widely in American society.[15] Numerous original and reprint copies of mountain man dime novels were produced, but the total numbers printed will unlikely be known. Six major publishing companies produced over 100 different series of dimes novels totaling over one million copies.[16] Kit Carson alone

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[15]By 1860, over ninety percent of native born American whites could read, creating a large market for popular literature. See Louise L. Stevenson, *the Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), pp. 30-31. A few examples of the mountain man's dime novel portrayals include C. Dunning Clark, *The Prairie Trappers: or, The Child of the Brigade* (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1868); Major Max Martine, *Old Bear Paw, the Trapper King: or, The Love of a Blackfoot Queen* (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1873); "Capt." L. C. Carleton, *Old Jim Bridger; or, Death in the Canyon* (New York: George Munroe, 1871); "Capt." Mark Wilton, *Beaver-Takers; or, The Free Trappers Feud* (The Nickel Library, 1879); T.C. Harbaugh, *Giant Pete and his Pards; or, Trapper Tom the Wood Imp*, (New York: Ivers and Company, 1899). Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, chapter 4, deals with Kit Carson's dime novel image but is applicable to the mountain man's dime novel portrayal generally.

[16]*Dime Novels: Escape Fiction of the Nineteenth Century*, 7 vols. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), I, p. v.

appeared in over seventy original novels and reprints between 1860 and 1900.[17] And the number of dime novel mountain men heroes far exceeded Carson's numbers.[18] The flood of dime fiction was largely attributed to the New York publishing house of Beadle and Adams, whose "yellow-backed" dime novels were read by hundreds of thousands of people at all levels of American society. Originally intended for adults, the dime novels were used mostly by children. The mountain man proved a reliable and profitable character early on, and had little competition with other western figures for readers' attentions, until the cowboy became an American hero.[19]

Writers and publishers of dime novels created heroes of their mountain men through a common practice among writers of popular literature — they divorced their subjects from historical reality. Mountain men heroes of dimes became learned, articulate, upright, and moral (even if only because of their ineptness around women). Their encounters with women usually involved rescuing them from villainous riff-raff or Indians. Much of their effort was directed toward piling up "pesky Redskins" like cordwood in the name of morality, nationalism, and patriotism. Such depictions of the mountain man were

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[17]Jones, *The Dime Novel Western* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1978), p. 58.

[18]A quick perusal of the massive lists of dime novel titles will attest to the numerous dime novels with the mountain man hero. See Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, I, for an extensive list of dime novels published by Beadle and Adams. Any study of dime novels should begin with Johannsen's book. Or see the finding guides for the microfilm series *Dime Novels: Escape Fiction of the Nineteenth Century.*

[19]Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, pp. 127-128; Richard W. Etulain, "Origin of the Western," *Journal of Popular Culture* 5 (Spring 1972): 800.

sensationalist, mythic, and helped sell plenty of books. One author, Max Martine (the *nom de plum* of Henry M. Avery), even portrayed his own life in a manner as imagined as his fiction. Martine claimed to have been a "free" trapper, Indian fighter, emigrant guide, and a captive of several tribes. He alleged that while with the Sioux, the tribe adopted him and he married the chief's daughter. It was a life even a fictive mountain man would have envied.[20]

Edward S. Ellis contributed significantly to the mountain man's image in dime novels. Ellis, an educator and minor author, made his mark with Beadle's first big production dime novel *Seth Jones; or, the Captives of the Frontier* (1860), about an old Northwest backwoodsman. Advertised intensively, *Seth Jones* sold well, making Ellis one of the best-known dime novelists. Ellis followed *Seth Jones* with *Bill Biddon, Trapper* (1860), a novel about adventurous mountain men. Two months later he published *Bill Biddon*'s sequel, *Nathan Todd; or, Fate of the Sioux Captive* (1861). Like many writers before and since, Ellis distinguished the mountain man's masculine and chivalrous character by adding violent brushes with bloodthirsty Indians and occasional encounters with the opposite sex to the mountain man's routine. Such traits and exploits became common in mountain man dime novels. Plots were enhanced to make them as exciting or intriguing as possible, because to portray the mountain man accurately would have meant to bore or even offend readers. Author of many mountain man dime novels, Ellis' greatest success came

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[20]Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, II, pp. 22-24.

with his *The Fighting Trapper; or, Kit Carson to the Rescue.*[21] Carson's part in the story turned out to be minuscule; he only arrived in the nick of time to rescue the main characters (women and inept Eastern men) from an Indian attack at the end of the novel. Nevertheless, Carson was marketed to potential readers as the book's main hero, through not only the title, but also as the featured figure on the cover. On the cover illustration, Carson slew two Indians at once — a feat he miraculously pulled off twice during his brief appearance in the text.[22] Ellis embellished Carson's already popular image, making him as appealing as possible to readers. Ellis created a dime novel Carson that was a young, handsome, and Herculean man whose proficiencies in slaying Indians and rescuing women from any number of scrapes proved unmatched. The real Carson's reaction to Ellis' sensationalism revealed the audacity of such portrayals. While examining the cover of one story that showed a large and muscular Carson clutching a buxom female in one arm, with a knife in the opposite hand, and slain Indians strewn about his feet, Carson remarked, "Gentlemen, that thar may be true, but I hain't got no recollection of it."[23] Hence, Carson, by humorously not denying

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[21]Ibid., I, pp. 30-37. *Seth Jones* sold 60,000 copies at first and 400,000 copies overall. Edward S. Ellis, *Seth Jones; or, the Captives of the Frontier* (New York: Irwin P. Beadle and Co., 1860). Other mountain man dime novels by Edward S. Ellis, who also wrote under the pseudonyms Capt. "Bruin" Adams or Capt. J.F.C. Adams, include *The fighting Trapper; Or, Kit Carson to the Rescue* As Beadle's Dime Library No. 68 (1879); *Bill Biddon, Trapper: Or, Life in the Northwest* (1860); *Old Grizzly, the Bear Tamer* (1874); *Old Ruff, the Trapper: Or, The Young Fur Hunters* (1877); and *The Balloon Scouts; or, The White Indians of the Yellowstone* (1873).

[22]Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, II, pp. 93-100; Ellis, *The Fighting Trapper; or, Kit Carson to the Rescue.*

[23]Inman, *The Old Santa Fe Trail*, p. 301; Another version of this incident is referenced in Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, I, p. 5. Carter, *Dear Old Kit,*

it, contributed to his own myth.

The dime novels about mountain men, besides being escapist fare for readers, reflected national concerns of American society at the time regarding individualism, physical freedom, and manly comportment. This genre of fiction became inextricably linked to the national identity, reflecting a literary extension of society's mentality.[24] The mountain men of mass fiction were part of a larger American myth of mobility and they especially embodied the tie between geographic mobility, social clamber, and masculine self-creation. They became the vanguards of society, the possessors of "wisdom, morality, power, and freedom of nature in its pure wild form."[25] All of great stature and toughened moral character, they possessed Herculean strength and great endurance. Thus, they appealed to American readers and were very marketable men.

Just as authors of western fiction wrote about the mountain man to sell books, sculptors and painters employed his image because of its popularity and profitability, and film-makers used him to fill theaters. Since financial gain accompanied the mountain man's portrayal, his image has been heavily influenced by the financial aspirations of artists who represent him. Certainly, some creative satisfaction exists for those who apply his image to

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chapter 1, provides an excellent overview of the literary Carson figure of historical and fictional form. See also Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, chapter 5. For a list of Ellis' publications see Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, I, pp. 96-97; The popularity of Ellis' works persists today and in foreign countries too. See for example *Trapperne Ved Ozark* translated by Tore Kviland (Oslo, Norway: N. W. Damm & Sons Bokbinderi, 1978), one of many Ellis reprints in the Damms Indianerboker series.

[24]Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, I, p. xxiii.

[25]Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*, p. 374.

their artistic medium. But, the lure of the dollar undoubtedly influenced artists, who portrayed the mountain man with an eye on the market.

Owing to the persistent national appeal of Western American culture, the mountain man's popularity endured. His image in western art has been constant, and numerous museums and galleries devoted to displaying the mountain man's image have attested to and upheld its popularity. The content of magazines about the West and Western art over the past few decades also revealed a great deal about the mountain man's pervasive and continual presence. In magazines devoted to western art there have been found numerous advertisements for artists and galleries that peddled the mountain man's romantic and rugged image. But unlike the cowboy, the mountain man in art was never depicted as a contemporary figure. He emerged instead, a figure from the romanticized past, and identified that way always. And so the reasons that his artistic portrayals held appeal were different from most other western subjects. He symbolized a distinct time and place in the West and embodied a sense of authentic and rugged individualism and primitiveness. As such, he represented the pre-modern world and provided onlookers with a sense of nostalgia, and therefore remained a popular figure even though what he represented was mythical. Even the titles of many of these works of art — for instance, "The Legend," "Shinin' Times," "Free Trapper," and "The Lure of the Mountains" — revealed and reenforced such notions.[26]

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[26]See for example *Art of the West* (July-August 1999), 3, 66, 78: *Art of the West* (September-October 1999), 18, 77, 94; *Art West: The Foremost Western Journal* (March-April 1984), 4-5, 17, 26, 37, 41, 116-117, 129, 141, 144; *Artists of the Rockies and the Golden West* (Fall 1978), 4, 22, 30.

Most art depicting the mountain man has been commercial in nature. It has almost always been of a representational or reportorial style, called "realism," and descended from conventions of pictorial forms by artists like Frederick Remington (during his earlier artistic years) and Charles Russell. Its appeal seems to be more closely related to peering at photographs than appreciating the subtleties of artistic expression.[27] This artistic style remained the primary way artists depicted the mountain man, and revealed how American society prefers its Western heroes to be portrayed. Hence, artists of the mountain man have not strayed far from the rigidly established traditions of the Western art genre. Instead, they have worked in the narrowest range of representational art. Most liked to think of their work as "realistic" and "authentic." However, the market promoted the production of such works, inasmuch as money was to be made from his image, a certainty to which any western art broker would attest. As Rudolph Wunderlich of the Kennedy Galleries in New York observed about artists of such works: "They're not selling a picture anymore, they're selling a commodity."[28] Thus, the basic artistic style and the basic reasons artists depicted the

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[27]Estelle Jussim, *Frederic Remington, the Camera and the Old West* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1983; Peggy and Harold Samuels, *Remington the Complete Prints* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1990), p. 8. Peggy and Harold Samuels, Joan Samuels, and Daniel Fabian, *Techniques of Artists of the American West* (Secaucus, New Jersey: The Wellfleet Press, 1990), p. 175; Peter Hassrick, *Frederic Remington: Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture in the Amon Carter Museum and the Sid W. Richardson Foundation Collections* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973), p. 73; Brian W. Dippie, *Looking at Russell* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1987), pp. 3-6.

[28]Cathleen McGuigan, "Paint Your Wagon," *Newsweek*, 10 September 1979, p. 81, which discusses the popularity of "realistic" artistic portrayal of the mountain man and the profitability of the style and the subject matter. Articles about specific twentieth-century artists of the mountain man producing in this genre include Walt

mountain man remained much the same as when artists in the mid-nineteenth century first established the mountain man hero as one of the fundamental figures of American iconography.

In literature, film, television and other entertainment genres, the use of the mountain man's image again resulted from efforts to create a captivating figure for popular consumption. Phineas T. Barnum instituted one of the greatest marketing schemes involving the mountain man with his own brand of sensationalist entertainment. In 1860, Barnum convinced mountain man James "Grizzly" Adams to join his show, which highlighted Adams and his bear act as a new attraction, and to put Adams' collection of animals on display (Adams' "California Menagerie") at Barnum's American Museum in New York City. Barnum understood the monetary potential of Adams' captivating character. Barnum called Adams an "extraordinary man," and "one of the most striking men of the age," who possessed enough of the romantic in his nature to make him a real, and profitable, hero.[29] A mountain man from the romantic West of the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevadas,

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Reed, "Clymer, Historian With a Paint Brush," *The American West* (November-December 1976): 18-29; "The Clymer Museum: an Old West Kind of Place," *The Seattle Times*, 24 August 1991, p. C2; Vicky Stavig, "Paul Calle, Back to the Future," *Art of the West* (July-August 1988), 36-41; Sue Keller, "If Paintings Were Wired For Sound, This One Would Be Filled With Rifle Shots, Yells, and Hoofbeats," *Wild West* (October 1992), 74-77, which is about the works of Gary Carter. See also *The Art of Frank G. McCarthy* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), pp. 12-13, 40-61; and *The West of John Clymer* (Oklahoma City: Cowboy Hall of Fame, 1991), a book that accompanied an exhibition of Clymer's fur trade works presented at the Cowboy Hall of Fame, March 16-June 2, 1991.

[29]P.T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs: or, the Life of P.T. Barnum* 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927) II, p. 502.

Adams attracted eastern audiences wishing to see in person a man of his type.[30] He offered the prime example of the mountain man hero, "sure to prove a success," according to Barnum, since he was "quite as much of a show as his beasts" when dressed in his buckskins.[31] Adams, a proven self-promoter in California with his Mountaineer Museum (a collection of wild animals), became nationally promoted with Barnum.[32] On the show's opening day in New York, Barnum paraded the bearded and buckskinned Adams down Broadway and up the Bowery astride a grizzly bear. Thousands of spectators championed the "demi-savage" Adams dressed in frontier attire, telling astonishing stories about his exploits in the West, and performing with his bears.[33] The show's success led Barnum to set his sights on marketing Adams to great popularity in print as well. Barnum hired the New York publishing firm of Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, and Thomas to create a dime novel mountain man hero of Adams. Adams' mythic stature and popularity grew with the publication of the *Life of J.C. Adams, Known as Old Adams, or Old Grizzly Adams.* The novel purportedly told the "true" story of Adams' numerous fights with wild animals and of his fame among the mountain men of the West.[34] The novel increased popular interest in the buckskinned and

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[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., II, pp. 502-503; see also A.H. Saxon, *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 94.

[32]Tracy I. Storer and Lloyd P. Tevis, Jr., *California Grizzly* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), pp. 217-238.

[33]Barnum, *Struggle and Triumph*, II, p. 505.

[34]Ibid., II, 504; Joseph G. Rosa and Robin May, *Buffalo Bill and His Wild West: A Pictorial Biography* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), p. 66; Richard Dillon, *The Legend of Grizzly Adams: California's Greatest Mountain Man*

bewhiskered genuine article, which could be seen at Barnum's show for the price of a ticket. As the "world's greatest showman," Barnum packaged the mountain man as an item of entertainment. Americans were receptive, fulfilling Barnum's supposed adage "that there's a sucker born every minute."[35]

Other producers of Wild West pageantry followed Barnum's lead and used the mountain man to achieve similar entrepreneurial ends. In 1875, William F. Cody included a stage actor, who was billed as Kit Carson, Jr., — no part of the immediate Carson family — in his theatrical show *The Scouts of the Plains* who replaced John B. "Texas Jack" Omohundro.[36] Cody understood early the profitability of associating his image with the mountain man type, and he packaged that image throughout his career. When Cody and William Frank "Doc" Carver created their Cody and Carver's Wild West Show, both men affiliated themselves with the mountain men.[37] Carver was a self-claimed expert marksman who built part of his western image on the claim that he lived among and became "close friends [with] the mountain men and plainsmen" of the Far West.[38] Carver also implied that

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(New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1966), pp. 213-223. See also J.C. Adams, *Life of J.C. Adams, Known as Old Adams, Old Grizzly Adams, Containing a Truthful Account of His Bear Hunts, Fights with Grizzly Bears, Hairbreadth Escapes, in the Rocky and Nevada Mountains, and the Wilds of the Pacific Coast* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, and Thomas, 1860).

[35]Saxon, *P. T. Barnum*, pp. 4, 334-337.

[36]Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 212.

[37]Rosa and May, *Buffalo Bill and His Wild West*, pp. 67-73.

[38]Raymond W. Thorp, *Spirit Gun of the West: The Story of Doc. W.F. Carver; Plainsman, Trapper, Buffalo Hunter, Medicine Chief of the Santee Sioux, World's*

while trapping in the West with various mountain men, they taught him the proper skills and character of a western hero.[39] Cody followed the same suit regarding his image, especially after he and Carver ended their partnership in 1883.[40] Indeed, Cody became the master at presenting himself as the ultimate frontiersman.

Cody billed his Wild West spectacle as a cultural exhibition of exotic American types, the Indian warrior and cowboy hero represented by the likes of Sitting Bull and William Levi "Buck" Taylor.[41] But Cody distinguished himself as the quintessential frontiersman by claiming to be the successor to mountain men like Kit Carson, Jim Bridger, Jim Baker, "and the rest of his dead and gone associates," as Cody put it.[42] As part of Cody's self-identity and association with the mountain men, he equated himself "in terms of service and personal adventure" with their heroic conquest of the West and their unquestioned masculine stature. Spectators attending the show were assured, by scripted words and staged deeds, that Cody was the "genuine specimen of Western manhood" but mostly that he was

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*Champion Marksman, and originator of the American Wild West Show* (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1957), p. 14.

[39]Ibid., pp. 38, 53-54.

[40]Rosa and May, *Buffalo Bill and His Wild West*, p. 76; Thorp, *Spirit Gun of the West*, p. 141.

[41]Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, pp. 63-79; Robert Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), pp. 263-266; Savage, *The Cowboy Hero*, pp. 109-112.

[42]Program of 1885 *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, pp. 3-4, 11, 32; See also Frank C. Cooper, *The Stirring Lives of Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill*, 2d ed. (New York: S. L. Parsons and Co., Inc., 1912), chapter 1.

"the representative man of the frontiersmen of the past."[43] And in his version of the mountain man hero one could find "the exemplar of ... a true American frontiersman."[44] According to one of his contemporaries, Cody was so enamored with being akin to this "corp of kindred scout spirits" that his real lineage became secondary to this invented one.[45] His adoration for Kit Carson even led him to name his own son after the famous trapper, thinking perhaps it would form a kinship of sorts with the famed mountain man.[46]

Cody most often equated himself with the mountain man hero Kit Carson, and he promoted that notion to the public, not only in his Wild West shows but also in popular literature. Cody turned to his friend Prentiss Ingraham, a prolific dime novelist, to write a blood-and -thunder novel about himself, Cody. In 1881, Ingraham published *Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood* in Beadle and Adam's Weekly and promoted Cody as successor to Kit Carson, being equals as men, who were "barriers between civilization and savagery" and who risked their lives "to save the lives of others."[47] The *Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood* was intended mostly for children. But

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[43]*Program*, Cody's Wild West (1885), p. 4,

[44]Ibid., p. 5.

[45]Cooper, *The Stirring Lives of Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill*, chapter one; See also the *New York Democrat*, 5 June 1886.

[46]Helen Cody Wetmore, *Buffalo Bill, Last of the Great Scouts* (Duluth, Minnesota: Duluth Press Publishing Company, 1899), p. 181; Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, p. 160.

[47]Prentiss Ingraham, *Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Boyhood to Manhood: Deeds of Daring and Romantic Incidents on the Life of William F. Cody, the Monarch of Boardermen*, (New York: Beadle and Adams Weekly, 1881), p. 2.

Cody also extended the notion about he and Carson as equals to adults readers. In his book *Story of the West* (1888), Cody presented himself and Carson as two of a "Renowned Pioneer Quartette" in American history that also included Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett.[48] In the book's preface Cody unmistakably equated Carson's fame to his own. He claimed that he and Carson shared mutual friendships with other mountain men who Cody referred to as "comrades."[49] Mostly, Cody sought to classify himself with Carson through shared experiences, in what Cody called the "reclamation of the Great West."[50] Cody embellished his mythic image and made it appealing to readers by claiming that he and Carson were "distinguished characters in the great work of redeeming to civilization the territory lying west of the Mississippi valley."[51] His self-proclaimed association with the mountain men implied that Cody was the last of their kind. Thus, by creating and packaging his image by association with the already popular mountain man hero Carson, Cody sold the public on the notion that to see him and his show was to experience an authentic mountain man type in action. Cody understood the popularity of mythic constructs, especially among a public reared on dime novel exploits of mountain men heroes. Cody capitalized on this cultural

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[48]William F. Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp Fire Chats, by Buffalo Bill, (Hon. W. F. Cody) A Full and Complete History of the Renowned Pioneer Quartette, Boone, Crockett, Carson and Buffalo Bill, Including a Description of Buffalo Bill's Conquests in England with his Wild West Exhibition* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1888).

[49]Ibid., pp. Iv-v, 307.

[50]Ibid., p. v.

[51] Ibid., pp. 401.

association with profitable promise.[52]

Cody also capitalized on the degraded image of the mountain man. He first tried to employ the infamous and cannibalistic John "Liver-Eating" Johnson whose exploits were well known along the Missouri River.[53] Johnson, perceived as ignorant and uncivilized, provided a great character for Cody to contrast himself against.[54] Johnson, however, disliked Cody, and recognizing him as the frontier huckster he was, and wanted nothing to do with his show.[55] Eventually Cody hired John Young Nelson, a mountain man and an Army scout. Nelson became the show's resident squaw man, and presented in the show's promotions as such, the title "Squaw Man" always prescored Nelson's name.[56] Never among the show's headliners, Nelson was always consigned to the smaller print of cast billings reserved for the show's non-white participants. a designation indicative of the marginality in American society that his squaw man status brought.[57] Nelson lived more of an Indian than a white lifestyle, he had married nine Indian women during his life, and at one time was married to

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[52]Archie H. Jones, "Cops, Robbers, Heroes, and Anti-Heroines: The American Need to Create," *Journal of Popular Culture* 1 (Fall 1967): 115-116; Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, p. 212; Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," in *The Frontier in American Culture*, James R. Grossman, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 7-12, 45-49.

