

PEREGRINATIONS: WALKING THE STORY, WRITING THE PATH IN EURO-  
AMERICAN, NATIVE AMERICAN, AND CHICANO/CHICANA LITERATURES

by

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## ABSTRACT

*PEREGRINATIONS: WALKING THE STORY, WRITING THE PATH IN EURO-AMERICAN, NATIVE AMERICAN, AND CHICANO/CHICANA LITERATURES* traces the act of walking as both metaphor and physical journey through the American landscape in American texts. Drawing together texts from different time periods, genres, and cultural contexts, I contend that walking is a central trope in American literature. Textual representations of traversing the land provoke transformation of the self recording the walk and the landscape in the imagination of the walker. The experience of walking across and through the heavily storied American land challenges the walker to reconcile lived experience with prior expectations.

While many critics have noted the preponderance of travel stories in American literature, they tend to center their studies on the journeys of Euro-American men and less often Euro-American women, and approach walking solely as metaphor. The symbolic power of a figure walking across the American land has rightfully interested critics looking at travel across the continent; however, this focus tends to obscure the fact that walking, after all, is not only a literary trope – it has real, physical dimensions as well.

Walking in the American land is more than the forward movement of civilization, and it is more than the experience of wilderness and wildness. In many ways, walking defines the American ideals of space, place, and freedom. In this context, this dissertation investigates the connections between walking, American literature, and the

natural world: What is it about walking that seems to allow American writers to experience the land in a way that horses, cars, trains, and planes prevent? What about the land and the self is revealed at three miles an hour? In the texts I examine, walking provides a connection to the natural world, the sacred, and individual and cultural identity. I trace American responses to nature and cultural identity through the model of walking – the rhythm of footsteps, the pain of blisters and calluses, and the silence of moving through the wilderness on foot.

## INTRODUCTION: PEREGRINATIONS

On March 15, 1976, the year of America's bicentennial, George Hormell and Scott King left Portland, Maine and began a four month and 3,281 mile walk to Santa Monica, California. On the way, the two young men established a new record for long-distance walking and collected money for the American Cancer Society. They also carried with them a hand-written letter from Karen Pettee to her infant niece – me. My aunt had read about Hormell and King in her local newspaper and contacted them about carrying a letter to me. At the time, my aunt and her family lived near Portland, and I lived with my parents in Santa Monica. In her letter, my aunt explains the significance of the walk and of the letter:

...There are several reasons why all this is so special for you. First, your mother's birthday is the Fourth of July and, this year, that is the big day to celebrate our nation's bicentennial. Secondly, the men who are bringing this letter to you just happened to plan to leave from a point very near our home and complete their trip very near where you now live. Last, but not least, any money donated during the long walk will be given to the American Cancer Society. That means a lot to your mother and me because we lost our mother (your grandmother) to cancer, two years ago.

So, Amy, I hope this letter arrives safely and that, someday, you will enjoy it as a special symbol of the year 1976. (2)

My aunt puts forth three points for the future Amy to contemplate: the intersection between America's bicentennial and our family, the intersection between Hormell and King's walk and our family, and the intersection between Hormell and King's cause (the American Cancer Society) and our family. But looking at the letter, photographs, and newspaper articles pasted on two pages of my baby book, what strikes me is how walking marks an intersection between physical exertion, national/cultural identity, and pilgrimage.

In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Hormell said, "We want to bring a message of pride to the American people....The true meaning of our bicentennial has been lost in commercialism and our purpose is to make everyone aware of the hard work of the settlers who paved the way for all of us to enjoy the freedoms we have" (qtd. in Smith F1). Hormell's statement repeats a long history of imagining the struggle of Euro-Americans settling the American land. An article about Hormell and Scott from *The Portland Press Herald* mentions the physical pain experienced by the two walkers, noting, "King's feet became badly infected while they were walking through Pennsylvania" and he had to ride in a car for a few days as Hormell walked on alone (Gevalt). King told the reporter, "we'd been bragging so much about the trip that there was no way we could have turned back" (qtd. in Gevalt). Hormell and King align themselves with the story of Euro-Americans' triumphant and brave march west. They express the sentiments Wallace Stegner identified eleven years later: "the interior West was not a place but a way, a trail to the Promised Land, an adventurous, dangerous rite of passage" (21). Like Hormell and King, Stegner was writing about the symbolic

experience of Euro-American explorers and pioneers crossing the plains to find a new home in the mythical land of plenty. When he argues that the West is “largely a civilization in motion, driven by dreams” he invokes visions of frontiersmen compelled into a threatening wilderness by a powerful myth, just as Hormell and King overcome the difficulties of walking in order to live up to the image they had created for themselves (21). Yet motion is more than a common trope in stories of the Euro-American frontier. In fact, motion, particularly walking, is central to literatures from many other American cultural contexts.

For example, Alvár Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca’s report to the king of Spain complicates journey stories of Euro-American settlement and conquest. Cabeza de Vaca was part of a disastrous Spanish expedition to conquer the land north and east of the Gulf of Mexico. After losing contact with their ships, he and his companions walked a harrowing 6,000 miles from the coast of Florida in 1527 to Mexico City in 1536. Out of an original land-force of 300 Spaniards, only four survived. His report is one of the first odysseys of a Euro-American man walking on the land that would become known as North and Central America. At first glance, the text seems to fit into Stegner’s vision of movement in the American land. However, Cabeza de Vaca presents a landscape that is already crisscrossed with walking paths, and he presents himself walking along these paths with Native American peoples, following their patterns of movement.

In his report, Cabeza de Vaca writes of his physical and psychological transformation as he was escorted from tribe to tribe by Native American companions. Beginning his journey as a captive slave, Cabeza de Vaca becomes a trader, a healer, and

finally, after reportedly bringing a dead man back to life, a powerful shaman. By the time he returns to a Spanish settlement, Cabeza de Vaca reports that he “could not stand to wear any clothes for some time, or to sleep anywhere but on the bare floor” (134). More significantly, he writes that contrary to his prior expectations, he had found “no sacrifices and no idolatry” among the indigenous peoples he met (133). He urges Spanish Emperor Charles V to pursue a policy of kindness in order successfully to “bring all these people to Christianity and subjugation to Your Imperial Majesty” (123). The alteration of Cabeza de Vaca’s attitude toward the Native American tribes he met occurred alongside his own partial psychological transformation and physical movement. Throughout the narrative Cabeza de Vaca makes it clear that he was never aimlessly wandering. As a slave he was forced to move with his captors, and then as a trader he walked along established routes between tribes who could not travel because of intertribal warfare. Later, as a healer, he was escorted from tribe to tribe on his way west and south in pursuit of established Spanish settlements.

Though the version of the narration edited by Cyclone Covey in 1961 adjusts the placement of several paragraphs and includes chapter titles not written by Cabeza de Vaca, the original format of the 1542 narrative remains clear. As an early explorer, Cabeza de Vaca arranges his narrative of his experience as a recitation of a journey. He begins with the sailing of the armada and the subsequent landing in Florida. He then tells the story of the expeditions’ struggle to survive and of the violent deaths met by many of his companions. However, the bulk of the narrative is devoted to his foot travel from

Florida to Sonora and finally to Mexico City. Whatever else his narrative is about, the action and meaning are driven by his physical walking.

Yet the story of walking across the American land did not originate with Spanish explorers. N. Scott Momaday relates the Kiowa migration story in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. As “many journeys in one,” the text combines traditional and family stories, nineteenth-century ethnographic writing, personal memory, and poetry (4). The text is divided into several parts: sandwiched between a Prologue and Introduction and an Epilogue, the three body sections are called, “The Setting Out,” “The Going On,” and “The Closing In.” In “The Setting Out,” The journey begins with the people emerging through a hollow log. After they came out, “[t]hey looked all around and saw the world. It made them glad to see so many things. They called themselves *Kwuda*, ‘coming out’” (16). From the point of emergence, the Kiowa began their “great adventure...a going forth into the heart of the continent. They began a long migration from the headwaters of the Yellowstone River eastward to the black Hills and south to the Wichita Mountains. Along the way.... [t]heir nomadic soul was set free” (4). The journey of the Kiowa, Momaday suggests, is central to their understanding of themselves as a people: “The journey herein recalled continues to be made anew each time the miracle comes to mind, for that is peculiarly the right and responsibility of the imagination” (4). The journey, largely made on foot, is not a story that is finished; it doesn’t belong to the past. The journey lives on through stories and cultural memories and through Momaday’s own journey along the trail of the Kiowa’s migration. Momaday’s text demonstrates that movement, landscape, and story weave together and are, in effect, inseparable.