[53]Joseph Mills Hanson, *The Conquest of the Missouri: Being the Story of the Life and Exploits of Captain Grant Marsh* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1909), pp. 116-117.

[54]Ibid., p. 117.

[55]Thorp and Bunker, *Crow Killer*, p. 187.

[56]Rosa and May, *Buffalo Bill and his Wild West*, pp. 70, 90, 107, 109.

[57]Program, *Cody's Wild West* (1885), p. 1.

three.[58] The "squaw man" status that labeled Nelson was viewed in American society as that of a cultural turncoat — a stigma Cody's reputation as an Indian fighter and frontiersmen did not shoulder.[59] Cody successfully used Nelson's less admirable image as a contrast to his own heroic image. Still, Nelson attracted admirers, including the Prince of Wales. But such attraction stemmed from curiosity rather than veneration and did not alter what Nelson personified in Cody's show.[60]

Major Gordon W. Lillie, the acclaimed Pawnee Bill, also understood the marketable power of the mountain man's heroic image. Like Cody, Lillie associated his image with the mountain man. He drew on his personal trapping experiences and association with mountain men as the foundation for his frontier persona. Lillie considered fur trappers as heroic and

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[58]John Young Nelson, *Fifty Years on the Trail: A True Story of Western Life: The Adventures of John Young Nelson as Described to Harrington O'Reilly* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).

[59]The mountain men as squaw men image is discussed in Stanley Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History, 1850-1891* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), p. 313. See also William T. Hagan, "Squaw Men in the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation: Advanced Agents of Civilization or Disturbers of the Peace?" in John Garretson Clark and George LaVerne Anderson, eds., *The Frontier Challenge: Responses to the Trans-Mississippi West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1971), pp. 171-172; James W. Schultz, *My Life as an Indian: The Story of a Red Woman and a White Man in the Lodges of the Blackfeet* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1907), p. 412, which describes white woman resentment toward such men; and Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," 830-832. For insight into the concept of social marginality see Gino Germain, *Marginality* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, Inc., 1980).

[60]Rosa and May, *Buffalo Bill and his Wild West*, p. 111. Frederic Remington, however, admired Nelson's rough image, so much so that Nelson became Remington's model for many of this mountain man works. Any comparison of photographs and sketches will shed light on the notion.

good men whose vocation, he extolled, allowed anyone to "make an honest living in the great West."[61] In promotional literature printed by Lillie's own Wild West Company, he reminisced about his first frontier experience, which included his "initiation into western life" as he called it, trapping beaver on the Arkansas River with a group of mountain men led by a "Trapper Tom" McClain.[62] In one of his hand-out advertisements, Lillie suggested that the American public "should know and admire the men who had the hardihood and enterprise to lead the skirmish line in the vanguard of civilization," like the mountain men, and that his show offered the public the chance to see such heroic types.[63] In promotional literature for his show Lillie presented Trapper Tom as an exemplary mountain man and the "*beau ideal* of a genuine, big-hearted, blunt Westerner."[64] So enamored of the mountain man's image and its appeal to spectators, Lillie included Trapper Tom and thirty other mountain men in the cast of the 1888 version of Pawnee Bill's Wild West. Audiences could now come to Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show and see examples of the buckskinned heroes of the Far West they read about in dime novels. Trapper Tom became one of the main attractions of Pawnee Bill's Wild West. The program unveiled to spectators Trapper Tom's

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[61]J. H. De Wolff, *Pawnee Bill, His Experiences and Adventures of the Western Plains* (Pawnee, Oklahoma: Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West Company, 1902), p. 13.

[62]Ibid., p. 14; Glenn Shirley, *Pawnee Bill: A Biography of Major Gordon W. Lillie* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958), pp. 51-61.

[63]*Pawnee Bill Herald*, also titled *Pawnee Bill's Wild West; America's National Entertainment* (Pawnee, Oklahoma: n.p., n.d.), p. 2.

[64]*Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West: Official Program* (Pawnee, Oklahoma: n.p., 1895), p, 7.

acquisition of heroic character by his association with Kit Carson, heroic qualities that the audience was informed Trapper Tom passed on to Lillie. Lillie's production showcased Trapper Tom, with the grand finale — "Burning of Trapper Tom's Cabin" — centered around this mountain man hero's quick wit and heroic actions. So committed was Lillie's show and Pawnee Bill's own image to the Trapper Tom character and it's profitability, that the show continued to stage the popular finale with other actors after Trapper Tom's death.[65] The other mountain men in Lillie's show, such as Lewis Vasburb, who was billed as "Iodine the Trapper," also linked their heroic image to Carson. Iodine was promoted in Pawnee Bill's Wild West programs as having started his trapping career with Carson, who had served with the famed mountain man on many explorations, and who possessed the heroic qualities as Carson. Iodine was also an attraction in the show as a storyteller whose "many starling and romantic tales" about the mountain men and their days entertained visitors and "imparted valuable information to those who [sought] it about the ... times and trials of Kit Carson."[66] Even in his 1892 program, Lillie linked his image to Carson and sold his show as the place where people could come and see those who roamed the "stamping ground of Kit Carson" and had known the famed "gentleman frontiersman."[67] Lillie's association with such "hardy,

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[65]Shirley, *Pawnee Bill*, pp. 118, 134; Capt. A.G. Shaw, *Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West and Mexican Hippodrome: Official Route Book, 1898* (n.p.., 1893), p. 79; *Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West: Official Program* (Pawnee, Oklahoma: n.p., 1905).

[66]*Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West: Official Program* (1895), p, 14.

[67]*Pawnee Bill's Historical Wild West: Official Program* (Pawnee, Oklahoma: n.p., 1892), p, 11.

tough men" intended to lend his own buckskinned image to a marketable link with the mountain man hero.[68] Like Carver and Cody, Lillie connected his image to the mountain man's because he too understood the popular appeal of the mountain man hero. Hence, the mountain man's mythic image was doled out as a popular item from the arenas of Wild West entertainment for the ticket price of fifty cents.

During the late-1860s, S. Sewell Newhouse profited from the post-Civil War boom in furs by using a unique sales approach for his company's leaf-spring jaw trap. Newhouse introduced an imaginative work — a manual of sorts — titled *The Trapper's Guide*, in which he idealized and romanticized the mountain man's life and occupation. His claim was "to furnish all the information needed in order to qualify a mere novice in trapping to enter upon the business intelligently and successfully; and ... to make an interesting book for all lovers of wood-craft, and for the reading public at large."[69] He asserted that his traps figured as the reason for the mountain man's success.[70] *The Trapper's Guide*'s enticed "poor men ... looking out for pleasant work and ways of making money" into buying Newhouse's traps.[71] Newhouse's tactics typified other purveyors of popular culture with regard to the mountain

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[68]Cooper, *Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill*, p. 114.

[69]S. Sewell Newhouse, *The Trapper's Guide; A Manual of Instruction for Capturing All Kinds of Fur-Bearing Animals, and Curing Their Skins; With Observations on the Fur-Trade, Hints On Life In the Woods, and Narratives of Trapping and Hunting Excursions*, 3d ed. (Oneida, New York: Oakley, Mason and Company, 1869), p. 7.

[70]Ibid., pp. 206-207. A bold claim since Newhouse's traps were not available until the late 1850s, at least fifteen years after the last rendezvous.

[71]Ibid., p. 7.

man. That is to say, he created a highly romanticized and idyllic depiction of an actually arduous, grubby, and uncomfortable profession. Newhouse intended to peddle merchandise, not merely an image. He succeeded in selling both.

In the marketing milieu of the twentieth century, the mountain man hero remained an effective promotional figure. Sports became a viable form of entertainment, and the term "entertainer" became part of an athlete's job description. Sports, like any amusement must, as James A. Michener suggests, "be studied as a form of entertainment."[72] Occasionally the mountain man's image found itself woven into the fabric of sports. In these instances, his image and perceived attributes helped promote and market sports at both the professional and amateur levels. Among the collegiate ranks, the Volunteers of the University of Tennessee and the Mountaineers of the University of West Virginia became best known for utilizing the buckskinned frontiersman image. Smaller institutions, like Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and even high schools, such as Hudson Bay High in Vancouver, Washington, and Kit Carson High in Kit Carson, Colorado, utilized this image as well. Such employment usually reflects regional historical ties. For the Universities of Arizona and New Mexico the image was linked to yearly grid-iron bragging rights between the two rivals that started 1937, and lasted until 1978, when Arizona left the Western Athletic Conference for the Pacific-10 Conference. The winner of the annual matchup received the "Kit Carson Rifle" as part of the spoils of victory. The rifle was a Springfield flintlock mounted on a pedestal, and was supposedly the rifle the famed mountain man carried during his military

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[72]James A. Michener, *Sports in America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1976), p. 285.

campaigns against the Navajo. Arizona currently possesses the rifle.[73]

The mountain man materialized as a promotional image in professional sports as well. In AAA baseball the Edmonton Trappers, a farm club of the Angels organization, called Salt Lake City home until being supplanted by the Beavers franchise of Portland (a transaction marking perhaps the first time the beaver got one up on the trapper). The mountain man found his name in the National Basketball Association's (NBA's) Portland Trailblazers. The mountain man's repute sometimes even became part of an individual athlete's persona. Ironically, the Trailblazers' only NBA title came under the leadership of one such figure, the six foot, eleven inch, and scruffy bearded Bill "Mountain Man" Walton. But Walton was not the only NBA player promoted as a "Mountain Man." The Utah Jazz's all star center Mark Eaton was also promoted by the title. As a seven-foot, four-inch league-leading shotblocker, Eaton's "Mountain Man" appellation referenced not only his size, but also his rugged and bearded persona. The Utah Jazz further promoted and capitalized on this image with posters and publicity photos with Eaton's bearded image towering over the Rocky Mountains.[74] The persistence of this imagery suggests that society wishes to maintain its frontier heritage and preserve the mythical qualities the mountain man hero embodies. Like the legendary mountain men themselves, both Eaton and Walton came across as larger

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[73]Corky Simpson, "Politically Correct Mistake: 'Kit Carson Rifle Gets Fired,'" *Tucson Citizen*, 22 December 1997, Sports sec., p. 1C; Corky Simpson, "One of First Cats to Win Rifle Says it no Longer has Meaning," *Tucson Citizen*, 23 December 1997, Sports sec., p. 1D.

[74]Information obtained from Kim Turner who is with the public relations department of the Utah Jazz. Interview by author, telephone interview, 9 November 1999.

than life, even among towering NBA talent.[75]

The image of the mountain man hero sustained flamboyant trial lawyer Gerry Spence's self-promotion. Spence, described as a "hard-bitten mountain man," or as "a towering mountain man who wears a buckskin jacket and wins big cases for the little guys," won dozens of celebrated cases including those for the family of Karen Silkwood, Imelda Marcos, and white separatist Randy Weaver.[76] He usually donned a fringed buckskin jacket, whether in the courtroom, on television, or out promoting his books.[77] As *Washington Post* television critic Tom Shales reported of Spence and his courtroom attire: "That ridiculous buckskin jacket reeks of a calculated way of distinguishing himself from all other lawyers."[78] Along with his tall and bearish frame and white shaggy hair, Spence's buckskinned mountain man-like image worked well for him, and people recognized him because of it. Spence's posturing, preening, and mountain man image put on for television became part of a relatively new facet of American jurisprudence called "TV law," and Spence has been among

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[75]Hank Hersch, "Big Man on the Block," *Sports Illustrated* (May 1, 1989), 32-35; Mike DiGiovanna, "Getting it Done; 7-Foot-4 Eaton Grows into his Own NBA," *Los Angeles Times*, 4 February 1993, pt. C, p. 1; "In Your Face! Says NBA's Top Shot-Blockers Eaton and Bol," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 13 January 1991, p. 11f.

[76]Michael Asimov, "*Frontier Justice, the Making of a Country Lawyer*," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1996, Book Review, p. 4; Harry Jaffe, "Gerry Spence: Buckaroo Barrister," *Playboy* (April 1996), 122

[77]Tracy Tayler, "America's Best Trial Lawyer, Larger than Life," *The Toronto Star*, 27 October 1996, People sec., p. D1.

[78]Jaffe, "Gerry Spence: Buckaroo Barrister," 126.

its leading innovators.[79] Spence's buckskinned image, recognized before the O.J. Simpson case, magnified as the trend of TV law and lawyer self-promotion escalated, as lawyers like Spence (who was the legal commentator for *Larry King Live* during the O.J. Simpson case) found celebrity. Spence spun his celebrity and became one of network television's most visible and sought after legal commentators, even procuring his own show, *Gerry Spence*, on CNBC.[80] According to New York trial lawyer Brian O'Dwyer, Spence, who is among the current leaders of the "TV bar," is one in "a termites nest of ... self-proclaimed experts on everything" offering "a quality of commentary that is ridiculous."[81] Spence's image and frontier-like bravado became part of a growing trend in law of self-promotion. With the mountain man hero image Spence has "created [a] persona that [has] served him well in court" and helped him promote his own brand of social commentary in books and on television, selling himself as the lone frontiersman coming to the rescue of those in need.[82]

As a marketing tool, the mountain man denoted a reliable and influential symbol intended to attract consumer attentions. And often the notions of nostalgia and heritage

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[79]Robert Reno, "TV's Termite Nest of Experts on Law; New Code of Ethics Needed to Protect Viewers," *The Arizona Republic* 2 June 1998, p. B5.

[80]Tan Vinh, "Flamboyant Trail Lawyer to Give Talk," *The Seattle Times*, 23 October 1998, p. B3; Verna Noel Jones, "Spence Adds Valuable O.J. Perspective," *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 9 November 1997, Las Tooticias Sec., p. 3E.

[81]Ibid.; John C. Ensslin, "Lawyers Discuss their Role in the Media; Commenting on Big Cases and Big Business for Some," *The Denver Rocky Mountain News* 12 September 1998, p. 32A.

[82]Tan Vinh, "Flamboyant Trail Lawyer to Give Talk," *The Seattle Times*, 23 October 1998, p. B3; Verna Noel Jones, "Spence Adds Valuable O.J. Perspective," *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 9 November 1997, Las Tooticias Sec., p. 3E.

forged a good part of the mountain man's identification with various products. Manufacturers of firearms and knives recognized this potential of the mountain man's image and used it to suggest to prospective customers the nostalgic benefits that such weaponry offers. Makers of muzzle-loaders convinced consumers that purchasing such a gun conferred a way to feel "the power of tradition," or to be "an exercise in nostalgia," or a way to imagine when "life or honor was defended."[83] Knife manufacturers employed the mountain man's image similarly.[84] The nation's largest muzzle-loader manufacturer, Thompson/Center, promoted its firearms as a way to "rekindle the spirit" of frontier life and experience the "solid values which formed this country."[85] They espoused the opportunity to acquire values carried by mountain men who "blazed trails and opened up new territories ... with visions of fame, fortune, and fur."[86] Thompson/Center backed these claims and exploited the theatrical qualities of muzzle-loaders by using advertisements showing an ordinary man passing through a fissure in time and being transformed into a mountain man, decked out in buckskins, blasting some unseen quarry or enemy, becoming anything but ordinary. The

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[83]*Wild West*, (October 1999), 68; *Sports Afield* (Winter 1996-1997), 7; *Shooting Times*, (July 1979), 10. Articles in gun and outdoor magazines also imply that the use of muzzle-loading rifles is an essential link to our national heritage, and the mountain man is an important figure to that end. See for instance Keith McCaffery, "The Hawken: Hawken-Rifles of the Rendezvous," *Field and Stream* (February 1997), 38-40.

[84]*Tactical Knives* (November 1999), 73; Rob Krott, "Eastern Rendezvous '93: Mountain Men," *Knives* (March 1995), 17-22. See also promotional literature, Arizona Custom Knives, for the Kit Carson line of knives (n.d.).

[85]See back cover of *Thompson/Center Arms Sales Manual* (n.d.).

[86]Ibid.

mountain man image appeared occasionally in television promotions as well, retailing the same nostalgia and merchandise. Dixie Gun Works, a major distributor of black powder arms, used the mountain man image to sponsor a brief segment called "Shot of the Week" on ESPN's *American Shooter*, a five-minute show hosted by exhibition shooter Mike Blackburn. On each show, Blackburn, dressed as a mountain man, performed various trick shots that promoted popular notions about the mountain man hero's abilities with a gun. But mostly, Dixie Gun Works used the mountain man's image to promote the sale of guns.[87]

Those enthusiasts who felt uneasy about real firearms, but still wanted a token of the mountain-man era to hang above the fireplace, could obtain non-firing replicas. Advertisements for these artifacts commonly drew upon nostalgia, pitching them as "guns that won the West."[88] The Franklin Mint, for instance, created exact reproductions of the famous weapons of legendary mountain man Kit Carson.[89] But since these guns were not real and the experience of shooting was lost, they remained just memorabilia. Perhaps those who purchased such articles felt they acquired a piece of heritage. What occurred in obtaining an emblem of the mythic West, linked the mountain man hero to a sense of identity or a feeling for a place and time, but for a price.

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[87]In one segment the host shot with his feet, shot backwards, then performed a trick with two shotguns called hydro-plinking, *American Shooter*, aired 27 November 1993.

[88]Alex Zidock, "Cease Firing: Nonfiring Replica Guns are a Safe Way To Appreciate the Fine Art of Collecting Firearms," *Popular Mechanics* (September 1993), 34-37; See advertisement for miniature collection of frontier firearms in *The American West* (March/April 1986), 5;.

[89]Promotional literature, The Franklin Mint, The Kit Carson Rifle (1992).

In advertising, Americans found their icons sponsored an array of consumable products, from cowboys who pushed cigarettes or bar-B-Q sauce to athletes who graced the front of cereal boxes. Here too the mountain man proved a periodic but an admirable salesman, often pitching outdoor or nature-related foodstuffs like jerky products. Advertisers endorsed jerky as the mountain man's food of choice, giving consumers the impression that he must have been a connoisseur of dried meat. His image emblazoned the package fronts of these snacks, and worked well in promoting them, as his tough and rugged image reflected the product itself. One of the nation's largest jerky manufacturers, King B. Jerky, used the mountain man on its packaging and thus linked its product to the trappers, explorers, and mountain men of the Rocky Mountains. Such imagery intended to tell consumers that ingesting King B. Jerky not only paid "tribute to the majesty of their spirit," but provided a "link to the past."[90] One presumably imagined himself akin to the mountain man and his "rugged individualism and raw grit adventure" while tearing off a sinewy bite and becoming a modern mountain man in doing so.[91] Much the same may be said for the mountain man's association with smokeless tobacco. Tobacco usually acquired its endorsements from cowboys. The popular brand of Hawken smokeless tobacco, however, employed the image of the mountain man outright. Hawken's lid, once emblazoned with the figure of a grizzled trapper, later adopted the profile of its namesake weapon for identification. Nevertheless,

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[90]King B Jerky promotional literature from Internet web page http://www.northrim.net/rockymountainsupply.

[91]Ibid. Other producers of jerky use the mountain man's image similarly. See for instance promotional literature, Mountain Man Beef Jerky, (n.d.); and promotional literature, Wind River World Class Jerky Company, (n.d.).

the name and the new label evoked the same basic imagery, and enticed users to believe that partaking some corresponded to dipping into a bit of mountain man spirit and heritage.[92]

The mountain man image also endorsed items having nothing to do with the historical mountain man or western imagery. For example, The Mountain Man Nut and Fruit Company of Salem Oregon used the image to bestow a hearty ruggedness to such supposedly mountain-mannish victuals as yogurt-covered pretzels, raisins, and trail mix. In *Playboy Magazine*'s September, 1982, edition, editors used buckskin clad mountain men (fully clothed), but substituted their equestrian mounts for modern high-tech mountain bikes promoting an article on those vehicles. The intent was clear. The depiction of modern mountain men conveyed a sense of ruggedness not only to the bikes, but also to the activity of mountain biking altogether, implying that the recreational sport was a modern man's wilderness adventure, and his bike his steed. The mountain man's display in such a large circulation magazine aptly reflected society's fondness for his rugged frame.[93]

Perhaps the best known example of product identification with the mountain man to date was found in Beer advertising. During the 1970s, television advertisements for Hamm's Beer used a Grizzly Adams type figure, walking the Rocky Mountain West, with a bear companion. But more explicit was Busch Beer's television advertising campaign during the early 1990s. Busch, long a promoter of the rugged West and masculine types, suggested

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[92]Hawken smokeless tobacco is manufactured by Conwood Company, L.P., Memphis, Tennessee.

[93]Matthew Childs, "The Wild Bunch: Riding the Range With the New Breed of Mountain Bike," *Playboy* (September 1992), 108-113.

with its slogan that beer drinkers could vicariously "head for the mountains" by chugging down a cold one. Advertisers, however, needed to revamp the product's image to attract a new generation of customers while retaining a familiarity with older ones. They chose the mountain man to achieve this objective.[94] Through a series of television commercials Busch used popularly held conceptions about the mountain man hero (but not the use of the mountain man's buckskinned image outright) to convince would-be consumers that they could assume many of the mountain man hero's idyllic traits by merely drinking "the right beer." Again, the message was clear. Anyone, and not necessarily only those people with two X chromosomes, could "learn to live life as a man among men." The commercials exhibited young and sexy urbanites at play, underscored by narration that was intended to have consumers make the correlation between the mountain man hero and the images on the screen. Each vignette ran rampant with sophomoric behavior, reflecting an endorsement of such behavior, but having nothing to do with the historical mountain man. In the end, an invitation was extended to viewers to have some Busch Beer, become a mountain man, and join the fun, because only with Busch "does a mountain man find true happiness." In this Madison Avenue-created fantasy, the mountain man's West could be obtained anywhere with a simple pop of a top.[95] The mountain man was a well enough know figure of American

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[94]J.J. Maples, interview by author, telephone interview, 14 September 1999. Mr. Maples was creative director of the mountain man add campaign for DDB Needham Worldwide Adverting of Chicago, Illinois. He noted that the focus of the advertisements was to attract younger drinkers and contemporize Busch Beer, and that the campaign was very successful.

[95]The mountain man Busch Beer campaign was developed by DDB Needham Worldwide Adverting (Chicago, 1993). The campaign included a number of thirty-

culture that all of these companies found him to be a secure enough promotional figure to use in attaining company profits.

In the Busch Beer mountain man campaign masculinity surfaced as a dominant issue (as in most beer advertising). Indeed, the thirty-second mountain man spots for Busch beer conveyed a host of notions about masculinity, from the things men should do like "head for the mountains," or how to become a man. Males reigned in the imagery of this advertising world, and demonstrated their manhood by imbibing in something presented as being the incarnation of nature itself. In this way, the mountain man existed as more than a product promoter. He possessed the role of a cultural communicator and facilitator who furthered the social myths linked to him, especially those related to masculinity. The same inferences may be made regarding much that has been endorsed by the mountain man hero.[96]

A product need not necessarily be something consumers may take off a shelf or pull out of a cooler. The mountain man found credibility as a salesman with less tangible but nonetheless profitable merchandise in tourism. The West has always drawn a great portion of the nation's touring masses. Its appeal may have stemmed from notions that it epitomized those things Americans believed their country to be: spacious, beautiful, and full of promise.

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second spots relating mountain man imagery titled as follows: "Mountain Man 101," "Common Misconceptions About a Mountain Man," "What Does it Take to be a Mountain Man," "How to Live Like a Mountain Man," "Mountain Man Blues," "What Makes a Mountain Man a Mountain Man," "Where to Find the Mountain Man," "Mountain Man Survival Skills," and "What is a Mountain Man's Natural Environment."

[96]Lance Strate, "Beer Commercials: A Manual on Masculinity," in Steve Graig, ed., *Men, Masculinity, and the Media* (Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage Publications, Inc., 1992), pp. 78-92.

But the West's mountainous regions reflected a sense of rugged individualism — a concept evoked by the mountain man. For that reason the mountain man remained one of the West's ambassadors, warmly inviting tourists who wished to visit his stomping grounds and feel his frontier spirit.[97]

State tourism bureaus of the Rocky Mountain region have long understood the mountain man's ability to draw tourists and their dollars. Utah long employed the mountain man hero to this end. Promoters of the state's northern quarter, sold to vacationers as "Bridgerland," made no bones about the region's place in the history of the Rocky Mountain fur trade, as the "stomping grounds" of "Jim Bridger ... and his fellow mountain men."[98] Promotional literature encouraged visitors to experience such places as Cache Valley or the shores of Bear Lake, where mountain men "gathered for yearly rendezvous," areas that are part of Bridgerland's "lasting legacies to the rugged mountain men."[99] Wyoming also portrayed areas of the state under the auspices of the mountain man image, with names like Jim Bridger Country and Rendezvous Country (even though Wyoming is known as the "Cowboy State").[100] For Pinedale, Wyoming (in Sublette County, named after mountain man

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[97]John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel In Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), pp. 225-244.

[98]Promotional literature, "Bridgerland," in *The Utah Travel Guide* (Salt Lake City: Utah Travel Council, 1997), pp. 22-23.

[99]Ibid., pp. 22-23, 74, 123-124; Promotional literature, "Utah's Bridgerland," Utah Travel Council (1999).

[100]Promotional literature, "Wyoming Vacation Guide," Wyoming Business Council, Tourism Division (1999), pp. 2-3, 16, 20-31, 66-74. Promotional Literature, "Wyoming Vacation Directory: Accommodations, Events, and Adventure Tours," Wyoming Business Council, Tourism Division (Summer 1999), pp. 5, 18, 33-35;

William Sublette), the mountain man hero has prevailed as the centerpiece of the town's and the county's tourist industry. Every July, Pinedale has hosted the Green River Rendezvous Pageant with celebrations, programs, and a modern rendezvous commemorating the mountain man and filling the area's coffers.[101] The marketing concept presented by the state of Wyoming possesses an air of frontier ruggedness by associating it with the most rugged of western types. This goal has attracted vacationers seeking to explore and experience authentic frontier settings. Other Western states having historical fur trade sites have similarly used them to attract tourists.[102] And at such places as Bent's Fort, Colorado, or Fort Bridger, Wyoming, merchandise and trinkets have been copiously peddled — all under the patronage of the mountain man's rugged facade. The mountain man's image even played a role in part of tourist promotional gimmicks, especially Wall Drug in South Dakota. Such trinkets and promotional efforts, while part of the tourist industry, emblematized a mythic West and heroes offered up for a price, which reflected much about American culture.

The mountain man, as an inviting figure, became incorporated into the West's bourgeoning entertainment industry of tourism. He became part of the iconographic revolution in the West, part of the packaging and marketing of images and experiences as commodity, with western tourism that has helped transform the West by the sale of its

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Promotional literature, "Jackson Hole, Wyoming," Wyoming Business Council (1999), p. 16.

[101]"The Museum of the Mountain Man," *Journal of the West* 36 (January 1997): 92-93.

[102]Promotional literature, "Colorado State Vacation Guide," Colorado Travel and Tourism Authority (1999), pp. 100-103.

identity. Thus, the mountain man existed as part of the "fashionability"of the West, and an influential figure in "the marketing of charm and myth" of the region.[103]

For the past two centuries the mountain man hero succeeded as a persuasive figure used by the profit-minded, and his marketability helped sustain his heroic image in American culture. In this way, society mostly encountered the mountain man's hero. As a marketable figure, the mountain man manifested an abundance of traits and characteristics viewed by society, in general, as rugged and American. And though this myriad of commercial visages impinged profusely on historical reality, they nonetheless sustained his popular image in the attending culture. His periodic appearances in commercial settings comments on American society's willingness to prostitute its national heroes and their accompanying myths to the highest bidder — the consumer. Ultimately, such behavior has revealed America's casual attitude toward its cultural past. It also revealed the adulteration of the mountain man's image through mythic constructs that have become part of the nation's epic lore and self-image. Thus, the mountain man hero emerged and has existed as part of America's consumer-minded culture, endured, in part, due to the support of the marketplace, and provided much of society's popular conceptions about him.

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[103]William G. Robbins, "In Pursuit of Historical Explanation: Capitalism as a Conceptual Tool for Knowing the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* (Autumn 1999): 288-289; Jim Robbins, *Last Refuge: The Environmental Showdown in Yellowstone and the American West* (New York:1994), p. 203; Hal K. Rothman, "*Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*, pp. 10-28; Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968), pp. 54-70.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## BASTION OF MASCULINITY

The mountain man hero, as one of America's most masculine icons, embodied various ideals of masculinity in American history. His image provided a model of manly behavior against which individuals measured their own masculinity. Rugged, rational, brave, courageous, undaunted, steady, strong, honorable, and similar adjectives became part of a vocabulary that defined a masculinity basic to the mountain man's popular description. While conveying supposed idealistic behavior (mythical and unattainable) this masculinity has been projected through assorted popular media. Consequently, the mountain man remained a dependable figure in American culture and embodied expected American masculinity. By his looks and actions, words and deeds, the mountain man has become a bona fide artifact of American manhood.

Essential to the mountain man hero's masculinity loomed the struggle against "others." In popular culture, he constantly defined his manliness through domination or superiority over the unmerciful wilderness, savage Indians, and less manly men, or by rescuing weak-minded women. The mountain man's image existed as more than escapist fare; it reflected certain characteristics and insecurities of a society enamored of him. Since his first appearances the mountain man hero remained a symbol of the "self-made man," an ideal that

placed masculinity atop most other qualities in America.[1]

Masculinity comprised much of the mountain man hero's image during the Jacksonian period, also termed the era of the "masculine achiever," a time in which the "cult of masculinity" emerged and with it the "self-made man," or the "Jacksonian man."[2] The earliest works about mountain men emphasized manliness, in part because the mountain man embodied the Jacksonian spirit. Thomas Jefferson's yeoman farmer type paled to these more heroic, romantic, and physical type heroes. Distinct gender spheres developed. Europeans and genteel types became disdained as castigated and feminized, creating the antithesis of the Jacksonian man. Women embodied effeminate inaction.[3] Popular literature reflected the ideals of masculinity associated with physical ability and the body and a new breed of backwoods heroes, including the mountain man. The mountain man emerged as a bastion of manly virtue who performed amazing feats of physical bravery to the delight of growing audiences. He embodied strength, courage, cunning, and endurance, a rugged individual who created his own destiny, qualities viewed as central to national expansion and the conquest

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[1]Roger Horrocks, *Male Myths and Icons: Masculinity in Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 13, 56, 62, 77; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, Introduction; William W. Savage, Jr., "What You'd Like the World to be: The West and the American Mind," *Journal of American Culture* 13 (Summer 1980): 302-303.

[2]David G. Pugh, *Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), chapter 1; E. Anthony Rotundo, "Learning About Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle-Class Family in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, ed. J.A. Mangan and James Waluin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 35-51; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, chapter 1; Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), p. 47; Goetzmann, "Mountain Man as Jacksonian Man," 402-415.

[3]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 50-59

of the wilderness and its denizens. This contributed to the mythology that surrounded those who carried out this conquest and to the ideal of physical manhood in nineteenth-century America.[4] The mountain man hero emerged as an icon of American manhood during the Jacksonian era.

Authors Timothy Flint and Washington Irving distinguished their mountain men by physical masculinity. Flint suggested, in 1831, that men of "shrinking and effeminate spirits, the men of soft hands and fashionable life" ought to "read a lesson" from the mountain men, for "there [was] a kind of moral sublimity in the contemplation of the adventures and daring of such men," possessed of "manly hardihood."[5] The mountain men exemplified self-made masculine achievement to Flint, who saw "no subjects of higher interest" in character or body as these manly specimens. Flint, impressed by these men who possessed "spirits impassible to fear," seemed more impressed by their "frames for strength and endurance" that he characterize "as if ribbed with brass and sinewed with steel."[6] Because of their physical manliness and Jacksonian spirit, they conquered nature by traversing deserts, scaling mountains, navigating rivers, and fighting grizzly bears and Indians. Theirs was "a spirit-stirring ... mode of life," and, according to Flint, exemplary of what a man ought to be and be about.[7] Flint believed "the adventures and daring" of the mountain men could "re-inspire

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[4]Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," 26-30; Zanger, "The Frontiersman in Popular Fiction, 1820-60,"pp. 141-146.

[5]Flint, *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie*, p. 3.

[6]Ibid., p. 2-3.

[7]Ibid., p. 3.

something of that simplicity of manners, manly hardihood, and Spartan energy and force of character" in American society and with American men especially.[8]

Like Flint, Washington Irving followed suit. Irving portrayed the mountain men's "wild wood life," their struggle over nature as it were, which "produced the manliness, simplicity, and self-dependence" that defined American society and manhood.[9] Irving wielded their manliness through both commerce and conquest, making them vanguards of trade and colonization, and conquerors of the wilderness and Indians. Irving cast his mountain men as "hardy, well-seasoned," "prime condition[ed]" men of "courage, fortitude, and perseverance ... who broke their way through [the] wilderness, ... traversed the most dreary and desolate mountain, and barren and trackless wastes ... infested by predatory and cruel savages," who possessed a "brave and adventurous spirit" unlike any other "class of men on the face of the earth."[10] The learned men of parlors and offices were not real men to Irving. But the "mountaineer[s], the hardy trapper[s] of the west" who "lead a life of ... continued exertion, peril and excitement," and reached "full vigor among the Rocky Mountains," being "a totally different" and "more independent class" of men, were.[11] According to Irving these men lived a "wild, Robin Hood kind of life" of "wild chivalry," as "cavaliers of the mountains," educated in the "wild and warlike school" of the wilderness. Thus, Irving contributed examples of warrior-heroes who used their physical nature for civilized ends to inspire and strengthen his

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[8]Ibid.

[9]Irving, *Bonneville*, p. 6, 10; Irving, *A Tour of the Prairie*, p. 55.

[10]Irving, *Bonneville*, pp. 11, 159.

[11]Ibid., p. 10-12, 68.

male peer.[12] Flint and Irving crafted examples of masculine achievement and the self-made man in an era of national expansion, social change, and emerging identity. Their mountain men heroes who embodied the ideal of Jacksonian manhood identified by historian Anthony Rotundo wherein "a true man was now a physical creature, full of animal qualities and primitive urges."[13]

The mountain man, as a bastion of manly virtue, showed up in early-nineteenth century art. Manliness was principal to Alfred Jacob Miller's depictions of mountain men as restless, self-reliant, and individualistic adventurers conquering nature and the West's indigenese (mostly native women). They were men freed of domestic concerns, part of Miller's mythic construct of the mountain men. Though his art did not become renowned until its rediscovery in the mid-twentieth century, Miller revealed much about American society's ideals regarding masculinity in the first third of the nineteenth century. Miller's artistic style relied on what art historians have called *Orientalism;* wherein cultural "others" are portrayed as immoral, and hence inferior, thereby justifying their domination.[14] Miller's art reflected cultural ideologies regarding both racial and gender differences. When women appeared in his art, they accentuated the mountain man's masculinity. He placed his mountain men subjects in positions of dominance over women, and that the women in Miller's works

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[12]Ibid., pp. 7, 11-12, 70; Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," 27.

[13]Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," 26.

[14]For a discussion of orientalism, men, women, and their place in art see Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* (May 1983), 119-30, 187-91. See also Cristine Peltre, *Orientalism in Art*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998).

were natives, further elevated his mountain men's masculine superiority. Miller's works reflected distinct gender spheres. His portraits and sketches presented mountain men as racially superior and cloistered in their manly sphere. His Indian women served as embodiments of the wilderness as well as domesticity, and his mountain men surmounted these obstacles, thereby achieving true manliness. Miller portrayed his Indian women as exotic and untamed, and as lascivious strumpets, best reflected in *Snake Girl Swinging* (n.d.) and *The Trapper's Bride* (1850). *The Trapper's Bride* depicted a commercial transaction in which an Indian woman was used as the item of business. Such an image reinforced notions of the mountain men as masculine icons.[15]

Western expansion and settlement upheld the masculine endeavor, defined by words such as "progress," "growth," and "constructions," words that also embodied physical action.[16] The mountain man in expansionist literature embodied and promoted expansionist ideals and the physical qualities associated with manhood in mid-nineteenth America. John C. Frémont, in his *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842*, portrayed mountain man Kit Carson as the greatest masculine figure of the Far West.[17] Frémont depicted his "true and reliable friend," Carson, as a first-rate guide, a bold

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[15]Jennifer McLerran, "Trappers' Brides and Country Wives: Native American Women in the Paintings of Alfred Jacob Miller," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18 (Summer 1994): 1-41; Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, "The Absent Other: Women in the Land and Art of the Mountain Men," in *Discovered Lands Invented Pasts*, pp. 136-153;

[16]See Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail.*

[17]Frémont, *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842.* See also Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, pp. 13-23.

frontiersman, and a heroic and fearless mountain man able to endure extreme physical hardships, traits mightily admired by nineteenth-century readers.[18] But the real Kit Carson proved to be no likely candidate for legendary status or to become a manly icon. He was short, not greatly proportioned, plain featured, and pigeon-toed. Hero-worshipers who met Carson commented that they could not believe he was the hero of countless written encounters with Indians and wild animals. His physical qualities fell far short of their expectations about the bodily ideal of manhood. General William Tecumseh Sherman said of Carson after meeting him: "I cannot express my surprise at beholding a small, stooped-shouldered man, ... nothing to indicate extraordinary courage or daring."[19] Dime novelist Edward S. Ellis expressed similar sentiments about the actual Carson's less-than-manly stature.[20] In his writings, Frémont transformed Carson from a raw mountain trapper into a national hero. He altered Carson's language (replacing Carson's crude mountain parlance with refined speech), suppressed any facts he considered unbecoming of a proper man (including Carson's Indian wives, his vices, and other coarse traits), and magnified Carson's physical character. What Frémont invented in Carson was a figure of ultimate manliness, who performed feats of physical bravery by which men measured their own masculinity. Carson

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[18]Frémont, *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842*, pp. 119, 237, 261-265; Zanger, "The Frontiersman in Popular Fiction, 1820-60," 141-142; Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," 26; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 61-65; Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, p. 410.

[19]William T. Sherman, *Memoirs*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton, 1836), I, pp. 46-47.

[20]See Ellis, *The Life and Times of Christopher Carson*, pp. 82-83. See also *Arkansas Gazette and Democrat*, 13 June 1851.

became one of nineteenth-century America's major masculine icons, and the best known of the brawny mountain man type.[21]

What Frémont initiated with Carson, ensuing writers adopted and manufactured into the quintessential man of the Far West. They provided a vicarious western experience and the tonic virtues of the wilderness in book form, to men unable to venture to the West, apprehending a masculine life in civilized comfort.[22] Kit Carson became further transformed into a subject of both biography and fiction whose character and physical manhood "formed by hardship, exposure, peril, and temptation," became a major facet of Carson's heroic image.[23] In his biography of Carson, *The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson; The Nestor of the Rocky Mountains* (1858), DeWitt C. Peters authored a manly figure who embodied the Victorian sensibilities of the day. In *The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson*, Carson emerged as an ideal figure of manhood. Indeed, the book focused on Carson's masculine example. Readers discovered a Carson possessing those "traits of manhood" that shaped the

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[21]Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, p. 24. A biographer of Frémont mentioned Carson and other mountain men as men of "manly and noble virtues ... who formed a class of men of marked and striking traits, ... perfect freedom and manly excitements and achievements," and "favorable in many respects to the development of noble energies and sentiments," see Charles Wentworth Upham, *The Life of J.C. Frémont* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1856), pp. 184-186.

[22]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 63.

[23]Quote from *The Rough and Ready Annual; Or, Military Souvenir* (New York: D. Appleton, 1848). Cited in Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, p. 25. See also Charles Averill, *Kit Carson, Prince of Goldhunters*; DeWitt C. Peters, *The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson, the Nestor of the Rocky Mountains* (New York: W. R. C. Clark, 1858). Other early works that include Carson's mythic figure include Emerson Bennett, *The Prairie Flower*, and "An Adventure of Kit Carson," *Holden's Dollar Magazine* (April 1848), 209-17.

"distinguishing ornaments of character" for all men, and whose moral character was "held up as an example to men whose pretensions to virtuous life [were] greater."[24] Beyond his physical abilities and "manly courage," exhibited by "surmount[ing] every obstacle presented by the unbroken and boundless forest," Carson's manliness stemmed from his moral purity.[25] That the heroic Carson maintained Victorian standards and an "enviable reputation" in a region isolated from social constraints and open to opportunities for personal degradation strengthened his manly status.[26] Consequently, Carson became a man of gentlemanly conduct, unwilling to commit improprieties against his race and womanhood. Peters described Carson as having "contracted no bad habits, but learned the usefulness and happiness of resisting temptation, and became so well schooled" in such behavior "that he was able, by the caution and advice of wisdom, founded on experience, to prevent many a promising and skillful hand from grasping ruin in the same vortex."[27] He was a man to be emulated.

Carson resisted the clutches of women (Indian and white alike), preserving his freedom, and thus, his manhood, by not succumbing to their domesticating influences. The fictive Carson evolved as a man devoid of sexual urges, a frontier warrior monk for whom women offered nothing desirable or worthy of surrendering his freedom. The fictive Carson thrived as a major masculine icon for men seeking escape from their own domesticated lives through popular literature. Men defined their manhood and found male identity, if only by

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[24]Peters, *The Life and Adventures of Kit Carson*, p. v.

[25]Ibid., p. 16.

[26]Ibid., p. 534.

[27]Ibid., p. 50.

running away momentarily via these fictive and semi-factual narratives.

No quarter of nineteenth-century popular culture exhibited the mountain man as a masculine icon more than dime novels, and the fictive Kit Carson grew as one of the most recognized manly types in this popular fiction. This mountain man hero, by his words and actions, instructed a growing readership about what defined masculinity. The norm for mountain men heroes included large physical stature, strength, and wilderness skills. And with Carson as one of the most popular figures in dime novels, America found a masculine hero.