These stories, and hundreds of others, illustrate the centrality of walking in American literatures. Yet there has been almost no critical engagement with this trope. To be sure, there are several illuminating studies of the significance of walking for the English Romantics, and scholars of Medieval and Early Modern literature have examined the importance of Christian pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup> Analyses of American literature, however, largely relegate mention of walking to brief asides or supporting points. The only studies of American literature that focus on walking are centered on Nature Writing and the Transcendentalists. For example, David C. Smith's *The Transcendental Saunterer: Thoreau and the Search for Self* (1997), traces the importance of walking in Thoreau's conception of self and Nature. Smith recognizes that "[t]he United States has always been a nation of walkers" (4), and "[w]alking still grips our imagination" (5). Smith's brief mention of the importance of walking in American history and literature is largely focused on the history of Euro-American men. While he notes the Trail of Tears, the walkers he mentions by name are white men such as George Washington, Daniel Boone, Thomas Jefferson, William Bartram, John James Audubon, and John Burroughs (3). And, of course, the bulk of his discussion focuses solely on Henry David Thoreau. Michaela Keck follows Smith's lead in her study, *Walking in the Wilderness: The Peripatetic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Painting* (2006), which also places Thoreau as a central figure. In fact, she frames her study with Smith's text, contending that his analysis "falls short of accounting for the greater significance of the walk and its ancient, rich, literary and philosophic tradition" (12). As this statement suggests, Keck aims to fill this gap and her resultant study provides a fascinating analysis

of Thoreau by examining his work in the context of “a transatlantic dialogue” with philosophers and writers such as Plato, Michel de Montaigne, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Friedrich Schiller, as well as American artists William Cullen Bryant, Asher B. Durand, and Thomas Cole (16). While Keck’s interdisciplinary approach is important and instructive, it still remains firmly in the realm of European and Euro-American masculine traditions.

What is so clearly missing from these studies is attention to walking in American literatures from an inclusive, cross-cultural perspective. In the last eight years, there have been several books published that perform cross-cultural comparative work with American literature; however, the majority of critical and theoretical treatments of American literature focus on works from a single cultural group or perhaps include cursory mention of a single (usually well-known) voice from another group.<sup>2</sup> I am arguing that it is vital for American literary scholars to seriously attend to cross-cultural analyses of American literary texts that do more than put “marginalized” voices in conversation with “dominant” voices. Instead, it is crucial for American literary scholars to examine the myriad ways in which voices from different American cultural groups work to influence one another. Mary Louise Pratt suggests the term “transculturation” as an alternative to the idea that the dominant culture influences, for better or worse, the subordinate culture(s) while remaining largely unchanged. “Transculturation” is a process that works both ways: the two (or more) cultures in contact influence and alter one another. This is not to suggest that power dynamics are not at work in such

encounters; the point is that when two or more cultures come together, *none* of them are unchanged.

In this dissertation I address two areas in American literary studies that need further attention. First, my dissertation is a contribution to cross-cultural studies of American literature. While remaining attentive to specific historical and cultural circumstances, I analyze texts by Euro-American, Native American, and Chicano/Chicana authors side by side in order to consider American literature from a broader, more inclusive perspective. Second, I focus my cross-cultural analysis on the recurring trope of walking in American literatures. Walking is a central image in literatures from different cultural groups and extends through texts from different moments of American history. Certainly, we can find images of people walking across the land in Euro-American narratives of exploration and settlement, but walking also plays a vital role in many Native American migration and emergence stories, narratives of Christian pilgrimages, the Mexican and Chicano legend of Aztlán, Indian captivity narratives, nature writing, narratives from Native American removals, and contemporary crossings of the U.S.-Mexican border.

My first chapter, “Paths in the Wilderness: Walking and Agency in the Indian Captivity Narratives of Mary White Rowlandson and Sarah Wakefield,” analyzes the captivity narratives of Mary White Rowlandson (1682) and Sarah Wakefield (1864). In narratives separated by nearly two hundred years, Rowlandson and Wakefield chronicle their forced marches through the American “wilderness.” I argue that both women connect walking across the land as captives with the interior transformation they

experience. Walking provides them with an image that expresses the pain and horror of captivity as well as the strength and agency of their bodies. However, while Rowlandson's narrative ultimately reinforces negative stereotypes of the wilderness and of her captors, Wakefield's walk brings her to a new understanding of her country, of the land, and of the Native peoples she walks alongside.

The second chapter, "'This world-that-walks': Subjugation and Survival on the Trails of Nineteenth-Century Native American Removals," examines the trope of walking in narratives about Native American removal trails, focusing on family stories from the Navajo Long Walk and Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. I argue that in these narratives images of walking serve a complex purpose: walking is part of the real, physical experience of the removal trails, however in the stories I analyze, walking is also posited as a metaphor of both suffering and survival. In describing moments of forced walking along removal trails, the storytellers and writers express the deep losses inflicted by removal policies and also a fierce resolve to survive.

Chapter III, "Peripatetic Philosophers: Walking, Rhythm, and Nature in the Early Writings of John Muir and Mary Austin," argues that through walking nature writers John Muir and Mary Austin express bodily connection with the rhythms of Nature, and both writers identify that connection as a window into the sacred. However, they interpret Nature's patterns and "presence" in very different ways that reflect the differences of their genders and their relationships to cultural and literary traditions. For Muir, walking ties him to Christian traditions as well as to Romantic and Transcendental

writers. While for Austin, walking offers an entry into what she imagined to be the Native American experience of the natural world.

In the fourth chapter, “Walking to Aztlán: Pilgrimage and Migration in Chicana/Chicano Literatures,” I examine personal narratives from the annual pilgrimage to El Santuario de Chimayó in New Mexico and Luis Alberto Urrea’s text, *The Devil’s Highway*, about a deadly border crossing in the Sonoran desert. Though the walkers in Urrea’s text are not pilgrims in the sense of the walkers to Chimayó, I argue that walking across the border resonates with the tradition of *peregrinación* (pilgrimage), and accounts of these different walks complicate “voluntary” movement by linking the act of walking to economic necessity, religious belief, penitence, and justice.

The title of this dissertation, “Peregrinations,” has a long list of definitions. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, the term is chiefly theological and can mean: “the course of a person’s life viewed originally as a temporary sojourn on earth and hence as a spiritual journey, esp. to heaven;” “a pilgrimage;” “an act of traveling or going from place to place; a course of travel; a journey, esp. on foot. Also occas.: an account of a journey;” or “a comprehensive or systematic investigation of study; a discourse. In later use: a literary wandering or digression” (“peregrination”). The definitions provided in the *OED* demonstrate the multiple ways of understanding walking. Peregrination is a metaphor for the “course of a person’s life;” it is a spiritual journey; it is the physical act of travel; it is an account of travel; and it is a literary investigation. Thus, this project is a peregrination about peregrinations. In *On Foot: A History of Walking* (2004), an examination of walking in Western traditions, Joseph

Amato asserts, “walking is talking. It can be understood as a language, having its own vernacular, dialects, and idioms. Expressing intentionality, walking conveys a wealth of information about the walker’s identity, importance, condition, and destination....

[W]alking is a clear revelation of identity” (4). The language of walking is written in the trails and paths left by the feet of generations upon generations of walkers, and it is traced into the literatures of America. This project is itself a journey that seeks to posit walking as a central trop in American literatures – a rich symbol that connects to myriad ideas from different cultural contexts – as well as a real way of experiencing the vast American land.