The first fanciful depiction of Carson, published in 1848, found Carson cast as a rescuer of beautiful women and a slayer of savage Indians, a model of manhood.[28] Dime novelists soon capitalized on Carson's burgeoning fame. Edward S. Ellis wrote the first Beadle publication with the heroic Carson in *The Life and Times of Christopher Carson: the Rocky Mountain Scout and Guide* (1861).[29] Numerous Kit Carson dime novels followed, and dime novel scholar Daryl Jones asserted that between 1860 and 1900, Carson appeared in over seventy original novels and reprints.[30] In his literary role, Carson excelled in a masculine frontier by his wit and action, prevailing in the wilderness, overpowering and outsmarting

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[28]"An Adventure of Kit Carson: A Tale of the Sacramento," *Holden's Dollar Magazine*, New York, April 1848. See also Steckmesser, *The Western Hero*, pp. 35-37.

[29]Edward S. Ellis, *The Life and Times of Christopher Carson: the Rocky Mountain Scout and Guide* (New York: Beadle, 1861).

[30]Daryl Jones, *The Dime Novel Western* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1978), p. 58. See also J. Edward Leithead, "Buckskin Men of Forest and Plain," two parts, *Dime Novel Round-Up* 21 (March 1953): 18-22, and (May 1953): 34-37.

renegade whites, and slaying countless Indians, and by doing so embodied and reinforced popular perceptions about masculine identity in American culture to readers. Carson's ability to thrive on the frontier where action, centered on physical combat, defined his masculinity was basic to Carson's dime novel image. He became one of America's best Indian fighters, and in one novel was said to have raged "like a lion among his prey" in battle and left the ground "plentifully sprinkled with the blood of savages."[31] In Albert W. Aikens' dime novel for young boys, *Kit Carson, King of Guides; or, Mountain Paths and Prairie Trails* (1882), a youthful Carson defeated the "bloodthirsty" Mangas Colorado, the "best fighting man in the Apache tribe," after which the tribe viewed Carson as "something more than mortal."[32] Young readers likely viewed Carson the same way since he was defined as "the greatest fighting-man ... ever."[33] In numerous other dime novels Carson dealt with Indians and renegade whites, all merely props to help manifest his heroic and manly character.

The dime novel mountain man hero continued past the turn of the century with Carson's image persistent as an example of proper manhood. *Kit Carson's Boys*, published in 1904, still touted Carson (then dead thirty-six years) as one of the most noble men of the West. Readers discovered that:

> All men admire a brave spirit, but when such a one is not only valiant in battle, but gentle in camp, he is doubly admired. Such a man is Kit Carson, the king of backwoodsmen — a kind of westward Bayard, without fear and without reproach. He had naturally acquired great influence over his fellow

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[31]Ellis, *The Life and Times of Christopher Carson*, p. 92.

[32]Albert W. Aikens, *Kit Carson, King of Guides; or, Mountain Paths and Prairie Trails* (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1882), p. 4, 6.

[33]Ibid., p. 14.

bordermen, and his name was known and feared by every Indian tribe.[34]

In *Kit Carson's Boys*, to the end, readers found Carson helping a friend Ellis Gardner and his family to a new start in the West. But more importantly, Carson taught Gardner's sons, and young readers, how to achieve proper manhood. The popularity of dime novels like *Kit Carson's Boy's* grew because they were filled with scenes of romance and adventure, and because they affirmed the values readers held about self-reliance, hard work, courage, and manly comportment — traits viewed as threatened by the rise of industrialization, corporate organization, and urbanization. Dime novels re-asserted masculine ideals by dramatizing the lives of frontier icons like the mountain men.[35]

Hapless white women proved essential to the dime novel western, serving as props that fortified the mountain man hero's manly character. Women generally played passive roles, usually as weaker souls dependent on male heroes for their survival. Indeed, the main task of women in dime novels was to be protected and rescued. Most, unable to control their own lives, and intellectually and physically inferior, were in need of a hero to get them out of tough situations. No androgynous Amazons existed, rather only virtuous and frail women who needed protection from savage Indians and the corruptions of industrialized society. Little if any love existed between mountain men and women in dime novels. If enticed

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[34]An Old Scout, *Kit Carson's Boys; or, With the Great Scout on his Last Trail*, Pluck and Luck no. 340 (New York: Frank Tousey, 1904), p. 4.

[35]Edmund Pearson, *Dime Novels; or, Following an Old Trail in Popular Literature*, reprint (New York: Kennikat Press, 1968), p. 5; Johannsen, *House of Beadle and Adams*, p. 4; Jones, *The Dime Novel Western*, p. 5; Pugh, *Sons of Liberty*, pp. 93-100; Louise L. Stevensen, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), pp. 30-31.

otherwise, the mountain man quickly realized his mistake. Male bonding took precedence over romantic encounters. Indeed, dime novels celebrated male bonding that depicted "a love between males more enduring and purer than any heterosexual passion."[36] Mountain man dime novels often culminated with the creation of a purified, pristine male world that women and sexuality (and the inevitable domesticity associated with them) would have destroyed if allowed in. These dime novels were strikingly devoid of sexuality, marriage, or families. Indeed, they were devoid of women in general, except when women provided literary props with which the mountain man proved his manhood by not only rescuing them but resisting their affections. The mountain man of dime novels emerged essentially as a buckskinned monk. But more than a man avoiding the domestic snares of women, sex, marriage, and responsibility by fleeing civilization, the mountain man hero of dime novels was one of nature's noblemen, liberated from cultural feminization and domestic emasculation. The charge of opening the wilderness for civilization required such a man, and readers of dime novels found heroes like the mountain man a suitable companion for traversing the masculine frontier of the fictive West.[37]

While the mountain man hero of dime novels continued to embody the physical nature that defined masculinity in American during the nineteenth century, it provided men a means of pursuing manly endeavors by extension. Indeed, Ellis, other dime novel authors, and Beadle and Adams propagated the qualities that they believed constituted real masculine

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[36]Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 214.

[37]Ibid., pp. 26, 181, 214; Anthony Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-Class Manhood, 1770-1920," 32.

character. Ellis' own perceptions on masculinity were influenced by his imperialist and militarist ideals. He crafted his dime novels as territorial and race conquest stories, wherein the mountain man continued to be the warrior-hero type who possessed a violent or physical manliness capable of conquering Indians and nature. His stories promoted the patriarchal structure in American society.[38]

Besides dime novels, actual reports from the field of westward expansion celebrated the mountain men's masculinity. In *Life in the Far West* (1849), George Frederick Ruxton described his mountain men heroes as "strong," "active," and "daring" men who were "hardy as bears," of "quick determination and resolve," of "fixedness of purpose," and "bold and instant" in action.[39] As "hardy pioneers," Ruxton's mountain men personified the "real and genuine character" and "the energy, enterprise, and hardihood characteristics of American" manhood.[40] Ruxton's personal hero, mountain man Bill Williams, possessed absolute masculine character, one who "invariably fought man fully, and with all the coolness that perfect indifference to death or danger could give."[41] In the context of westward expansion, such qualities led Ruxton to declare that "to these men alone was due the empire of the

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[38]A short biography on Ellis is in Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams*, II, pp. 93-100. Beadle and Adams also instructed its authors about suitable character traits for their dime novel heroes, which included proper behavior for the two sexes. See Johannsen, p. 4, 9.

[39]Ruxton, *Ruxton of the Rockies*, pp. 227-228; Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, pp. 22-23.

[40]Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, p. 51.

[41]Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, p. 114.

West."[42] Others writers idealized the mountain men's masculinity. In *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail* (1850), Lewis H. Garrard praised them as examples of what men could become in the West. Garrard, a feeble young man, went west to mingle with frontiersmen and encounter the wilderness hoping to acquire the manly traits nature failed to give him. The mountain men he met were "hardy," "chivalrous" types leading "reckless li[ves]," whose manliness was exhibited through their freedom and their conquest of Indians and Mexicans.[43] Francis Parkman, another feeble-bodied young man, headed west and wrote about his western peregrinations in *The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky Mountain Life* (1849), which became the most well-known nineteenth-century book applauding the mountain man's masculinity. The mountain men Parkman wrote about were "manly examples," who were "all-daring and all-enduring ... rough and hardy" types, "restless," "bold adventurers," and physical specimens "to hold up to effete Bostonians."[44] Parkman believed the mountain men personified the "vigorous life of the nation [that] springs from the deep soil at the bottom of society," and he promoted them in this manner to his readers.[45] This masculine escapist memoir channeled Parkman's masculine salvation.

A relentless conquest of nature defined the mountain man. The story, "The Mad

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[42]Ibid.

[43]Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail*, pp. x, 127-129.

[44]George M. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 34; Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, ed. E. N. Feltskog (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), pp. viii, 148.

[45]Quoted in Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 61.

Wolf: A Tale of the Rocky Mountains," written under the pseudonym "Solitaire," exemplified this ideal.[46] The tale described the West as a wild and dangerous place where only men possessed of real physical and mental fortitude defeated nature. The story followed a small group of mountain men, all bitten by a rabid wolf. Readers learned that the wilderness was the ultimate foe, a place "where danger lurked in every bush."[47] Cold weather and misfortune plagued the group, but the hydrophobia from the wolf's bite became "more terrible than the painted warriors of the western desert — more appalling in its promised fatality than the torturing knife of the ruthless red man."[48] In the end most of the trappers became howling "savages." Only the lone American in the group, who possessed sense enough to care for his wound, overcame nature and survived. The story pitted man against nature with the truest example of manhood being manifested by wilderness conquest through survival. That is to say, the white American mountain man became a masculine icon because he was depicted as a man of physical action who proved his manhood through courage, prowess, and his struggle to survive. He was far removed from civilization and pitted against nature and savage man. Indeed, the mountain man became a hero unmatched in physical courage, self-reliance, and primitive ingenuity. As Richard Slotkin pointed out, such actions of conquest and enterprise

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[46]Solitaire, "The Mad Wolf: A Tale of the Rocky Mountains," *Graham's Magazine* (December 1846), 304-307. A more humorous story of mountain men conquest over wildlife, but exhibiting manly character nonetheless is John S. Robb, "Fun with a Bar," in *Streaks of Squatter Life and Far West Scenes: A Series of Humorous Sketches Descriptive of Incidents and Character in the Wild West* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1847), pp. 104-112.

[47]Solitaire, "The Mad Wolf," 305.

[48]Ibid.

made the mountain man hero an appealing masculine figure in the literature of the day.[49] And so this bastion of manly virtue held great interest for readers.[50]

In his dealings with women and non-whites these same attributes elevated the mountain man's masculine image. Women appeared in early works about mountain men as helpless and frail creatures. In Ruxton's *Life in the Far West*, Pattie's *Narrative*, and Garrard's *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail*, mountain men expended a fair amount of time rescuing women from various predicaments because, women (mostly Hispanic), it seemed could not survive without the adequate attention and protection of Anglo-American trappers. Moreover, feminine traits were liberally attributed to men (especially Hispanic men) not of the mountain man class. Such depictions by Anglo-writers reflected racial sentiments in America against non-white races in the West, whose conquest was viewed as inevitable.[51]

Popular literature exhibited the mountain man's rugged masculinity through his speech. It was a course, sparse, and picturesque rhetoric that celebrated hardship, conquest, and adventure. But it was also a restrained rhetoric that demonstrated masculine control over emotions, which not controlled denoted feminized character. Like most western hero types, the mountain man sported a simple vocabulary. His direct, commanding, and aggressive

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[49]Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, p. 410.

[50]Pugh, *Sons of Liberty*, pp. 3-19; Zanger, "The Frontiersman in Popular Fiction 1820-60"; Don Walker, "The Mountain Man as Literary Hero," *Western American Literature* 1 (Spring 1966): 16-18.

[51]Ruxton, *Life in the Far West*, chapter 8; Pattie, *Narrative*, pp. 38-46; Garrard, *Wah-to-Yah and the Taos Trail*, pp. 128-129, 171, 202-203; see also John R. Milton, *The Novel of the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), p 75. See also Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*.

speech reflected a man of few words and became part of his manly construct. But when he spoke, it was about action. Such rhetoric reflected a discarding of the artificialities that made men effete and turned to a more rugged, masculine life. Thus, in early mountain man fiction, like Emerson Bennett's *The Border Rover* (1857), the harbingers of the "habits of manly, energetic activity and self-dependence" were the "hardy and weather-browned mountaineers," exhibiting rugged masculinity defined as much by their speech as by their physical make-up.[52] The mountain man, an "envied hero of ... bold encounters" according to Bennett, became a manly type "whose simple narrations" identified him and caused one's "hair to rise, and the blood to leap through [one's] veins with a wild thrill."[53] This type of language formed a common part of the mountain man's masculine construct in the literature of the nineteenth century, and has persisted in popular depictions about the mountain man hero.[54]

The fictive West remained a masculine realm in other quarters of American popular culture at the turn-of-the-century, especially in the new cinema. From its beginnings western film dealt with masculine constructs, and since film was based on visual imagery, heroic

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[52]Emerson Bennett, *The Border Rover* (New York: F.M. Lupton Publishing Company, 1857), pp. 46, 60, 62-71. See also Emerson Bennett, "The Trapper's Story," in *Wild Scenes on the Frontier; or, Heroes of the West* (Philadelphia: Hamelin and Company, 1859), pp. 180-188.

[53]Ibid., p. 70.

[54]The subject of speech of the mountain men in literature is the focus of Richard Poulsen, *The Mountain Man Vernacular*. Another example of this speech as a key to the masculine character of the mountain man can be found in Mayne Reid, *The Scalp-Hunters; or, Romantic Adventures in Northern Mexico* (New York: G.W. Carleton and Co., Publishers, 1883), preface. For a discussion about language and the masculinity of western heroes see Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 47-67.

physical action became the focus of early westerns. Among the greatest misconceptions in cinematic history concerns the identity of film's first western hero. Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) has often been cited as the first western and the cowboy as the genre's first hero.[55] But two mountain men westerns, *Kit Carson* (1902) and *The Pioneers* preceded Porter's film, both celebrating masculinity. They drew on an "authentic" and convincing historical icon, embellished the facts and in the end aggrandized the mountain man's mythic stature. The deeds and actions of the heroes in both *Kit Carson* and *The Pioneers* reflected typical ideals of physical manliness in that the heroes were independent and self-sufficient men who explored the West, battled Indians, and rescued virtuous young white women from savage natives. In subsequent mountain man films like *Kit Carson* (1910), *The Trapper and the Redskins* (1910), *Kit Carson's Wooing* (1911), *The End of the Trail* (1916), and *Kit Carson Over the Great Divide* (1925) the heroes were defined even more by their physical qualities and actions. They operated in an adventurous, male-oriented world, saving a society of milksops, and projecting moral uprightness and manly character; their prowess, intellect, and heritage was measured by the number of Indians killed and women saved on the screen.[56] Being of "pure American" stock also defined proper manhood at the time. So, early westerns always cast Anglo-Americans as their mountain men. These larger-than-life,

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[55]The fallacy of Porter's film is discussed in both Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, p. 231, and James Robert Parish and Michael R. Pitts, *The Great Western Pictures* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), p. ix.

[56]Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 151-155; Larry Langman, *A Guide to Silent Westerns* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. xiv, 133, 241-242, 465; Fielder, *Return of the Vanishing American*, p. 13.

buckskinned incarnations reaffirmed to onlookers what social critics and scientists extolled about American society and Aryan heritage at the time. What defined their masculine character in early cinema differed little from earlier popular manifestations. But to the new, growing audiences of "others" which they now reached, these bastions of manly virtue staged an "authentic" pattern of American manhood and peerless Anglo-Americanness.[57]

The routine activities of the celluloid mountain man — subjugating Indians (that is, ridding the West of its undesirable occupant), rescuing white women, and demonstrating masculine superiority in the process — were more than escapist fare. Early mountain man films exhibited contemporary attitudes of racism and nativism in turn-of-the-century American society. They defined Anglo-American males as "real" men, while "others" were not and therefore could not, by definition, be deemed real men. Mountain man films Like *The Trapper and the Redskins* (1910), and *Kit Carson Over the Great Divide* (1925) embodied much that D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) did, in that they were visualizations of racial purification, portrayed through the metaphor of a struggle between men of white and dark races for the body of a white woman. More than "saving one poor little Nell of the

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[57]Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, p. 83; Bronwen J. Cohen, "Nativism and Western Myth: The Influence of Nativism Ideals on the American Self-Image," *Journal of American Studies* 8 (April 1974): 23-39; E. Anthony Rotundo, "Body and Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle Class Manhood, 1770-1920," 32; any study of early American film history should begin with Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1968), pp. 10-11; and Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), pp. v-vi, 3-47, 102-103; See also Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns*, pp. 3-13; and Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, pp. 231-242.

plains," such films reflected "a ride to save a nation."[58] *Kit Carson's Wooing* (1911) directly addressed social anxieties about racial amalgamation. Thus, the mountain man's actions went beyond the simple chivalrous protection of white womanhood. He ensured the survival of his own race and his own "pure American" manhood since dilution of racial purity was equated with race emasculation, and hence the loss of American manhood. As such, nativism and racism bore the mark of gender, and hence, masculine identity, and placed a nativist twist upon the mountain man's image as part of a larger search for secure manhood in America.[59]

In the 1920s and 1930s the cinematic mountain man's masculinity continued to be equated with physical attributes. Heroes, like Will Jackson (Ernest Torrence) in *The Covered Wagon* (1923), or Breck Coleman (John Wayne) in *The Big Trail* (1930), identified by their ability to be and do, displayed their masculinity in body and action. Manliness, synonymous with muscularity, was exhibited through endurance, suffering, violent combat, skill, and individualistic ways, that provided symbols of moral and physical strength. Jackson's and Coleman's status and stature as heroes was denoted by their race and by their superiority in thought and action. As the introduction to *The Covered Wagon* affirmed: "The blood of America [was] ... the blood of lion-hearted men ... who carved a splendid civilization out of an uncharted wilderness."[60]

In *The Covered Wagon,* mountain man Will Jackson was a man's man. Strong,

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[58]Richard Schickel, *D. W. Griffith: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 213.

[59]Nativism and racism as part of a search for secure masculine identity in turn-of-the-century American society is discussed in Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 194-196.

[60]*The Covered Wagon* (Paramount, 1923).

wilderness wise, and a hero to the movie's hero, he saved Will Bannion's (J. Warren Kerrigan) hide and shunned romance because he never allowed a woman to cloud his judgement. He aided expansion by guiding incompetent men and mercurial women through the West. Accordingly, Jackson stood at the head of a patriarchal order, a natural aristocrat and a "natural nobleman," in the western's masculine fantasy.

Similarly, mountain man Breck Coleman in *The Big Trail* achieved status as "a man among men."[61] Beyond strength, courage, wilderness know-how, sureness with weapons, and gentlemanly conduct towards women, Coleman's masculine character was defined by honor. Indeed, honor comprised a major component of the western hero.[62] *The Big Trail* followed Coleman's detective efforts to track down the killers of one of his trapper friends, while leading a wagon train west and flirting with the heroine Ruth Cameron (Marguerite Churchill). Only during the movie's closing scenes did Coleman settle matters with the "ignominious Red Flack and his cohort Lopez," and assured his honor and masculinity by fulfilling his vow of justice.[63] Only then did Ruth Cameron receive Coleman's attentions.

The romanticized image of the rugged individualistic mountain man endured in early twentieth-century literature. As efficiency, bureaucracy, professionalization, and rising union solidarity in America intruded on individual life and identity, the mountain man occasionally appeared on the popular cultural landscape to show that work and life need not be so

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[61]Mordaunt Hall, "The Trek to the West," *New York Times*, October 25, p. 20.

[62]Robert Warshow, "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy, fourth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 457.

[63]Mordaunt Hall, "The Trek to the West," p. 20.

monitored or regimented. He represented a throwback to pre-corporate days, providing a stark contrast to the dependency and impotence that men were experiencing. He was a self-made type embodying republican virtue and autonomy. John G. Neihardt used such imagery in his epic poems about mountain men: *The Song of Hugh Glass* (1915), *The Song of Three Friends* (1919), and *The Song of Jed Smith* (1941), which formed part of his *A Cycle of the West* (1941).[64] When Neihardt wrote about mountain men he intended "to celebrate" their "great mood of courage" and their lives as examples of "a time of intense individualism, a time when society was cut loose from" the powerful drives of "needs and greeds."[65] His poems of mountain men were "tales of ... struggle, triumph and defeat," wherein manhood was achieved by physical experience in overcoming nature and men.[66] He drew these examples of manly virtue from the veritable "watershed of history" to demonstrate what "mighty men" were.[67]

The feminization of the work place and the invasion of the public sphere by women intruded upon masculine identity and created a world hardly viewed by men as the world of

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[64]John G. Neihardt, *The Song of Hugh Glass* (New York: MacMillan, 1915); John G. Neihardt, *The Song of Three Friends* (New York: MacMillan, 1919); John G. Neihardt, *The Song of Jed Smith* (New York: MacMillan, 1941); John G. Neihardt, *Cycle of the West* (New York: MacMillan, 1941); see also John G. Neihardt, *The Mountain Men*, I, of *A Cycle of the West*, Bison Book edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), which is just his three mountain man *Songs*.

[65]John G. Neihardt, *The Mountain Men*, I, of *A Cycle of the West*, Bison Book edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. v.

[66]Ibid., p. viii.