**CHAPTER I:**

**PATHS IN THE WILDERNESS: WALKING AND AGENCY IN THE  
NARRATIVES OF MARY WHITE ROWLANDSON AND SARAH WAKEFIELD**

Euro-American history begins with tales of migration, escape, and exploration. From the beginnings of Euro-American colonial presence in North America, journeys have shaped writing and writing has crafted our understanding of journeys. When the first European immigrants set out on their voyage to North America, they did so with pen in hand, recording their experiences as they went. These first narratives often are shaped by explorers such as Captain John Smith of Virginia and settlers such as William Bradford of Plymouth: stories of male exploration and conquest, stories of male movement. In the introduction to her compelling study *Secret Journeys: The Trope of Women's Travel in American Literature*, Marilyn C. Wesley recounts the “missing” story of William Bradford’s first wife, Dorothy. In chapters nine and ten of *Of Plymouth Plantation* Bradford tells the story “Of Their Voyage, and How they Passed the Sea; And of Their Safe Arrival in Cape Cod” and “Showing How They Sought out a Place of Habitation and What Befell Them Thereabout.” Yet he fails to mention a significant event: between first casting anchor in Cape Cod and finally disembarking a month later, he lost his wife. Wesley writes that in “Life of William Bradford” Cotton Mather explains that Dorothy fell overboard and drowned in the harbor. However, in a 1963 introduction to *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Samuel Eliot Morison claims that Dorothy, debilitated from the voyage, probably killed herself rather than face the difficulties of

settlement.<sup>3</sup> The true story will perhaps always lie on the bottom of Cape Cod, however Bradford's silence and Dorothy's absence indicate the ways in which stories of women's movement to and in the American land are often ignored and displaced in accounts and studies of American travel.<sup>4</sup> One place to uncover these missing or overlooked stories of travel is in the vast collection of Indian captivity narratives written by Euro-American women. On the surface these narratives tell the story of women's victimization in the wilderness and thus maintain traveling in the wilderness as a male pursuit; however, within the framework of these narratives, Euro-American women found a space to narrate their own journeys and adventures.

Captivity narratives, whether "true" or fictionalized, fascinated Euro-American audiences from the late seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. According to Gary Ebersole, "A modern checklist of American Indian captivity narratives compiled by the Newberry Library of items either based on fact or presented as factual accounts lists almost two thousand items published before 1880" (9). As they developed over time, the narratives began to assume a common outline: "the author or the protagonist is snatched from his or her home and forcibly carried off into an alien culture, into the world of the Other. There the captive undergoes a series of ordeals or adventures while living among the Indians and later escapes or is ransomed and returned to civilization" (Ebersole 10). Kathryn Derounian-Stodola and James Levernier assert that this basic outline is then filled with stereotypical scenes and characters such as: "a *mother*, at least one male *Indian*, and a *child*, usually held by the *heels*, whose *brains* (or *head*) are *dashed* against a *tree*" (emphasis in original; 148). By the nineteenth century

the motifs and outline of the captivity narrative had been retold hundreds of times and came to shape the way in which Euro-Americans experienced life on the frontier. Glenda Riley suggests that nineteenth-century women in particular “were so thoroughly convinced that they were about to come face to face with the fiendish visages of creatures who were little more than consorts of the devil that they transformed every sight and sound into an avenging native” (83). Indian captivity narratives with their stock scenes and characters offered a skewed and simplified vision of the complex and conflicted relationship between Euro-Americans and Native Americans, and between Euro-Americans and the American land. Yet the crush of formulaic scenes also allowed the writers an opportunity to express the multifaceted and contradictory experiences of captive movement.

Mary White Rowlandson’s 1682 narrative, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, initiated the distinctly American genre of the Indian captivity narrative. Apparently written two years after the events it chronicles (Lang 19), Rowlandson’s narrative was an instant success and a bestseller, second in popularity among American readers only to the Bible (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 14). The narrative numbered four editions in its first year in print, twenty-three editions by 1828, and at least forty editions by 1990 (Lang 20-21). Rowlandson’s narrative ushered in a way for Euro-American women to express their experiences in the American land. In the decades and even centuries that followed, other women found the freedom to express observations of the land and its inhabitants and their own experience living as captives within the popularly sanctioned boundaries of the Indian captivity narrative.

Among the most compelling and elastic stock images that developed in Indian captivity narratives written by women is the captive's physical movement, especially walking. Women frequently illustrate arduous forced marches with images of their painful, blistered feet and their exhausted bodies. For example, in her narrative of captivity among the Dakota, Helen Tarble recalls "[my] feet were torn and bleeding" and she longed for "a pair of shoes badly, for my feet were in a terrible condition from bruises and thorns" (40 & 36). Similarly, in a narrative recorded by Rev. Royal B. Stratton, Olive Oatman relates the first night of her captivity among the Apache: "I had no strength to walk....I crept, snail-like" (319).<sup>5</sup> Later, when her captivity is shifted to the Mohave, she recollects: "This trail to a second captivity was not improvement on the first....Our feet soon became sore, and we were unable on the second day to keep up with their rapid pace" (329). Walking through pain and crawling when walking becomes impossible are tropes that appear again and again in Indian captivity narratives written by women. These moments complicate the division between the metaphoric and the literal. These moments of painful movement record the very real pain women felt when forced to walk for long distances and across terrain their Euro-American clothing and lifestyle had not prepared them for. Yet descriptions of painful walking also reflect the deep fear and emotional pain the captives experienced as they moved away from their familiar homes into the unfamiliar wilderness. Yet even as captives located their suffering in captivity in the experience of walking, recording these moments also allowed many formerly captive Euro-American women to claim a degree of agency. Walking, whether coerced or voluntary, always requires the effort and agency of the walker. As opposed to a passive

body carried away on horseback or in a wagon, the captive who walks must purposefully place one foot before the other. In narratives written months and even years after their actual captivity, the writers utilized images of themselves walking in captivity to express not only physical and emotional pain, but also a degree of agency and resilience.

Rowlandson's 1682 narrative and Sarah Wakefield's 1864 narrative bookend the nearly two hundred year period when Indian captivity narratives were the most popular genre in America. Rowlandson's narrative helped shape the tropes and structure that Wakefield's narrative both adopts and resists. While their texts are certainly not the only examples of Indian captivity narratives that engage walking as a vehicle for agency and change, examining their texts together allows for a clear view of some of the important and very different ways Euro-American women claim walking and movement as a vital trope for understanding their experience in captivity.

### **Mary White Rowlandson's Pilgrimage Through Captivity**

I had often before this said, that if the *Indians* should come, I should chuse rather to be killed by them than taken alive; but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my Spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous Bears, than that moment to end my dais. And that I may the better declare what happened to me during that grievous Captivity, I shall particularly speak of the several Removes we had up and down the Wilderness. (Rowlandson 33)

This passage from Mary White Rowlandson's *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, first published in 1682, marks Rowlandson's transition from her short depiction of the attack by "Indians of great number" on Lancaster, Massachusetts on February 10, 1676, to her account of the eleven weeks and five days she lived and traveled as a captive of the Narragansett. Rowlandson indicates that although she was frightened and therefore her decision may have been faulty, she "chose" to submit to captivity rather than death. Her choice to traverse "up and down the Wilderness" in the company of "ravenous Bears" allows her to carve out her role in the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" even as she stresses her own lack of agency. As the Israelites found their home in the wilderness through constant wandering, so too does Rowlandson enter the Wilderness on her own two feet.<sup>6</sup> Throughout Rowlandson's narrative, movement, in particular walking, serves as an organizing principle, a scriptural image, and a central trope for her experiences.

The Puritans, like Rowlandson and her family, who crossed the Atlantic in the seventeenth century to settle in America, imagined themselves as the antitype of the Biblical Hebrews with a special covenant with God. Their mission in the American wilderness mirrored and extended the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. The Puritans believed their temporary exile from an idolatrous land (England) and the subsequent period of travail in the wilderness would purify and convert their community to a more valid worship of God, just as it had for the Hebrews.<sup>7</sup> Movement into and through the wilderness itself was vital to their sense of themselves as the chosen people; the Puritan voyage to America and in the landscapes of America provided them with a literal

manifestation of their inner spiritual journey to a closer communion with God. As David Jacobson contends, the Puritans imagined themselves to be “journeying to the Promised Land, metaphorically, in the sense of some Edenic future. But that Edenic future is also located physically; [they] are journeying to America, where the future will be realized” (32). Wandering through the actual wilderness allowed the Puritans to imagine themselves drawing closer to the non-material Promised Land.