[67]Ibid., p. xi.

real men.[68] The world of the mountain man hero, however, provided men with an escape into a masculine world that set women apart in their proper place. Harvey Fergusson, in his *Wolf Song* (1927), championed the mountain man as an icon of rugged independence unencumbered by the domesticating influence of women.[69] Manhood was defined by physical action, and that forged a mountain man brotherhood. The hero of *Wolf Song*, Sam Lash, "suffered all the cruelties of the mountains" and "knew the passionate fellowship of men riding and hunting together, fighting together in bloody brutal play, sitting round fires swapping yarns of wild beasts and women and other strange creatures that [were] found in a world of mountains and men."[70] Lash and his fellow mountain men had "rode conquering, gathering wealth, through a country ... where nothing stood against their hard-bitten hazard-loving strength."[71] They exemplified masculinity. But equally important to their masculinity was their freedom from the domesticating influences of women. For a mountain man "everything that binds a man down goes with a woman ... she pulls him down, she holds him down ... she sucks out of him power and longing to go."[72] A woman allowed into the mountain man's world could not be an impediment, she needed to be like Lash's "squaw" who "stuck to him like a dog," and "fitted so easily into his life he hardly knew she was

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[68]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 197-198; Margaret Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915," *American Quarterly* 40 (June 1988): 174.

[69]Harvey Fergusson, *Wolf Song* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927).

[70]Ibid, pp. 38-39.

[71]Ibid., p. 37.

[72]Ibid., pp. 201-202.

there."[73] For the mountain man the best woman was one who "was less a woman than part of the outfit like the pack mules and his rifle," one who would not impinge on his life or masculine identity.[74] For men wanting to leave the emasculation of the modern world momentarily and seeking to escape to a masculine world, works like Fergusson's and Neihardt's provided a way.

While the mountain man hero in early twentieth-century literature allowed men of the time to imagine a manly life in the mythic West in contrast to their current circumstance, some authors further championed the mountain man's qualities as necessary to success in the modern world and essential to attaining one's manhood. Much of this literature was aimed at adolescent boys. A new introductory note by G. Mercer Adam for the 1902 reprint of Charles Burdett's *The Life of Kit Carson* (originally published in 1860) touted the "uprightness of character" and industry "strenuous" living provided by making men of "mighty resources and phenomenal self-reliance, besides physical courage and hardihood."[75] Youthful readers were directed to draw lessons from Kit Carson about the values of hard work, ambition, industriousness, and proper instruction for the benefit of their own conduct. Carson became a model of behavior for boys needing to develop the proper traits necessary for modern survival. He exhibited "moral and physical courage" and possessed the "virtues

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[73]Ibid., p. 43.

[74]Ibid., p. 44.

[75]Charles Burdett, *The Life of Kit Carson, The Great Western Hunter and Guide* (New York: Grossett and Dunlap, 1902), pp. iii, xiii.

of honor" that provided him the "best attributes of manhood."[76]

The mountain man as a masculine tutor for boys, appeared in a surge of wilderness novels during the early twentieth century. In such works less attention was given to style and more to action and adventure. Author Dillon Wallace utilized the mountain man image in *The Wilderness Castaways* (1913). Two young boys, Paul Densmore and Daniel Rudd, joined with an American trapper, Charles Amesbury, who instructed the boys in the wilderness life that gave one "grit."[77] The boys learned that hard work and a small dose of "pluck and luck" achieved financial success and independence, a most important lesson. Such works were similar to Horatio Alger, Jr.'s fictional accounts of upward mobility gained through hard work, where manliness, associated with progress and success, but manifesting a distinctly American frontier take on the self-made man, with a distinctly western American hero. Mountain man Amesbury detested debt and explained to the two boys (and to those reading) that he was "pretty free to do as [he] please[d]"[78] He achieved honor, independence, and, thus, his manhood, because he worked hard for them in a man's wilderness world. The boys followed his example, worked themselves out of the debt of a despotic fur trader, and returned to their hometown of New York City as mature and manly examples of industrious citizens. They survived the corruptions of modern life because of their wilderness experience and a mountain man sage.

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[76]Ibid., pp. iii-iv, xii.

[77]Dillon Wallace, *The Wilderness Castaways* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1913), p. 275, chapters 17-18.

[78]Ibid., p. 222.

Wallace's *The Fur Trail Adventures* (1915), warned young men of the emasculating effects that the soft life of wealth could bring if not careful, and extolled the mountain man's wilderness as the antidote for such a condition. The story followed the life of young Phil Porter, who, lacking self-discipline, disgraced himself and lost his honor and his father's trust. Greed caused him to lose the prudent traits of a true man, and this weakness affected his logic. A useless, dependent, social parasite, Phil lacked manly character. His father sent him west to become a man.[79] Phil met mountain man sage Ezra Dodd, a large, physical man, of rugged stature, and of direct and industrious character. Dodd instructed young Phil about manly conduct. Under the tutelage of this man of action who taught that "talk don't count; it's doin' that does," Phil experienced a "wilderness apprenticeship."[80] He lived as "Kit Carson had lived."[81] In the process Phil's character and physical stature transformed, giving him "grit" and making him "a man."[82] Phil learned endurance, patience, self-reliance and resourcefulness, attributes necessary for success in the modern world but considered unattainable through "the gaieties and frivolities of civilization."[83] Phil's wilderness quest with the mountain man was a maturation from an effete adolescence to a prosperous and honorable manhood.

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[79]Dillon Wallace, *The Fur Trail Adventure* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1915), pp. 1-12.

[80]Ibid., p. 19-20.

[81]Ibid., p. 39.

[82]Ibid., pp. 20, 39, 84, 104.

[83]Ibid., pp. 103-104.

More than escapist fare, wilderness novels instructed boys about what masculinity and success in the corporate world required: hard work, dedication, honesty, and a bit of pluck and luck. To achieve such masculinity, the boys in these works entered a world devoid of women and eschewed anything effeminate. They continued to conquer "others" (bad Indians, tyrants, nature), but under the auspices of a wise mountain man. This mentor was a "real man," teaching proper manly conduct and logic, and acting as a surrogate father figure for the story's characters and readers alike. The mountain man in wilderness youth literature posed masculinist strategies for coming-of-age boys by providing exemplary accounts of young men being tested, proving themselves, and progressing in manliness. As Thorton W. Burgess surmised in his *The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp* (1915), Deity created the wilderness so man could gauge "his moral strength no less than his physical strength" and to learn "manliness, self-reliance, physical and mental health, [and] strength of character."[84] The mountain man, as a masculine role model for young men, persisted in pulp western magazines, too. In *Zane Grey's Western Magazine*, the mountain man typified the red-blooded American example of upstanding masculine comportment and simple virtues. He possessed consummate gentlemanly and wholesome conduct, a man who never smoked, drank, swore,

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[84]Thornton W. Burgess, *The Boy Scouts in a Trapper's Camp* (Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Company, 1915), Introduction. Burgess wrote numerous Boy Scout novels, most set in the wilderness, teaching youth matters of industry, honesty, honor, and manliness settings. Other writer contributed to this flood of literature. See for instance George Bird Grinnell, *Jack, the Young Trapper; An Eastern Boy's Fur Hunting in the Rocky Mountains* (New York: F.A. Stokes Company, 1907); Milton Richards, *Dick Kent, Fur Trader* (Akron, Ohio: The Salfield Publishing Company, 1927); and Flora Warren Seymore, *The Boy's Life of Kit Carson* (New York: The Century Company, 1929). See also Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 142-144. For and overview of the nature of children's out-of-doors fiction see Schmidt, *Back to Nature*, pp. 115-124.

or was disrespectful to ladies. In stories, editor's comments, and in quiz sections that tested juvenile readers' knowledge about mountain man adventures and heroics, the mountain man as a masculine role model persisted.[85] Adult works employing the mountain man hero conveyed much the same opportunity for vicarious learning experiences about manliness, revealing that anxieties about adult masculinity endured.[86]

The mountain man hero of B-westerns provided an unmistakable masculine icon, since it was boys who mostly encountered him at Saturday matinees. However, he underwent on screen modifications accruing traces of Owen Wister's styled cowboy. He stood out from the crowd as a rugged individualist (even when he had a sidekick), the strong, silent type in American popular culture, always gentlemanly. Once again, as a man of action and few words, clean speech and integrity, and who never drank and avoided romantic encounters, the mountain man was a masculine icon because he upheld honor and virtue. Historical specificity yielded to matters of manly comportment in such films. However off-base

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[85]See for instance W.H. Hutchinson, "Bible, Buckskin, and Beaver," *Zane Grey's Western Magazine* (November 1948), 134-142; W.H. Hutchinson, "Cognomen,"*Zane Grey's Western Magazine* (February 1949), 145-147; W.H. Hutchinson, "Footprints on the West," *Zane Grey's Western Magazine* (July 1950), 129-137; Bill Gulick, "Fair Trade," *Zane Grey's Western Magazine* (February 1950), 136-145; "Mountain Man Lingo," *Zane Grey's Western Magazine* (December 1948), 35.

[86]See for instance Stewart Edward White, *The Long Rifle* (Garden City: Doubleday Doran and Company, Inc., 1930); Emerson Hough, *The Covered Wagon* (New York: Grossett and Dunlap Publishers, 1922); Harvey Ferguson, *Wolf Song* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927). All three authors were part of what literary critic W. Churchill Williams hailed as the "red-blooded" school of fiction, what is now recognized by literary historians as "realism" and "naturalism" and which espoused the notions of bully manhood, social Darwinism, and Anglo-Saxon race superiority and destiny. See Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, pp. 156-169. White's saga of Andy Burnett (the hero of *The Long Rifle*) ran as a lengthy serial in the *Saturday Evening Post* starting July 11, 1931 under the title "Mountain Man," and replete with "red-blooded" American ideals.

historically, the mountain man hero became a "real man" to youth based on his manly traits, attitudes, behavior, and perspectives. Bill Elliot as Kit Carson in Columbia's *Overland With Kit Carson* (1939), and the mountain men heroes in serials like Mascot's *Fighting With Kit Carson* (1933), or Republic's *The Painted Stallion* (1937), became more than heroes and conduits for cinematic escape from the Depression, they provided young viewers masculine role models each Saturday. At a time when gender roles, fatherhood, and manhood departed from traditional ideals, the mountain man hero, along with other western icons, projected stark masculinity. His actions and attitudes identified him as a real man never tied down and born to ride.[87] Time and again he proved his manliness through moral and physical superiority over others — Indians, villains, inept men, and insipid women.

In *Overland With Kit Carson*, hero Kit Carson (Bill Elliot) was identified as "patriotic," a "good man," an "inspired leader," and "a man who command[ed] respect and deserve[d] it."[88] This "tireless scout" and his band of mountain men "undertook a dangerous mission of combating an outlaw organization of Black Raiders headed by a ruthless and daring figure known as Peg Leg, who spread terror and destruction in order to control the West."[89] By quick wit, fist, and gun Carson out-fought and out-smarted the Black Raiders, Indians, and Peg Leg, making the West a safe place to live.

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[87]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 199-202; Mirra Komorovsky, *The Unemployed Man and His Family* (New York: Dryden Press, 1940). Both discuss the transformation of American manhood during the Depression and the accompanying anxieties about masculine identity men faced during that time.

[88]*Overland With Kit Carson*, 15 episodes (Columbia, 1939), episode 1.

[89]Ibid.

The B-western mountain man's masculinity with regards to women required gentlemanly conduct, but such conduct was also portrayed condescendingly. The women he encountered generally lacked the sensibilities and good instincts that even his trusted steed possessed. These women, usually do-gooders from the East, reflected moral uprightness, but not brightness, and tended to become less sensible the longer they sojourned in the company of a good mountain man. The men of their lives, prior to the mountain man, were either old or dandified, but emasculated to be sure. The women in these films served as props used to demonstrate the mountain man's physical and intellectual superiority. In *Overland With Kit Carson*, Carson rescued the heroine, Carmalita (Iris Merideth), numerous times. She realized that he personified a true man and one worth keeping. But Carson determined whether to allow her into his masculine world. He realized the necessity of sacrificing sexual desire to maintain his autonomy, and thus his masculinity, in a man's world. His young viewers realized this necessity as well. This sexlessness exhibited a pivotal expression of manhood for the mythic mountain man of B-westerns. What the mountain man exhibited by his resistance to sexual needs was his superiority over women, making him no easy prey to their influences. He maintained his patriarchal world and moral character, and therefore became a hero with great appeal to juvenile viewers and their parents.[90] The women of these films, characterized as superficial, nonthreatening, and subordinate, reinforced juvenile prejudice against the opposite sex. As a whole, the B-western mountain man hero did what Virginia Wright Wexman considered to be the proper generic function of the western movie hero, namely, to

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[90]Brian Garfield, *Western Films: A Complete Guide* (New York: Rawson Associates, 1982), pp. 33-34.

serve as a manly model for young boys.[91] Televison westerns of the 1950s carried on the B-western formula, projecting the same masculine ideals to youth, and occasionally with the mountain man hero.[92]

In the post-World War II years, the western film genre maintained its masculine world. The mountain man hero continued to appear as an individualist and an ideal self-made man, but his masculinity became increasingly identified by his physical appearance. Big muscles and bare-chestedness emerged as prominent components to masculine identity in films during the 1950s, and influenced the mountain man hero's now popular image.[93] Clark Gable, as Flint Mitchell in William Wellman's *Across the Wide Missouri* (1951), was among America's first leading men to bring "real" masculine power — the power to tame women, the wilderness, Indians, and less masculine men — to the mountain man's cinematic image. Mitchell confronted all of these "others," as he "blazed ... paths to the West and the western sea" and "found glory" in his intrepid search for pelts.[94] The movie industry cast Gable as its

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[91]Virginia Wright Wexman, *Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 84.

[92]Early television westerns with mountain men as leading heroes included the syndicated *The Adventures of Kit Carson*, starring Bill Williams, who, in the series, was just another cowboy hero type but who wore buckskins to present a minor touch with reality. There was also Disney's attempt to create a new series for its Frontierland episodes, *The Saga of Andy Burnett* (1957-1958), starring Jerome Courtland, that was as close to the Davy Crockett formula as possible, but not as successful. See West, *Television Westerns*, p. 87; "The Saga of Andy Burnett — Davy Crockett Retold?" *TV Guide*, February 1958, 6; Bill Cotter, *The Wonderful World of Disney Television: A Complete History* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), pp. 64-65.

[93]Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), chapters 4 and 5.

[94]*Across the Wide Missouri* (Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1951).

leading masculine figure, so much so that Sam Goldwyn said of Gable's presence: "When a person like Robert Montgomery comes on the screen you know he has balls. When Clark Gable comes on you can hear them clanking together."[95] As hard-boiled, muscular mountain man Flint Mitchell, Gable's masculinity manifested itself obviously, and beyond reproach. He starred as a leader among this "breed of men" who "lived hard and played hard," and who at rendezvous caught up on those manly penchants for "gambling, drinking, fighting" and the conquest of women.[96] *Across the Wide Missouri* established a man's world and Mitchell affirmed his place in it, especially when he put his Indian wife (Maria Elena Marques) over his knee and soundly gave her a spanking.

The brawniness and good looks that Gable bestowed upon the mountain man hero image became standard for celebrating the mountain man's manhood in films. An abundance of bare-chestedness and lean-muscularity in films thereafter galvanized this popular impression.[97] A score of beefcake Herculean mountain men who were big on brawn and long on looks appeared in westerns of the 1950s. They included Dewey Martin as Boone Caudill and Kirk Douglas as Jim Deakins in *The Big Sky* (1952), Victor Mature as Jed Cooper in *The Last Frontier* (1956), and Clint Walker as Yellowstone Kelly in *Yellowstone Kelly* (1959).

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[95]Joe Fisher, "Clark Gable's Balls: Real Men Never Lose Their Teeth," in *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies, and Men* ed. Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumim (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), pp. 35-51. Quote from Helen Taylor, *Scarlet's Women: Gone With the Wind and its Female Fans* (London: Virago, 1989), op. cit. p. 161.

[96]*Across the Wide Missouri* (1951).

[97]Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns*, pp. 154-160; Leon Hunt, "What are Big Boys Made of? *Sparticus*, *El Cid*, and the Male Epic," in *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies, and Men*, pp, 65-67.

The trend would continue with Burt Lancaster, Charlton Heston, James Arness, and Robert Redford in mountain man roles. Always the men's brawn was juxtaposed with petite Indian women or lilliputian men. None found difficulty in taking on hordes of Indians, getting less manly men out of tight spots, or keeping women in their proper place. Size became fundamental to their persona and symbolized the pure form of a man of power and epic stature. Their size signified their superiority when compared to more diminutive bodies displayed next to theirs on the screen and demonstrated what real men looked like. Their overwhelming brawn forced beauty to the inconspicuous corners of the screen or at least drew viewer attention away from women and other male actors. Such display supposedly led Groucho Marx to comment on Victor Mature's chest being bigger than the heroines' in his films.[98] The same applied to most other cinematic mountain men heroes. The cinematic mountain man hero of the 1950s defined manhood by physical size as he literally stood head and shoulders above those around him and personified what Martin Nussbaum described the adult western of the 1950s to be — "heroism between not men but giants."[99]

The mountain man hero's masculinity came to be identified in cinema and literature by his strength, stamina, and his ability to endure hardships (moral and physical). No tale in American culture displayed this perspective like the Hugh Glass saga. First in Frederick Manfred's novel *Lord Grizzly* (1954), which sold well in its paperback edition on the newsstands, and later in a movie version titled *Man in the Wilderness* (1971) starring Richard

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[98]Hunt, "What Big Boys are Made of?," p. 66.

[99]Martin Nussbaum, "Sociological Symbolism of the 'Adult Western,'" *Social Forces* 39 (October 1960): 25

Harris, the Glass story idealized masculinity as survival and thus conquest over nature.[100] Mauled by a grizzly bear and left for dead, Glass survived the attack and crawled hundreds of miles through the wilderness. His crawl proved a capacity to survive, and even thrive in conditions that most men would find debilitating.[101] It unleashed a process of masculine maturation. A desire for revenge to regain his honor against those who in cowardice deserted him and a stubborn refusal to give up motivated him. As Manfred articulated, "even half dead he had more grit, more guts, than most ordinary men in the prime of their power."[102] He mastered the wilderness (Mother Nature) as fully as he did his horse and women. To be a man required being at one with the terrain yet able to rise above it. Knocked down and whipped into shape, he emerged from his ordeal a real man, refined by nature's violence. He was just another mountain man until he survived the bear and the crawl, and his story gained epic proportions. He became a symbolic man of endurance, of self-fulfillment, and masculine identity by undergoing the bizarre and the outrageous. It heralded one of American culture's most powerful constructions and became standard to the mountain man's identity and

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[100]Frederick Manfred, *Lord Grizzly* (New York: Signet Books, 1964, originally published 1954); *Man in the Wilderness*, Warner Brothers, 1971. *Lord Grizzly* was one of five western novels by Manfred grouped under a single title *Buckskin Man Tales* (which covered the historical span of approximately 1800-1892), but only *Lord Grizzly* dealt with the mountain man hero, and has been considered by literary critics as the best of Manfred's *Buckskin Man Tales*. In all the *Buckskin Man Tales*, and esspecially in *Lord Grizzly*, Manfred attempted to find in history the "type of man — albeit a composite — who [could] act as a prototype, or forefather, for modern western man," an absolute masculine icon. See John R. Milton, *The Novel of the American West*, pp. 160-194; and John R. Milton, "*Lord Grizzly*: Rythem, Form and Meaning in the Western Novel," *Western American Literature* 1 (Spring 1996): 6.

[101]Manfred, *Lord Grizzly*, part two titled "The Crawl," pp. 96-181.

[102]Manfred, *Lord Grizzly*, frontispiece.

masculinization process.[103]

Director Sidney Pollack's *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) starring Robert Redford and based on Vardis Fisher's novel *Mountain Man* (1965) capitalized on this same process of survival and renewal.[104] Fisher's novel *Mountain Man* was subtitled — and therefore promoted — as *A Novel of Male and Female in the Early West.* Thus, the novel really rendered "a portrait of the mountain man archetype, the superman of the western wilderness," a man's man.[105] Fisher created a hero based loosely on the legendary, cannibalistic, "Liver-Eating" Johnson. But instead of uncovering the legend, Fisher exalted Johnson as the ultimate stereotype of the mountain man and masculine icon. Fisher exaggerated both fact and myth to achieve his ends and turned the hero of his novel, Samson Minard, into a "too full-blown, too-heroic, too-sensitive, too-knowledgeable, too-perfect" example of manhood in Fisher's own attempt to understand what masculine identity entailed.[106] The issue of masculinity became the essence of the film version *Jeremiah Johnson.* In the course of the film Johnson, refined by hardships in the wilderness, became a mountain man and a warrior-type hero. Like Boone Caudill in A. B. Guthrie's *The Big Sky*, but not in as traumatic a

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[103]Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns*, pp. 169-187; David Stouck, "The Art of the Mountain Man Novel," *Western American Literature* 20 (Fall 1985): 212-213.

[104]Sidney Pollack's *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) merely put cinematic form to the "Liver Eating" Johnson legend of Thorp and Bunker, *Crow Killer*; and Vardis Fisher, *Mountain Man: A Novel of Male and Female in the Early West* (New York: Pocket Books, 1967). Both works are among the most popular about mountain men. Pollack's *Jeremiah Johnson* is a western cult classic with frequent appearances on late night cable television. See also David Stauck, "The Art of the Mountain Man Novel," 214.