For the Puritans, the wilderness through which they sought passage contained complex meanings for them to decipher. The wilderness was at once a promise and refuge and a frightening wasteland waiting to test the Puritans’ devotion to God. Movement through the symbolically and physically complex landscape was both necessary and threatening. While the Puritans strongly held to the importance of their time in the wilderness, they struggled to separate their errand from the “rude,” “barbaric” and “rootless” nomadism they associated with American Indians.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the Puritans saw American Indian nomadism as a “hunter-gatherer vagrancy unregulated by the temporal and spatial commitments to agriculture and animal husbandry,” they imagined their own movement to have an endpoint, the promise of settlement and the cessation of wandering (Breitwieser 133). The Puritans imagined their travel not as aimless wandering, but as a sort of pilgrimage, which Victor Turner and Edith Turner define in their study *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, as a “rite de passage...marked by three phases: separation, limen or margin, and aggregation” (2). In other words, following a detachment of the individual or group from a “relatively stable set of cultural conditions,” the Puritans, like other pilgrims, passed through “a realm or dimension that

ha[d] few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state,” and sought to return to a classified and stable social life (Turner and Turner 2). The Puritans exile in the wilderness is also a sojourn, a temporary state of disconnection, a pilgrimage.

Turner and Turner compellingly argue that pilgrimage is defined by freedom of choice. The pilgrim *chooses* to submit himself/herself to a liminal state, a place “betwixt and between all familiar lines of classification” (Turner and Turner 2). They assert that pilgrimage is a form of penance as well as a release from “the ingrown ills of home” (7). Pilgrims walk away from familiar tribulations into potentially unknown trials and temptations in order to become purified. Despite (or perhaps because of) this initial movement away from the troubles of home, pilgrimage, Turner and Turner explain, is essentially about communion with similars. Even when a pilgrim moves on her/his own, like all religious ritual pilgrimage binds pilgrims together: “likeness of lot and intention is converted into commonness of feeling, into ‘communitas’” (Turner and Turner 13). In *Pilgrims to the Wild*, John P. O’Grady writes that the word *pilgrim* is “[d]erived from an Indo-European root (*ghedh-*) meaning ‘to unite, join, fit,’ it flourishes in modern English as the words *good, gad, gather, and together*....[T]hus even when conducted alone, pilgrimage always embodies the notion of the pilgrim’s community” (5). For the Puritan immigrants, their errand to the wilderness was a vital mark of their difference from the European world they left behind and a central trope that bound them together as a community.

In 1660, Puritan missionary John Eliot argued that the Puritans who left England for America,

...under[took] the enterprise with a suffering minde, and who ever shall do such a thing, must be armed or else he will not be able to hold out in the work: to part with our native country, a settled habitation, dear friends, houses, lands and many worldly comforts, to go into a wilderness where nothing appeareth but hard labour, wants, and wilderness-temptations.

(22)

The difficulty of life in America necessitates a “suffering minde” and being “armed” with devotion and dedication for the journey. The Puritans must be prepared because in the wilderness “the Puritan settler might undergo a martyrdom or lose his soul to the devil” (Slotkin 88). Pilgrims in Europe faced hazards such as “robbers, thieves, confidence men...as well as natural dangers and epidemics”; however, their paths were well-marked and well-traveled (Turner and Turner 7). The Puritan pilgrimage in America was defined by the unnamed and the unfamiliar. In addition, their endpoint was not a return to the home they left, but a future home that was as yet unknown. Survival in the wilderness required not only devotion to God, but as John Winthrop declared, “We must be knit together in this work as one man, we must entertain each other in brotherly affection...we must delight in each other, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our Commission and Community in work” (10). Winthrop outlines the ideal Puritan community as strongly united in spirit and purpose; a successful wilderness sojourn necessitated a clear sense of common faith and intention.

If Puritans such as John Winthrop and John Eliot stressed the devotion and union of American Puritan communities, the dedication and strength they identify is implicitly

male. It is the *men* who “hold out in the work” and are “knit together.” It is the *men* who have taken on the pilgrim’s mantle. Puritan women were expected to exhibit ““passive forbearance in the face of adversity”” (John Seelye qtd. in Kolodny *Land Before Her* 24). As Annette Kolodny argues, “By the time European women began to arrive on the Atlantic shores of what is now the United States, the New World had long been given over to the fantasies of men”( *Land Before Her* 3). While Puritan men imagined themselves moving across the land to seek a closer connection to God, Puritan women’s relationship to God and the land was heavily mediated by fathers, husbands, and clergy. Women were essentially living in “domestic captivity” (Kolodny *Land Before Her* 9).