[105]Fisher, *Mountain Man*; John Milton, *The Novel of the American West*, p. 132.

[106]Ibid., 133-134, 138-139.

fashion as Glass, Johnson, under the tutelage of a sage mountain man, "Bear Claw" Chris Lapp (Will Geer), passed through nature's initiation and achieved manhood. Part of Johnson's maturation included obtaining a 50-caliber Hawken rifle from a dead trapper. This was a real man's weapon, one he could not acquire back in civilization. This symbol of Johnson's manliness and individualism was an apparatus that with one stroke of his hand, could resolve all difficulties.[107] Well armed and learned in mountain ways, Johnson stumbled upon a number of less-manly types, and viewers of the film learned quickly who possessed the right stuff. Johnson eventually obtained an Indian wife and a child. He built a cabin, shaved his beard, and resigned himself to a more sedentary life. He became domesticated. When marriage and family intruded upon his independence and therefore his masculinity, his Indian wife and child were conveniently rubbed out by a raiding Crow party. Once again Johnson became an independent man, immune to the domestic controls of women. His sense of honor lead him to wage a personal war of revenge against the Crow tribe, resolving matters with his Hawken rifle. Johnson's response to the loss of his family compared to the mental insanity the "Crazy Woman" succumbed to after Indians killed her family, identified her feminine weakness verses his superior masculine ability to survive in the western wilderness. He reaffirmed his masculine identity after numerous battles with Crow warriors, thereby becoming a warrior-hero who regenerated his masculinity through violence.

Such plot development was a convention of the western genre, and basic to the mountain man hero. It reflected what Leslie A. Fielder postulated concerning the literary movement westward, as being a means by which males flee both women and civilization to

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[107]Nussbaum, "Sociological Symbolism of the 'Adult Western,'" 27.

find refuge in a masculine wilderness. In films like *Jeremiah Johnson, Kit Carson, The Big Sky, Yellowstone Kelly*, and *The Mountain Men*, or in literature like *Mountain Man, Wolf Song*, or *Lord Grizzly* females (and the civilization they brought) represented the destruction of the manly West, and the mountain man himself, when they imposed domesticity on his world and thus ended his freedom, his individuality, and thereby his masculinity. As Hugh Glass foresaw about white women coming to the West, bringing their henpecked husbands and building cities everywhere: " ae, the enslavement of both land and man was coming."[108] The mountain man hero resisted the emasculative grasp of domesticity and fatherhood, remained committed to his wilderness ways, and preserved his masculinity, and for this effort his manly world of physical action has remained an attractive realm of escapism for men.[109] As a western icon of male oriented escapism, the mountain man hero in films operated in an idealized masculine world that championed individualism and the self-made man during the conformity and depersonalization of the corporate and suburban transformation of American society that affected American male identity.[110]

Yet, another dimension of the mountain man's image in American culture exists in America's homosexual subculture. Nightclubs and bars like the Ramrod in Miami, Florida, or the Lone Star Saloon in San Francisco cater to a gay clientele, members of which call

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[108]Manfred, *Lord Grizzly*, p. 160; Stouck, "The Art of the Mountain Man Novel," 217-219.

[109]Fielder, *The Return of the Vanishing American*, pp. 50-51; Don D. Walker, "The Mountain Man as Literary Hero," *Western American Literature* 1 (Spring 1966): 15-19.

[110]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 234-253; Nussbaum, "Sociological Symbolism of the 'Adult Western,'" 25-28.

themselves "trappers," "bears," and "cubs." Those who frequented these spots view themselves as being from the masculine, rough, rugged side of gay society known as "gay macho." In this culture, the participants are men's men and the antithesis of the effeminate types in gay society that trappers and bears condescendingly label as "twinkies." Trappers and bears view themselves as coming from society's "rough edges" and liken themselves to the "rugged individual types historically drawn to [the] frontier."[111] These trappers, and the bears and cubs they "trap," are simply men who enjoy manly activities, but who love other men too. Often bearded, stocky, and hairy (denoted in this realm as the "fur factor"), the most rugged and outdoors types among them are aptly labeled a "Grizzly Adams."[112] As such, these gay trappers seem enamored with the image of Dan Haggerty's Grizzly Adams figure, a soft and loving but rugged manly type they aspire to be like, or at least hope to be his sidekick. The more recent rise of trappers (since the mid-1980s), compared to the longer-standing cowboy class of gay macho, may reflect the mountain man hero's increased popularity in American culture during the 1970s and 80s.

The mountain man's image underwent a steady domestication in other quarters of American culture during the 1980s and 1990s, indicative of a trend in American society toward "domestic masculinity." Notions of family, compassion, caring, and community redefined masculine identity, making the sensitive "New Age" male the model of manhood.[113]

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[111]Les K. Wright, ed. *The Bear Book: Readings in the History and Evolution of a Gay Male Subculture* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1997), pp. 31-32.

[112]Ibid., p. 154.

[113]Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, pp. 291-295.

Such notions werealso reflected in the mountain man hero's image. The mountain man hero of earlier times lived apart from "civilization" and unencumbered by the domesticating institutions of community and family that accompanied settled life. Rarely, if ever, did he discuss his feelings and fears with others, even his closest companions. Instead, this bold, unyielding, and uncompromisingly masculine type felt no need to explore his feminine side. The mountain man occupied his time with manly endeavors, which had little to do with family or society. But the mountain man hero of more recent popular culture assumed a subdued masculinity, and at times unable to resist the domesticating influences of women and civilization.

With Jimmy Stewart's role as mountain man Linus Rawlings, in *How the West Was Won* (1963), the taming of the mountain man emerged. Stewart's ordinary appearance, perhaps his greatest appeal as an actor, contributed greatly to the domestication process. His awkwardness and shyness on the screen projected a mundane type of manhood, far removed from the extraordinary virility which the mountain man usually projected. Linus tried to avoid the endemic influences of Eve Prescott, but in the end Linus succumbed to Eve's domestic ways and resigned his mountain man life that defined his manhood. She convinced him to settle down and take up farming, and he acknowledged that he had seen "the varmint," meaning his mountain man ways, "for the last time."[114]

The domestication of the mountain man continued with feel-good mountain man movies such as *Against the Crooked Sky* (1976). In the film a scraggly and drunken trapper played by Richard Boone got his act together long enough to help save a young kidnaped girl

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[114]*How the West Was Won* (Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1963).

about to be sacrificed by pseudo-Aztecan Indians, and in the end was welcomed into the family of the girl he saved with his rugged character more subdued.[115] An even more emasculated mountain man figure was Dan Haggerty's character in *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (1974). Haggerty, big and brawny, played a cuddly, clean-living, one-with-nature, father figure in the role of mountain man James "Grizzly" Adams who achieved "peace" and "harmony" with himself and nature by wilderness osmosis.[116] NBC spun off a television series from the movie using the same title that ran during the late 1970s. But neither the series nor the movie exemplified the standard western genre by any stretch of the imagination. Both were devoid of shootouts, drinking, rough behavior, Indian fights and similar physical activities of conquest or violence that traditionally defined the mountain man hero's masculinity. Besides the standard mountain man *Homo sapiens* sidekick, a mountain man character called "Mad" Jack (Denver Pyle), Adams had a cuddly *Ursus horribilis* named Ben, and became a "blood brother" (a term of implied equality) with an Indian named Nakuma (Don Shanks). The historic Adams (James "Grizzly" Adams) of the nineteenth century was a less-than-successful businessman who abandoned his family and spent his years in the Sierra Nevadas and the Rocky Mountains capturing animals for zoos.[117] But Haggerty took that image of the anti-social wilderness conqueror and invented in Adams a Doctor Doolittle of the frontier. Haggerty's creation intended to appeal to a society in which masculinity was becoming more domestic and familial. His mountain man presented an

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[115]*Against a Crooked Sky* (Doty-Dayton Productions, 1976).

[116]*The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (Sunn International Productions, 1974).

[117]Dillon, *The Legend of Grizzly Adams: California's Greatest Mountain Man.*

archetypal father figure who instructed young viewers about right and wrong and proper morals, and whose wholesomeness was directed primarily toward families.[118]

Television, through what has been termed the "domestic Westerns," became the primary medium of the mountain man's domestication and transformed masculinity.[119] These television Westerns centered around a family or community; the two most familiar being *Bonanza* and *Gunsmoke*. Mountain men appeared periodically in episodes in both shows, only to encounter ideals of family, community, and property ownership. Some inevitably became convinced by Ben Cartwright and the boys at the Ponderosa or Matt Dillon and the citizens of Dodge City to put away their mercurial ways and take up civilized, that is to say domesticated, lives. Festus (Ken Curtis) became part of the Dodge City family in this manner, trading in the lone hunter life for the companionship of Matthew Dillon, Miss Kitty, and the

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[118]*TV Guide*, February 5, 1977, 7, 76-77; Richard West, *Television Western: Major and Minor Series 1946-1978* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 1987), p. 66; Aleene MacMinn, "Viewers Follow Grizzly Adams," *Los Angeles Times* 27 July 1977, sec. 4, pp. 17-18. As if the *Grizzly Adams* movie and series were not enough, Sunn Classic Pictures, Inc., (who created both) also printed a cheap paperback version. See Charles E. Sellier, Jr., *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (Los Angeles: Schick Sunn Classic Books, 1977). Haggerty, however, struggled in real life to uphold the moral ideals his Grizzly Adams character embodied. Throughout his career Haggerty engaged in illicit and anti-social conduct including tax evasion, assaulting police officers, and drug trafficking. See Jack Jones, "TV's Grizzly Adams Held on Drug Charge," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 June 1984, sec. 2, p. 5; Paul Feldman, "Dan Haggerty Gets 90-Day Jail Term in Drug Sale Case," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 April 1985, sec. 2, pp. 1,6; "Actor Sentenced for Failure to File Income Tax Returns," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 December 1985, sec. 1, p. 2.

[119]Beginning in the late-1960s, the domestic western became the norm on television. Typical free-roaming individual western heroes became subordinate to the community and the family unit. This western sub-genre downplayed violence and personified a less tumultuous set of moral values adopted by society. Variations of the "domestic western" theme are outlined in Richard M. Merlman, "Power and the Community in Television," *Journal of Popular Culture* 2 (summer 1968): 63-71.

rest of their tightly-knit community.[120] In another episode of *Gunsmoke* titled "Drago" (November 22, 1971), in which Buddy Ebsen played the title role, this mountain man hero, convinced that civilization's ideals of justice prevailed over his personal code of vengeance, succumbed to civilization's influences and settled down to became a father.[121] But other mountain men who occasionally appeared on *Gunsmoke* and *Bonanza* refused the domesticated life and were portrayed as failures for not giving up their old ways. A great example was the *Bonanza* episode "Yonder Man," in which an old mountain man friend of Ben Cartwright, named Beaudry, could not relinquish his mercurial ways for a settled life. Contrasted to his settled and successful (financial and familial) friend Cartwright, Beaudry was depicted as a lesser man. "Beaudry may [have been] a hell of a man, but Ben [was] even more so," based on his settled life.[122] Interestingly, both Ben Cartwright and Matt Dillon apparently lived as mountain men in their younger days. An inferred common ground existed between Ben and Beaudry, and Matt Dillion clearly referenced his younger trapping days in the *Gunsmoke* episode "Lobo" that guest-starred Morgan Woodward as mountain man Luke

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[120]Ralph Brauer, *The Horse, the Gun, and the Piece of Property: Changing Images in the TV Western* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975), pp. 124-126, 152-153. All *Gunsmoke* episodes, plots, guest stars, and broadcast dates are outlined by Kristine Fredericksson, "*Gunsmoke*: Twenty Year Videography," IV Parts *The Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Spring 1984-Spring 1985): II, 137; III, 182; IV, 35.

[121]Brauer, *The Horse, The Gun, and the Piece of Property*, pp. 154-154; Fredericksson, "Gunsmoke: Twenty Year Videography," (Spring 1985), IV, 35.

[122]Brauer, *The Horse, The Gun, and the Piece of Property*, pp. 124-126.

Brazo (December 16, 1968).[123] Instead of clinging to the old and individualist ways, both men chose to route their masculinity in civilization, and, as viewers were led to conclude, became real men for it.

Television's first prime time series in which the mountain man was the star consummated his domestication. The small screen's first real leading mountain man was Zeb Macahan, played by James Arness, in ABC's television movie *The Macahans.* The network eventually parleyed the movie into a short-lived weekly series titled *How the West Was* Won (February 12, 1978 to May 21, 1978), proving there was life after *Gunsmoke* for Arness, albeit brief. *How the West Was Won* was produced at the tail end of the domestic western trend that had transformed the archetypal heroes of television westerns into more communal, familial, and sedentary fellows. The Macahan family's saga portrayed a blending of the moving community of *Wagon Train* with the family struggle against frontier adversity previously seen in *Bonanza, The Big Valley, The High Chaparral*, and similar series. Arness' character seemed two-dimensional, unoriginal and uninspiring. Despite the facade of buckskins, a mustache, and a lanky stride, Zeb Macahan merely mirrored Marshall Dillon in a fringed leather outfit, whose habits were tempered with certain Dillon-like prudence. His masculinity reflected honesty, cordiality, gentlemanliness, prudent drinking habits, and frugality by keeping a few dollars tucked away for a rainy day.

Arness described Zeb as "a man who goes where he wants and does what he pleases,

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[123]Fredericksson, "Gunsmoke: Twenty Year Videography," (Winter 1984/1985), III, 182.

a free spirit," making his image an anachronism in this family-based drama.[124] True, Zeb was a loner, and behaved as one when he could. But regardless of his lone image, Zeb was a family man, and when push came to shove, family came first in defending this view of masculinity. From one episode to the next Zeb constantly defended the Macahan family honor and rescued its members from numerous predicaments. The sanctity of a woman's honor remained important to Zeb's code of male ethics, and he regularly defended it, whether the woman was family, friend, Indian, Mexican, or, like Matt Dillon's Miss Kitty, a prostitute. Any female was a lady in Zeb's book.

Zeb's masculine adventures carried him from one border to the next. One week he was helping the U.S. Army appease Metis dissension and protecting womanhood along the Canadian border. The next week found him south of the Rio Grande playing detective, aiding Mexican policia in breaking up a slave trade dealing in young women. Along the way he bumped into historical figures who were usually acquaintances. Zeb realized an evolution of his individualist mountain ways, and thereby his masculinity, as evidenced by his comment while facing down an old associate over a woman's honor: "Ain't no room any more for old buffalo like you and me ... our old breed is gone." Zeb Macahan may not have been as clean-cut as Marshall Dillon, nevertheless they were cut of identical cloth and were western types whose masculinity stemmed from family and community.[125]

The made-for-television Western epic *Centennial* (adapted from James Michener's

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[124]Freeman, "Back In the Saddle Again," 14.

[125]*How the West Was Won* remains in syndication, often part of cable television station TNT's Saturday westerns.

novel), championed the domesticated masculinity of the mountain man. *Centennial*'s early segments centered around two mountain men, a French trapper named Pasquinel (Robert Conrad), and a Scottish trapper named Alexander McKeag (Richard Chamberlain). The contrast between these two men directly related to the issue of domestic masculinity. Unlike Pasquinel, who's harem of wives littered the West, McKeag dedicated himself to one woman, her honor, and single-family living. McKeag emerged as the man of honor and the proper example of manhood. Lauded in the story line as a true man, McKeag exemplified domestic masculinity.[126]

Nowhere was the domestication of the mountain man's masculinity more apparent than on the CBS series *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*. Joe Lando played mountain man Byron Sully, a Fabio-like figure with long flowing hair, good looks, and dripping in "Cult of the Indian" nuances. But Sully also characterized the quintessential domesticated "new age" type mountain man — warm, sensitive, compassionate, and fatherly. He represented the model of manhood some believed would be the new hero type of the 1990s, a man tied to a family and a community. Furthermore, he subordinated his role to the show's primary heroine, Dr. Michaela Quinn (Jane Seymour). Quinn, an independent, Boston-bred physician, moved to Colorado Territory and imposed her ideals of equality and philanthropy on everyone who crossed her path, especially men. As with earlier domestic westerns, events occurred in and about the local town and moralizing displaced violence as the solution to problems. The overemphasis on female equality and the flagrant excess of stupidity and arrogance by the show's male populace, merely reflected contemporary opinions about sexual equality and

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[126]*Centennial*, NBC (1978).

feminism which inundated popular notions about the West. Clearly a "new" westernist-styled western evolved. Though not portrayed nearly as sexist, bigoted, and doltish as most of the town's males, Sully was nevertheless figuratively emasculated, as a mountain man, by his subservience, calm demeanor and gender-association with other inept males. More especially, he became a father on the show, a genuinely family oriented mountain man hero.

Another facet of the series dealt with Sully's male image and his manly prowess directly. In contrast to the show's feminist front, *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* seemed merely television's version of the wilderness romance novels popular with women. Such pulp eroticism typically rendered women powerless from the advances of forbidden primeval lovers. Sully fit the role of primitive suitor well. Not a grizzled and gritty social outcast, his handsome and sensitive character seemed better suited to the pages of *Gentleman's Quarterly* than the Colorado frontier. He was far too handsome and cuddly for viewers accustomed to the bearded, grungy, rugged and uncouth mountain man type. But to viewers wishing for exotic and primitive romance, his image provided an ideal image and blissful escape. While Sully seemed the type of man a woman wished to have and to hold, his character did not lack in stereotypical attributes, lest his heroism be totally negated. He remained somewhat independent; his frontier skills and abilities were never in question. But he was far different from the typical mountain man hero. The evolution of his manhood was customized to fit the ideal definition of masculinity in late-twentieth century America.

The mountain man hero image was adapted to a range of masculine ideals, responding to American men's own shifting sense of identity. Traditionally, the mountain man's manliness hinged on his position in an Anglo-American, homosocial, competitive world

wherein he constantly proved his superiority against others. From the Jacksonian masculine achiever to the nationalistic man of dime novels; from the bare-chested icons of the 1950s to the "new age" man of television's domestic westerns, the mountain man's masculine evolution personified various types of American manhood, by which men sought to prove their own manliness or compare their masculinity against. But the various means of exemplifying the mountain man's manliness, of utilizing his image to preserve masculinity by exclusion of others, or even of using it as a means of escape to some masculine hideaway, always gave way to changing social currents. While the mountain man, this bastion of manly virtue, remains one of America's most enduring and recognizable masculine icons, the meanings of his masculinity will continue to change in American society.

## CHAPTER SIX

## THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND UP THERE STILL

The image of the mountain man hero has remained a popular and influential one in American culture because of his commercial potential and political value. His appearances in various quarters of American culture, outlined in the previous chapters, may be defined as "myth artifacts," which are not themselves myths, but rather the manifestation of such myths.[1] Being continuous, repetitious, and attainable, the myth artifacts associated with the mountain man sustained his popular image in the American mind. These myth artifacts keenly reflected certain cultural, social, economic, and political traits and ideals possessed by the society attracted to the mountain man hero. His hero image was sustained through two distinct yet interrelated factors. First, the mountain man hero transmitted social values, propagating a political forum. That is to say, his image has been employed to educate or indoctrinate, and thus carried political utility. Second, as discussed previously, his image has been used to sell goods and services, meaning his displays were often used to generate profit. The mountain man hero has existed especially as a commodity, and regardless of his presentation or intended use, remained easily available for consumption. By combining these two facets his existence suggested an American society that embraced its icons, but sold them willingly for almost any

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[1]The concept of myth artifacts is discussed in Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, pp. 8, 12-14.

price. His utility as a political and social tool guaranteed the effectiveness of his commerciality. The economic factor merely capitalized on the political factor and consequently preserved or influenced its nature.[2] As such, the mountain man hero image defined an arena of socially acceptable conduct or promoted certain political outlooks; while raking in the money both his "good" and his "bad" characterizations fostered these ends at home and abroad.

The mountain man, defined in popular history as the *American* mountain man, an "arch-type" of Americaness whose traits of "self-reliance, ingenuity, ... physical courage, individualism" provided Americans with an image viewed as uniquely theirs.[3] Washington Irving, Frederick Jackson Turner, Theodore Roosevelt, and others promoted these qualities during the nineteenth century; qualities that persisted in American culture through the twentieth century. While the mountain man endured as a symbol of Americaness, his legacy helped distinguish the nation, both for countrymen and for others around the globe. The mountain man prevailed as an integral part of American national mythology and a useful item for the perpetuation of that mythology.

The American mountain man's link to national identity carried political value as an item of cultural export, since his image became part of some Europeans' preoccupation with

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[2]The relationship of the mountain man to both social values and commercial aspects in American culture is much the same as with other western icons. See Savage, *The Cowboy Hero*, pp. 121, 150-151.

[3]See for instance *Trappers and Mountain Men*, American Heritage Junior Library (Mahwah, N.J.: Troll Associates, 1971), p. 99; Hafen, Hollon, and Rister, *Western America*, p.164. David Lavender, *The Great West*, The American Heritage Library (New York: American Heritage Press, Inc., 1985), p. 183; Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, p. 83.

the history and culture of the American West. Modern mountain men organizations in Europe revealed on example of this preoccupation. Members dressed-up in buckskins, discussed mountain man history and lore, and reenacted and reminisced about a place and time they never knew, except through the mythic content of imported popular culture. The Trappers Corral, located in the Czech Republic, staged such activities as part of the Westerners, an organization of western-history buffs founded in Chicago in 1944, now headquartered at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City. They have chapters (called corrals or posses) worldwide, that have promoted the popular constructs about the West.[4]

Apart from Westerners' groups, the mountain man received a great deal of attention from Europeans enamored by the American West, his heroic figure perpetuated by image-makers on both sides of the Atlantic since the nineteenth century. Germans have held an enduring affinity for the American West. Germany's own Karl May wrote the ever-popular *Old Shatterhand* series. The *Old Shatterhand* stories were blood-and-thunder novels about a German immigrant to America, who became a mountain man nicknamed "Old Shatterhand," and his adventures in the American Southwest with his Indian companion Winnetou. Initially targeted for a juvenile market, May's stories appeared in the late-1870s. But he quickly gained a wider reading public and became more famous throughout Europe than any other author on the subject, including American authors. May died in 1912, but "Old Shatterhand" continued to be a household name in Germany, and few Germans today have not read at least one Shatterhand novel or viewed one movie based on May's western tales. His books have

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[4]"Global Cowboys," *Cowboys and Indians*, p. 32.

been translated into numerous languages; millions of copies have been printed, and millions continue to circulate.[5] German fascination with Shatterhand led to the commercialization of his image in dolls, on trading cards, and on camping equipment, to name only a few items. And popular magazines like *Karl May and Company: Das Karl-May-Magazin* have been devoted specifically to May and the German public's fascination with his western fiction and heroes.[6] Shatterhand movies, mostly filmed in the wildest and most rugged locations of Yugoslavia, starred blue-eyed German actors like Lex Baker (a former Tarzan), provided a substantial part of German cinema during the 1960s, and remained popular.[7] Each summer during Karl May Festivals, hundreds of thousands of enthusiasts gathered to don buckskins and fur caps, camp out as mountain men and Indians, watch dramatizations of Shatterhand novels, and escape into an invented world, made so real by May, that it exemplified western America in the European mind.[8] These events, sponsored by organizations like the Karl-May-Gesellschaft (Society), promoted the Shatterhand image of the "strong, silent man of the western plains and the Rocky Mountains," who was a "knight errant on a crusade against

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[5]Harbert Frhr. V. Feilitzsch, "Karl May, the 'Wild West' as seen in Germany," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27 (Winter 1993): 173; Greg Langley, "A Fistful of Dreams: Taming the Wild West in the Old World," *Munich Found: Bavaria's City Magazine in English* (August-September 1996), 33.

[6]For internet copies of *Karl May and Company: Das Karl-May-Magazin* see www.karl-may-magazin.de

[7]Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp. 68-69.

[8]Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, pp. 318-319, 324-325; Richard H. Cracroft, "The American West of Karl May," *American Quarterly* 19 (Summer, 1967): 249-258.

crime and wickedness."[9]

During the Cold War, the Shatterhand image of a man of superior race heritage combating the ruthless activities of materialistic capitalists, provided Eastern Block Germans with leverage for their own political ideologies. At May's home near Dresden, Germany, his "Villa Shatterhand," artifacts about May's works and those he collected about the American West were displayed by the East Germans, not to honor the author as much as to glorify the romanticized Indians and their communal societies and to expose their slaughter by ruthless capitalists during their "struggle for freedom against Imperialism."[10] After World War II, the number and size of Karl May clubs in East Germany increased partly because they provided legal opportunities for people to gather in large numbers. May's anti-capitalist, anti-American (his heroes were men who embodied typical German, even Saxonian, characteristics), nationalistic, ethnocentric writings conformed to Eastern Bloc doctrines and ideals of German superiority. Old Shatterhand, the alter ego of May, represented the perfect man: honest, intelligent, of superhuman strength (he became famous for knocking people out with one punch), and a man with a sense of duty. Shatterhand embodied a man of superior standard possessed of German virtues and values. Such imagery influenced German society. Even Adolf Hitler considered May's heroes exemplary of German superiority and ordered his

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[9]Quote by Walther Ilmer, research consultant to the executive director of the Karl-May-Gesellschaft, taken from Greg Langley, "A Fistful of Dreams," 33.

[10]Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, p. 325; Feilitzsch, "Karl May," 173-185.

officers on the Russian Front to study May's novels for "tactical advice."[11]

The popularity of May's Old Shatterhand novels led to the production of a number of mountain man comic strips in European newspapers. One of the earliest of these strips was *Kit Carson*, written by Federico Pedrocchi during the 1930s for Italian newspapers, and regarded as one of the classics of Italian comic strips. France's own mountain man comic strip, *Buddy Longway*, followed the peregrination and tribulations of a mountain man and his American Indian wife. And Germany produced its most popular *Winnetou*, based on May's Shatterhand novels.[12] These comic strips reflected European fascination with the American frontier. Though these portrayals offered imitations of the mountain man hero, closer examination revealed deep ties to European culture. According to Maurice Horn, Europeans have "look[ed] upon the western as a modern allegory of the eternal struggle between good and evil," and have seen the mountain man and other western heroes as "the rightful hier[s] of the wandering knight[s] and medieval epics and novels of chivalry."[13] As such, Europeans have equally distorted views of history with mountain men heroes of mythic constructs as do Americans. The mountain man hero in European culture projected a system of values, even if not fully connected to Americanism; thus the mountain man's political utility transcended America's borders .

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[11]Feilitzsch, "Karl May," 173-189; Helmut Schmiedt, *Karl May, Studien zu Leben, Werk, & Wirkung Eines Erfolgsschriftstellers* (Koenigsten, Germany: Verlag Anton Hain Meisenheim GmbH, 1979), p. 243.

[12]Maurice Horn, *Comics of the American West* (New York: Winchester Press, 1977), pp. 14, 157.

[13]Ibid., p. 174.

In America the mountain man promoted or perpetuated certain social or political concerns. While the mountain man hero of twentieth-century American culture who fell in love with or even married an Indian women was acceptable with the masses, such nineteenth century unions were viewed as degraded and gained the mountain man who did so the derogatory title of "Squaw Man."[14] The mountain man as a Squaw Man represented a non-heroic image. The type and degree of social deficit of being a squaw man as opined by American society changed with time. Still, it always affirmed connections with race superiority and race betrayal to those who opposed interracial mingling.

Many who wrote about Kit Carson during the nineteenth century omitted his liaisons and marriages to Indian and Hispanic women to sidestep tainting his heroic image. Even when attacks upon Carson's virtue emerged, champions of Carson defended the mountain man's heroic and honorable image.[15] In David Coyner's *The Lost Trappers* (1847) the image of the mountain man involved with an Indian woman veered in another direction. Coyner's mountain man was defined as being on the "outskirts of civilized society" and part of a "motley class," as much because he chose an Indian woman to be with as the fact that he chose a wilderness life.[16] But even though Coyner depicted the mountain man as a deserter of civilized society, he proffered a positive twist on the image that embraced the race

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[14]Mountain man and Indian woman unions became common in film and literature of the twentieth century. See for example in literature, A.B. Guthrie, Jr. *The Big Sky* and Vardis Fisher, *Mountain Man*, and in film and television *Yellowstone Kelly* and *Centennial*.

[15]Gerald Thompson, "'Kit Carson's Ride,' E. F. Beale Assails Joaquin Miller's Indecent Poem," *Journal of the West* 26 (Summer 1984), 135-152.

[16]Coyner, *The Lost Trappers*, p. 21.

conquest aspect of Manifest Destiny. Coyner proposed:

> The result of this intermixing and intermarrying, has been the springing up of a numerous hybrid race of beings, that constitute a medium, through which, it is hoped, at no distant day, the laws, arts, and habits of civilized life may be successfully introduced among the tribes of the west, and be the means of reclaiming them from the ignorance and barbarities in which they have been so long enthralled.[17]

In this instance the mountain man who deserted civilization and his race heritage offset his ill-favored image by facilitating the nation's destiny.

For the most part, however, the mountain man as a squaw man suggested an ignoble figure without redeemable qualities. The stigma surrounding the term appeared to be more prevalent during the second half of the nineteenth century when the West itself was becoming a more domesticated region.[18] As Stanley Vestal (Walter S. Campbell) once said: "One suspects that the term 'squaw man' was invented by some spinster from the East, who came west to find a husband, only to discover that the Indian women had married all the best men."[19] The mountain man as a squaw man, no longer viewed as an agent of Manifest Destiny, emerged as a barrier to Indian acculturation and the antithesis of good Victorian sensibilities.[20]

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[17]Ibid., pp. 121-122.

[18]Stanley Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History, 1850-1891* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), p. 313.

[19]William T. Hagan, "Squaw Men on the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Reservation: Advanced Agents of Civilization or Disturbers of Peace?" in John Garretson Clark and George LaVerne Anderson, eds., *The Frontier Challenge: Responses to the Trans-Mississippi West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1971), pp. 171-172.

[20]See Hagan, "Squaw Men," p. 174; James W. Schultz, *My Life as an Indian: The Story of a Red Woman and a White Man in the Loges of the Blackfeet* (New York:

The image of the mountain man hero also reflected the popular political ideals and values about individualism, individual opportunity, and the morals of free labor connected with the West, in the mass culture of mid-nineteenth century America. Such ideals mirrored the foundation of antebellum Republican doctrine and were manifested in popular literature of the day about the West, especially in dime novels. This was particularly the case with Kit Carson's dime novel appearances. Carson emerged in American literature as the premier western icon of the mid-1800s. His service to John C. Frèmont as a guide and his part in the Mexican War helped open the West for the rapid penetration of an egalitarian agricultural society into the wilderness. Frèmont's politics also linked Carson to the anti-slavery cause. The Carson of popular literature, intended for more northern and western audiences, was produced in the industrial centers of the north. According to Alexander Saxton, the type of western hero that emerged with Carson was a hero that promoted egalitarianism over elitism. Presenting Carson in his relationship to other men with natural aristocracy and giving him his yeoman-like vernacular, accomplished this. Even his remaining aloof from any romantic couplings reflected urban workmen's opposition to such intrusions of their sexual sphere in the western world. Still, he maintained his ferocity toward Indians in opening the West to those who would, by their own make, use the land rightfully. Readers of dime novels and similar literature found themselves a hero opening the West for white settlement. Although there was never any mention in the novels of slavery's extension, Carson and similar dime novel mountain men appealed to northern and western literary tastes and ideologies, even if

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Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1907), p. 412, which describes resentment by white women toward such men.

such supporting roles were unintended. They symbolized popular cultural champions of basic Republican ideologies.[21]

The political utility of the mountain man hero figure continued in twentieth century America. Comic books portray cultural responses to pending social matters and at times the mountain man served as a suitable comic book hero to attend to such topics. In 1941, the *Captain Fearless* series made its appearance. Its advent corresponded with the public's anxieties about the troubles in Europe and the Far East. Captain Fearless was a patriotic buckskinned superhero preoccupied with fighting fascism and axis power expansion, even before America's entrance into World War II. On the cover of the first issue, Captain Fearless, the muscular, clean-shaven, all-American hero in buckskins and a coonskin cap, smashed monocle-wearing Nazi subversives, making America and the world a better place for truth, justice, and the American way. Captain Fearless prevailed as merely one of many superheroes utilized as part of a greater Allied propaganda effort. In the image of Captain Fearless the virtues of the American cause appeared unquestionable, as did the qualities of the American fighting man. Captain Fearless possessed no superhuman powers. In defeat of world tyranny he offered the skills of glorified basic American traits and values, mixed with great athleticism and superior intelligence. Even his name blatantly announced the type of

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[21]Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990), pp. 195-201; Smith, *Virgin Land*, pp. 88-98; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), pp. 95-97; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 1-39. Examples of popular mountain man literature that reflected such ideologies include Averill, *Kit Carson, The Prince of the Gold hunters*, Bennett, *The Prairie Flower*, and Ellis, *The Life of Kit Carson* and *The Fighting Trapper*.

American the enemy was up against.[22]

The mountain man hero's appeal sustained his image in other comic books well after the War. The adventures of these later mountain man comic book heroes mirrored the concerns, preoccupations, and beliefs of American society during the post-World War II decades. The 1950s became the watershed for comic book buckskinned heroes. In 1950, the *Tomahawk* series first appeared, with the distinction of being one of the few long lasting western comics set in the last half of the eighteenth century. *Tomahawk* followed a group of buckskin-clad adventurers whose exploits against "Redskins" and British "Redcoats" (red being the operative word here) during the Revolutionary War seemingly mirrored the "Red Menace" anxieties that also provided Joseph McCarthy his moments in America during the 1950s. The heroes of *Tomahawk* eventually moved west and took up the mountain man life. In addition to battling their own red menaces, the heroes of *Tomahawk* dealt with another major issue of the 1950s — a nuclear world. In one of the oddest sequences of frontiersman drama, Tomahawk's rangers were pitted against a giant tarantula of science fiction proportions in a "grim tug-of-war" to save the frontier. These mountain men battling a giant spider corresponded to a rising American popular culture interest in monsters of horrific destructive potential. In films and comics the advent of such creatures was unmistakably attributed to science and technology — mostly atomic — gone awry. They clearly projected their message — if you tampered with nature the results may not be pleasant. But

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[22]Robert M. Overstreet, *The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide 1990-1991* 20th edition (New York: The House of Collectibles, 1990), p. 63; William W. Savage, Jr., *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), pp. 6-13.

*Tomahawk*'s additional message declared that only through American ingenuity and determination would humanity be capable of maintaining proper control of such technology.[23]

Beyond dealing with troublesome Nazis or mammoth arachnids, the mountain men heroes of comic books continued to possess the rugged, independent, and adventurous, character that mountain men heroes always had, but now endowed with a sense of moral obligation to his country and fellow Americans. As a red-blooded American and a wholesome role-model to youth, he neither drank, smoked, chewed, spat, swore, nor fornicated. His respectfulness around ladies did not diminish his role to be as tough a man as one would ever come across. He was always bigger, smarter, stronger, and in possession of greater stamina and agility than any other man out West, and he was always white. In this way, by directly attaching his superiority to his being an Anglo-American male, this designation provided him the wherewithal to rescue women, manhandle badmen, and defeat inferior races. Kit Carson reappeared in comic books, embodying all of these attributes. His efficiency with weapons (even a boomerang) and the eventual outcomes of his escapades were never in doubt.[24] And he and most comic book mountain men acted as buckskin-clad frontier detectives.[25]

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[23]Horn, *Comics of the American West*, p. 183; Savage, *Comic Books and America*, pp. 22-23, 71-73.

[24]"Kit Carson and the Blackfeet," *Kit Carson, Indian Scout* 3 (January 1952); "Kit Carson: The Invisible Raiders," *Frontier Fighters* 6 (National Periodicals Publications: May-June 1956).

[25]See for instance "Kit Carson: The Gun Runners of the Cheyenne," *Frontier Fighters* 6 (DC Comics: August 1956); "Kit Carson: The Wild Horse Army," *Frontier Fighters* 8 (DC Comics: December 1956); "Kit Carson: Raiders of the Oregon Trail," *Frontier Fighters* 6 (DC Comics: March-April 1956); "Surrounded," *Ben Bowie and his Mountain Men* 599 (Dell Publishing Co.); "Rage of the North Wind," *Ben Bowie and his Mountain Men* 17 (Dell Publishing Co.: Nov-Jan 1958-59).

Intentionally or not, the mountain men comic book heroes of the 1950s reinforced notions of masculine superiority and Americanism to its mainly white, middle-class readers.[26]

The mountain man hero image found its way into the political upheaval of Vietnam as well. In the Spring of 1966, United States Marine divisions created a specially trained force of ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) soldiers and North Vietnamese defectors called the Kit Carson Scouts. These special Vietnamese soldiers sent to marine units acted as interpreters and scouts, who survey the terrain and detect booby traps, punji pits, snipers, and ambushes. The Kit Carson Scouts underwent a four-week training program in marine tactics, weapons, and drills.[27] Like the Carson of western myth, many of these scouts were said to have performed heroic deeds, some even to be endowed with "an uncanny sixth sense."[28] One Kit Carson Scout, Nguyen Chau, assigned to Company D, 3d. Reconnaissance Battalion, took five enemy bullets while walking point on a mission, but still he charged the enemy, killed five, and then carried two wounded marines to safety.[29] The Kit Carson Scouts who knew the enemy and the jungle proved assets to their units, and "made a definite political decision by changing sides" stated Kit Carson Scout project director First Lieutenant Robert

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[26]Savage, *Comic Books and America*, chapter 6.

[27]Tom Bartlett, "Chieu Hois and Kit Carson Scouts," *The Leatherneck*, November 1993, 68.

[28]William V. Cowan, "Kit Carson Scouts," *Marine Corp. Gazette* 53 (1969), 30-32; F. C. Brown, "Kit Carson Scouts in the Vietnam Conflict," *Military Collector and Historian* 30 (1978), 109-112.

[29]Bartlett, "Chieu Hois and Kit Carson Scouts,"68.

E. Ponzo.[30] The image associated with the Kit Carson Scouts was laden with political baggage and implied that those who turned from communism and helped lead efforts against it in the wilderness of Southeast Asia became real heroes. During the war the North Vietnamese placed bounties on Kit Carson Scouts and after the fall of Saigon Kit Carson Scouts left in Vietnam continued to be hunted down by the communists. Such cultural and political use of the mountain man image implied that those associated with it would go forth and help those who could not help themselves, keeping the globe safe for democracy and civilization by not letting the supposed domino fall. The mountain man image remained in the military in other ways.[31]

The National Rifle Association (NRA) used the political utility of the mountain man image as a lobbying influence for gun rights advocates. For the NRA the West represented ideology, a staging area in the battle over gun laws and the Second Amendment. The NRA often associated itself with western imagery, whether through an absent-minded cowboy actor turned president, or more recently in the figure of Charlton Heston (who played the craggy trapper Bill Tyler in the film *The Mountain Men*) as its spokesman, or with other images linked to America's western heritage. These figureheads, intentionally employed, promoted the philosophy that "guns are the fundamental symbol of what makes this country great ... and

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[30]Tim K. Brown, "Kit Carson Scouts ... Rebels With a Cause," *Typhoon Magazine*, December 1969, n.p., republished on the Fifteenth Field Artillery Regiment internet page www.landscraper.net/namstory.htm

[31]American soldiers who staff isolated strategic microwave relays in the mountains of South Korea are known as the "Madison Mountain men." See Berus E. Vidal, "Kings of the Mountain: Maison Men on Unusual Mission," *Army Link News* (May 1997) from www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/May1997/a19970527madison

represent all the original frontier values of rugged individualism."[32] The mountain man's successes, his ability to have "endured uncountable difficulties" and conquered the West by the use of his rifle constitutes much of the NRA claim to nation's "heritage."[33] Such imagery proved essential to the NRA's gun advocacy. As part of the NRA's liaison between pioneer heritage and modern gun ownership, the NRA offered its members and their families a "challenge," — "a vacation for real outdoors people" to experience mountain man life at the NRA's Whittington Outdoor Center near Raton, New Mexico.[34] Visitors shot, hunted, walked a portion of the Santa Fe Trail, and experienced the outdoors as mountain men once did. But more than playing mountain man, experiences at the Whittington Outdoor Center promoted a distinct political agenda because of what the NRA endorsed. Adventures at the Whittington Center developed experiences to keep "the legend of our frontier history alive," where modern shooters could feel a sense of heritage and unity of spirit with the historic mountain men, all linked to the use of firearms.[35] Thus, most hunters come to believe they are the progeny of pioneers, hunters, and mountain men, bound to uphold the traditions and ideals associated with the American frontier past. By these associations, the mountain man became a figure of great utility and leverage in the NRA's arsenal, aimed at championing the

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[32]Davidson, *Under Fire: The NRA and the Battle for Gun Control*, pp. 37-44.

[33]Advertisement for a "Pioneer Summer" at the NRA national outdoor center, in *The American Rifleman* (June 1997), 67; see also Joe Cashwell, "A Visit to Friendship," *American Rifleman* (December 1990), 38-41, 71.

[34]Advertisement for a "Pioneer Summer," 67.

[35]Promotional literature, *NRA Whittington Center*, (Raton, New Mexico: National Rifle Association, 2000), p. 1.

virtues of gun ownership, supporting Second Amendment rights, and linking gun ownership to individual freedom and national identity.[36]

Hunting education, chiefly focused at youth, also used the mountain man image as a figure associated with gun use. At hunter safety courses the prominent image of the mountain man and its unmistakable purpose in transmitting ideals about frontier heritage and individual rights and responsibilities shone clearly.[37] Popular publications dedicated to hunting and outdoor recreation supplied the implied threads between the mountain men of the past and today's hunters. Through these venues, the readers (presumably hunters) understood hunting's heritage, including what it took (and what it would take today) to have "the right stuff," as did the heroic mountain man.[38]

Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell promoted these ideals in hunting. In 1888, they formed the Boone and Crockett Club to "promote manly sport with the rifle," and

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[36]See "The NRA Membership Guide," (1992), pp. 5, 24; Moravek, "Winter Weekend Rendezvous," 14-15; See also *Muzzle Blasts: The Official Publication of the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association* which has the Second Amendment on its cover. They all imply a sense of heritage between the mountain man, the Second Amendment, and current pro-gun advocates.

[37]Most any state hunter education manual will contain such imagery. See for instance *Oklahoma Hunter Education Manual, 1998* (Seattle, Washington: Outdoor Empire Publishing, Inc., 1997), p. 21.

[38]Gene Hill, "The Skilled Outdoorsman," *Field and Stream* (January 1997), 16; William Moderow, " Another Man's Meat," *Field and Stream* (June 1995), 74-77; Jim Merritt, "The Right Stuff," *Field and Stream* (November 1994), 42-43, 108-109; Jim Fergus, "Mountain Man," *Outdoor Life* (March 1995), 42-43; "Mountain Man Mike," *Outdoor Life* (December 1994), 12; Jerome B. Robinson, "The Muzzleloading Boom," *Field and Stream* (August 1993), 42-43, 95-97.

"exploration in [the] wild ... lands."[39] Roosevelt encouraged men to become heirs to the mountain men and other frontier heroes through hunting. The club's stated purpose of hunting big game paled to the real objective — influencing the character of the hunter. Such hunting rendered "a sport for a vigorous and masterful people," according to Grinnell, key to possessing the mountain man qualities the club was dedicated to — "energy, resolution, manliness, self-reliance, and a capacity for self help."[40] Such political influence lingered with American sportsmen.

The adaptability of the mountain man hero to suit various political ideals or social currents in American history instituted a viable figure in American culture. The film *The Scalphunters* (1968), starring Burt Lancaster as mountain man Joe Bass, featured Bass trying to recapture his stolen furs, while a runaway slave named Joseph Winfield Lee (Ossie Davis) sought his freedom.[41] The underlying theme of the film concerned race, and associated with race the issue of masculine identity, subjects that then reflected society's recognition of the need for social reform and racial equality. Initially, Bass preached to Lee, "You're and African, a slave by employment, black by color," and continually declared the notion of "the superiority of the white-skinned race."[42] Scalphunting, yet not slavery, was ironically

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[39]George Bird Grinnell and Charles Sheldon, *Hunting and Conservation: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), pp. 534-535.

[40]George Bird Grinnell, "The Boone and Crockett Club," in *American Big Game Hunting: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club*, eds. Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1893), pp. 14-15.

[41]*The Scalphunters* (Metro Goldwyn Meyer, 1968).

[42]Ibid.

interpreted by Bass as the "dirtiest, rottenest trade ever invented by man to turn a dollar."[43] Yet the film's underlying message was not about inequality, but about equality and followed Joseph Lee's ascent from an inferior black slave to a man of equality in Bass' eyes, symbolized in the film's final scenes. In a no-holds-barred slugfest the two became exhausted and battered but each held their ground proving their equal worth. Remarkably symbolic, with both characters covered completely in mud, the issue of skin color became obscured. Bass recognized Lee's equality in giving Lee a swig of whisky that he refused to give earlier because it was "a man's drink"; the two rode off together on Bass' horse.[44]

The mountain man was employed for championing environmentalist concerns. This contemporary take on his image emerged as a facet of his heroicness. Television and film primarily conveyed this myth. *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972), starring Robert Redford, labeled by some film critics as the first "ecological Western," depicted Johnson who, disturbed by war, turned his back on civilization.[45] He ventured into the Rocky Mountain wilds to become a mountain man. The wilderness environment transformed him, and led viewers to believe he was a better man because of the experience. Redford's character seldom trapped, never took scalps, and certainly never ate an enemy's liver. Redford's fictive celluloid Johnson shared little commonality with the historically uneducated, unprincipled, insensitive, and

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[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Mick McAllister, "You Can't Go Home: Jeremiah Johnson and the Wilderness," *Western American Literature* 9 (January 1978): 35-49; Patricia Erens, "Jeremiah Johnson: The Mountain Man as Modern Hero," *Velvet Light Trap* (Spring 1974), 37-39.

cannibalistic Johnson who exploited the environment for profit.[46] But Redford's role was not aimed at accurate historical representation. It utilized the mountain man image to depict the superiority of the wilderness over civilization, despite the seeming brutalities of Darwinism at work in the wild. Even if unintentional, the Johnson mountain man image cleverly promoted the actor Redford's tenacious environmental agenda. The film's influence in American culture bore considerable significance. No film influenced American's perceptions about mountain men more. It provided the catalyst to the buckskinning movement of the 1970s and determined the environmental philosophies which the modern mountain man reenactors believed their mythical hero possessed. Originally, Warner Brothers pulled the film from theaters after two dismal weeks and vigorous panning by film critics. Redford successfully struggled to get it re-released. Eventually the film grossed $60 million, stood out at the 1972 Cannes Film Festival, and has since reached cult-film status and become a standard of late night television reruns. It continues to hold a place as one of the most popular westerns — ninth in total earnings and fifth in video rental popularity for the genre.[47] The Johnson image sustained substantial influence on popular perceptions about the American mountain man. Veneration for the mythic Johnson image even led worshipers of the myth (Redford included) to have Johnson's actual remains disinterred from a Los Angeles veterans' cemetery and have their newfound hero reburied at Old Trail Town in Cody, Wyoming in

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[46]Thorp and Bunker, *Crow Killer*.

[47]Philip Caputo, "Robert Redford: Alone on the Range," *Esquire* (September 1992), 173; "Cannes Entries Rated by Talking Geiger Counter," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1972, sec. Cal., p. 24; Phil Hardy, *The Western* (New York: W. Morrow, 1983), pp. 264-265; Winfred Blevins, "Redford in his Element as a Mountain Man," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 December 1972, sec. Cal., 1, pp. 54-55.

1974. For years after the reburial, photographs of the real Johnson and images of Redford as Johnson continued to be displayed together as part of the experience of visiting the grave site. The mythic Johnson portrayed by Redford became an American symbol, and that in turn has become an integral part of the American national mythology of American frontier heroes and wilderness.[48]

The mountain man evolved even more conspicuously as an environmentalist figure during the last decades of the twentieth century. In *The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (both the film and the television series), that showed during the latter part of the 1970s, viewers beheld enchanting vistas of the West while environmental themes, that reflected public concerns for the environment, dominated the series. The *Grizzly Adams* West was an idyllic place of harmony for all living things, where Adams lived a Thoreau-like life, and defended it against intruders who would exploit the environment. In the series, the Haggerty-portrayed hero became so wed to the wilderness and his troop of animal pals that he preferred nature over civilization. The show projected the notion that "peace" and "living free in harmony" could be found in a lush, foliage-filled world which needed protection by a mountain man environmentalist who called the wilderness "home."[49]

The idea of the mountain man as a wilderness guardian remained a persistent notion

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[48]Richard James, "The Cody Tradition," *The Tomahawk and Long Rifle* 7 (January 1983), 2-3; Caputo, "Robert Redford: Alone on the Range," 176; Stephen Farber, "Redford Turns West Again," *New York Times*, 20 October 1991), McAllister, "You Can't Go Home," 48.

[49]*The Life and Times of Grizzly Adams* (Sunn International Productions, 1974); Patrick McCarthy, "The Mountain Man and American Anguish: The Telewestern, the Scapegoat Complex, and the Extreme West," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 24 (Winter 1997): 166-167.

in American culture, indicative of society's preservationist oriented environmentalism of the latter-twentieth century. A handful of mountain man films promoted this trend, and their frequency reflected a measure of the popular perception of the mountain man hero as the environmentally sensitive sort, and thus a figure with some political utility. For example, in the film *Forest Warrior* (1996), Chuck Norris played a nineteenth-century mountain man who became a buckskinned apparition acting as an immortal guardian of a mountain wilderness in the twentieth century. In typical Norris fashion, this mountain man hero karate-kicked anyone bent on exploiting the environment for gain and in the end saved the wilderness from ruthless deforestation.[50] And Dan Haggerty returned to the screen with his typical Grizzly Adams persona in *Grizzly Mountain* (1997). In this film, Haggerty's mountain man figure teamed up with a couple of twentieth-century kids, who had slipped back to the nineteenth century through some fissure in time. Together they thwarted the attempts of a band of bungling miscreants trying to capitalize on the wilderness.[51]

The mountain man hero's mass appeal increased over the past few decades. He became more available to those who chose to use him. His popularity and accessibility has been manifested through a flood of paperback adventures peddled at supermarkets, drugstores, and truckstops.[52] Most of these works remained escapist fare and continued to

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[50]*Forest Warrior* (Turner Home Entertainment, 1996).

[51]*Grizzly Mountain* (Mega Communications, 1997).

[52]Examples of the abundance of mountain man fiction include Blevins, *Give Your Heart to the Hawk: A Tribute to the Mountain Men*; Terry C. Johnson, *Carry the Wind* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986); David Thompson, *Wilderness: Mountain Manhunt* (New York: Leisure Books, 1993), part of a series; Joseph Meek, *Mountain Jack Pike* (New York: Pinnacle Books, 1988); Richard Wheeler, *The Rocky Mountain Company:*

portray the mountain man with his traditional mythic constructs in a masculine West. Their popularity revealed not only the mountain man's marketability, but also the beliefs held by those who purchased these books regarding the mountain man's substance. Because the mountain man's image personified independence, self-sufficiency, self-governance and similar notions, he attracted writers who championed such political ideals. In particular, author William W. Johnstone used the mountain man hero to espouse his political ideologies in two separate book series — *The Last Mountain Man* and *The Mountain Man*. In the 1980s, in the *Ashes* series, a fiction series about a post-apocalyptic America, Johnstone created an idealistic right-wing alternative government based on what he defined as the Tri-States philosophy. The philosophy endorsed self-sufficiency, self-governance, rugged individualism, and local rule, based upon the idea of supporting the original constitution by a well-armed public. The books even led to the creation of Tri-State groups across the nation. Johnstone, a self-claimed constitutionalist with distinct views about the inalterable nature of the constitution, depicted his mountain men heroes as the quintessential American types, who possessed true American values in a time before government became "too big, too ponderous, too arrogant, too dictatorial, and too out of touch."[53] His rugged, self-sufficient individualistic mountain men heroes who were morally upstanding and quick with a gun, knife, or fist when dealing with those who trespassed on their morals or rights. Such imagery

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*Fort Dance* (New York: Pinnacle Books, 1991), part of a series.

[53]Scott Stoddard, "What is Tri-States? An Interview with William W. Johnstone," *American Survival Guide* 18 (March 1996), 66-67. For examples of Johnstone's mountain men fiction see William W. Johnstone, *Honor of the Mountain Man* (New York: Zebra Books, 1998) and William W. Johnstone, *The Last Mountain Man: The Legend is Born* (New York: Zebra Books, 1984).

remained popular in some quarters of American society because of a view ingrained in our collective cultural mind and political ethos, which Alexis de Tocqueville noticed even long ago. Essentially, Johnstone utilized the mountain man hero to promote his own political agenda, and did so with success. Johnstone's readers believed that by exemplifying the mountain men and following the author's political philosophies, the nation's perceived, though dubious, past heritage would be restored.

But the mountain man image has not always been so admired. It has also been used to designate behavior that stepped beyond social acceptability. The appellation of "mountain men" was given to the father-son tandem of Don and Dan Nichols, who spoiled their life of solitude in Montana's Absaroka Mountains in 1984 by kidnaping Olympic biathlete Kari Swensen and leading law enforcement on an extensive manhunt.[54] Likewise, the infamous Claude Dallas, a so-called "mountain man," in a deranged fit of frontier shoot-it-out, cooly murdered two Idaho Fish and Game officers in 1980. Dallas held the title "mountain man," because he was a trapper, misanthrope, and a loner. And also because around Winnamucka, Nevada, many found him to be "a genuine old-time mountain man, almost," who attained folk hero status for his demeanor prior to the killings.[55] For abducting Swensen, society regarded the Nichols as social deviants and viewed their actions as an assault upon the virtuousness of

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[54]Douglas H. Chadwick, "Montana Mountain Men — Wanted for Kidnaping and Murder: A Tragedy of Men Who Destroyed the Freedom they Love," *American West* (March-April 1985): 42; Mark Starr, "Attack of the Mountain Men," *Newsweek* (July 30, 1984), 29; Johnny France and Malcolm McConnell, *Incident at Big Sky: The True Story of Sheriff Johnny France and the Capture of the Mountain Men* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986). The Story was also made into a television movie.

[55]Jack Olsen, *Give a Boy a Gun: A True Story of Law and Disorder in the American West* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1985), pp. 67, 69.

American society that Swensen symbolized — womanhood. Ironically, Claude Dallas, even after his killings, was thought of by some as a "cunning but idealistic desperado," a social bandit of the Robin Hood, Jessie James, and Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd ilk who challenged the restraints of the oppressive establishment, and perceived by admirers as generous and selfless.[56] His actions were viewed by most Americans as abhorrent. Still, some people championed Dallas' exploits as true to the "code of the West," and as justified actions meant to rectify, or avenge, the blind injustices of society. Dallas even achieved local mythical status after the infamous events. For many, his perception as a modern mountain man shifted from his being a figure of malicious criminality to being a symbolic victim of government oppression and circumstances. His outlaw ways also shifted from being self-centered in motive to becoming identified with a cause, and a sense of Western identity. The popularity of such thought stems from society's traditional acceptance of violence as the ultimate expression of individual freedom. By taking the law into his own hands, Dallas evoked the notions of honor, glory, and independence explicit in the mythology of the West and American culture. His image embodied both the good and bad types of mountain man outlawry in the twentieth century. Both types possessed political utility.[57]

In addition to the Nichols' and Dallas' cases, the term "mountain man" became a

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[56]Ibid., p.151.

[57]See also Jeff Long, *Outlaw: The True Story of Claude Dallas* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985); Richard Brown, *No Duty to Retreat: Violence and Values in American History and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 158-160. The popular belief in the West as America's romanticized outlaw region and the desperado status of many who ventured there in the nineteenth century, including the mountain man, is held up in Robert Redford, *The Outlaw Trail* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1976), p. 81.

popular tarring for others who acted outside of socially accepted behavioral limits. Theodore J. Kaczynski, the "Unabomber," found himself cast in this vein for eschewing a mountain-man-styled isolated life in Montana. Mincio Donciev, a mentally unfit, sixty-eight-year-old, former Bulgarian police officer and convicted murderer, lived alone in the wilderness and burglarized vacation homes near Darrington, Washington during the 1990s. His habits subsequently earned him the "mountain man" appellation.[58] Similar images emerged in film and television. *Deliverance* (1972), the film adapted from James Dickey's novel, provides one such illustration. The story followed four urban professionals who encountered crazed backwoodsmen and produced one of the silver screen's most memorable scenes, wherein the backwoods boys promised to make the city fellows squeal like pigs. Mountain man stereotype Dan Haggerty starred in *Abducted* (1986), a film spun loosely from the Kari Swensen incident. And this anti-social mountain man image appeared in various television series, such as *The Highlander*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Bonanza*. In each case, the mountain men existed as dirty, ragged, and uncivilized social outsiders. The public and the media revealed an acquired comfort with a mountain man figure defined by unacceptable social behavior.

Near the end of the film *Jeremiah Johnson*, the mountain man hero crossed paths with his once fatherly-sage wilderness mentor, "Bear Claw" Chris Lapp (Will Geer). The two shared a meal but spoke little; real western heroes understood the power of limited speech. But what little the two said was significant. They talked about the time of year, though no

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[58]Steve Silberman, "The Hermit of Mount Baldy Goes Home," (www. Hotwired.com/special/unibomb/herm), pp. 1-3; Stephen Clutter, "Mountain Man Captured Near Darrington," *Seattle Times*, 3 March 1998; Susan Gilmore, "Tracking the Mountain Man," *Seattle Times*, 5 March 1998; Susan Gilmore, "Mountain Man's Hideout Discovered," *Seattle Times*, 16 March 1998.

calendars or clocks bound such men in this realm, and an uneasiness settled in their discussion. Finally Lapp recognized Johnson's maturation from a greenhorn to a mountain man by commenting, "Yee've come far pilgrim ... were it worth the trouble?"[59] To which Johnson replied, "Ah ... what trouble?"[60] It was a suitable question for the mountain man hero, who persisted in American culture in one form or another. He too has come far since the days of Flint and Irving. That is not to say that his appeal has not been subjected to occasional eclipses from time to time, a victim of the cyclical nature of western imagery in American culture. But the mountain man hero always reappeared in some fashion, in one medium or another, and it seems that, given the malleability of his image, he always will. This assertion holds because the mountain man hero possessed a good deal of cultural, sociological, political, and economic utility, certainly enough to keep him from fading from America's cultural conscience. The mountain man's image persevered in American culture through various media and in a cherished series of dichotomies: by turns gentle, in tune with nature; and ideal or violent and in need of control; what we should emulate or alternately, what we should fear to be: noble or near savage. Regardless of his presentation the mountain man image endured because of his commercial potential and his political value.

At the end of *Jeremiah Johnson*, a line in the closing song croons "And some folks say he's up there still," the screen image of Johnson appears frozen, preserved forever as it were.[61] The preceding chapters examined many images of the mountain man, and there are

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[59]*Jeremiah Johnson* (Warner Brothers, 1972).

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

still many more that might yet be considered. The mountain man's numerous cultural manifestations, or rather, the cultural artifacts relative to his image, demonstrated a unity of culture. That is to say, his image has been interwoven through the various quarters of American culture. Through the periodic translation of the mountain man hero image in film, in art, on television or on paper, and otherwise, he reflected and defined ourselves more clearly. It seems he will always be lurking, somewhere, somehow as part of American culture and thus, ourselves.

# APPENDIX

A composite profile assembled by the author through a survey revealed the typical buckskinner to be a middle-aged (30-60 years of age) (96%), married (93%), white male (89%), Republican (56%) or Independent (28%), with a college or university education (78%), working a white-collar job (68%) earning between $27,500 and $75,000 (89%) per year in income. He participated in Boy Scouting either as a youth or as an adult leader (88%), and served in the military (59%). He hunts (84%), and attends approximately five rendezvous per year. He dresses the part of a mountain man (50%), Taos trapper (12%), or plainsman (27%) when attending a rendezvous, and attempts to be authentic in dress as possible (92%) since most are interested in buckskinning as living history (96%). Most have been involved in buckskinning approximately twenty years (71%). Most have a camp name or identity (58%), and influenced by Native American ideals (50%). Over half involve their family in buckskinning activities to some degree (58%), but prefer to participate alone (74%). And most view their activities and an escape or retreat from modernity (85%).

Profile information from a national survey conducted in 1999 by the author of 50 buckskinners. The survey and the statistics obtained are provided below.

BUCKSKINNER SURVEY AND RESULTS

SEX: M 96% F 4%

AGE: Under 20yrs. 0%; 20-30yrs. 4%; 30-40yrs. 37%; 40-50 yrs. 26%; 50-60yrs 33%; Over 60yrs 0%

MARRIAGE STATUS: Married 93% Single 7%

MILITARY SERVICE: Yes 59% No 41%

ETHNICITY: Caucasian 89% Black 0% Hispanic 0% Asian 0% Native American 11%

Note: no tribal enrollment numbers were provided to prove claims of Native American status.

EDUCATION (Highest achieved level): High School 18% Trade School 4% College 78%

OCCUPATION: Blue Collar 32% White Collar 68%

ANNUAL INCOME: UNDER $20,000 7%; $20,000-35,000 33%; $50,000-100,000 56%; Above $100,000 4%

POLITICAL AFFILIATION: DEM. 4% REP. 56% IND. 28% POP. 12%

SCOUTING INVOLVEMENT: Yes 88% No 12%

YEAR YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN BUCKSKINNING: 1950s-60s 18%; 1970s 38%; 1980s 15%; 1990s 27%

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO BUCKSKINNING?: Popular Culture 25% Friend or Relative 33% Interest in History 34% Hunting 8%

HOW OFTEN DO YOU SHOOT?: Less than once a month 28% Once a month 36% Two or more times a month 36%

DO YOU HUNT?: Yes 84% N 16%

DO YOU BELONG TO A MUZZLE LOADING ORGANIZATION?: TYPE: Local 36%

State 21% National 32% None 11%

YOUR MAIN INTEREST IN BUCKSKINNING? Living History 96% Competitive Shooting 4% Hunting 0%

RENDEZVOUS ATTENDED YEARLY: 1-5 64% 5-10 36% 10+ 0%

STYLE OF DRESS: Mountain man 50% S.W./Taos 12% Plains 27% Long Hunter 11%

IS AUTHENTICITY IN DRESS AND ARMS IS IMPORTANT?: Yes 92% N 8%

MEN, AS A PART OF YOUR APPEARANCE, DO YOU MAINTAIN A BEARD? Yes 38% No 62%

DO YOU USE A CAMP NAME WHEN ATTENDING GATHERINGS? Yes 58% No 42%

WHAT NAME DO YOU GO BY?_____

ARE NATIVE AMERICAN IDEALS AND RITUALS PART OF YOUR EXPERIENCES?: Yes 50% No 50%

DO YOU PRACTICE ANY ARTISAN? Yes 50% No 50%

SPECIFY_____

IS THIS A FAMILY AFFAIR FOR YOU OR DO YOU GO ABOUT IT AS AN INDIVIDUAL HOBBY? Family 58% No Family 42%

DO YOU GO OUT ALONE TO CAMP PRIMITIVE STYLE? Yes 74% No 26%

IS BUCKSKINNING A RETREAT FROM MODERNITY FOR YOU?: Yes 85% No 15%

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