Images of white women’s captivity to Indians served an important function in Puritan society. Sacvan Bercovitch contends that “[o]ne of the central motifs in early Protestant sermons is the flight from Babylon under Nehemiah. Spiritually, it signifies Christ’s deliverance of his beloved from the bondage of sin” (58). Before they were “called by Nehemiah from captivity,” the “Hebrews had languished in Babylon” (Bercovitch 59). The captive’s experience mirrors that of *Judea capta*, “the image of Israel suffering in Babylonian captivity” (Kolodny 19). Puritan clergy such as Cotton Mather recognized the force and implications of the image of captive women as *Judea capta*. As *Judea capta*, the captive woman serves as an example to the larger Puritan community: she exemplifies piety, patience, and subservience to God’s will. As Kolodny demonstrates, Mather describes this figure on a Roman coin as ““A *Silent Woman sitting upon the Ground, leaning against a Palm-tree, with this inscription JUDAEA CAPTA*”” (qtd. in Kolodny *Land Before Her* 21). The body of the captive woman provided a space

for performing the Puritan errand. As Rebecca Blevins Faery indicates, in “the war for territorial dominance...the captive woman was made into a metaphor: she was herself the emblematic territory for control of which the two sides fought” (41). The body of the captive white woman who waits patiently for rescue and redemption was a border zone. As a “passive” boundary between cultures and between male captors and male rescuers, her body was a site upon which Puritan leaders could imagine themselves as types of Nehemiah, redeeming the white woman and the land from captivity to the Indians.

Mary White Rowlandson’s *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* presents a different image of the captive white woman. Her text, as the first public account of a woman’s relationship with the American wilderness gives a voice to *Judea capta* (*Kolodny Land Before Her* 17). Instead of passively sitting on the ground, Rowlandson stresses her own agency: she “chose” captivity over death, and walked into the wilderness on her own two feet. Rowlandson provides subjectivity and will to the image of the captive white woman. Hers is “the voice of a woman whose experience has given her evident authority outside the fold of the Puritan community” (Faery 32). Faery argues that for Puritan women like Rowlandson, “Indian captivity [paradoxically] represented...an expansion of experience rather than what we might ordinarily think would be a contraction or restriction of experience” (31). Her narrative belies the passivity of the captive woman’s body: As the boundary between men and between cultures, Rowlandson’s body-as-border, like all borders, “specif[ies] the liminal space in between, the interstitial site of interaction, interconnection, and exchange” (Freidman 3). Although Rowlandson constructs her narrative in accordance to the Puritan

worldview as many critics have pointed out, her experience in captivity and her decision to write and publish her experiences place her “out-of-doors,” in an unarticulated space (Faery 28).<sup>9</sup>

The attack on Lancaster in the early morning hours of February 10, 1676 was part of a larger conflict known as Metacom’s (or King Phillip’s) War. According to Neal Salisbury, in proportion to total population, Metacom’s War was the bloodiest and most destructive war in American history (1). The conflict which lasted little more than a year took the lives of about five thousand Indians and two thousand five hundred English, roughly 40 and 5 percent of the two area populations, respectively (Salisbury 1). Over the previous decades the Native peoples in the Massachusetts area had established a strong trading relationship with the early colonists in Lancaster. The English demand for furs and the Native demand for English goods had led Native hunters to procure as many pelts as possible and, in conjunction with European trappers, they had driven beavers, otter, martens, mink, and other fur-bearing mammals in southern New England nearly to extinction (Salisbury 18). Compounding the decline in the fur business, Native peoples in the area suffered severe decreases in population as the result of European diseases and were pressured by traders and colonial authorities to sell their land to make room for more colonists. The Wampanoag sachem, Metacom, told Rhode Island Governor John Eaton that English “cheating, discrimination, and pressures to sell land, submit to Plymouth colony’s authority, convert to Christianity, and consume alcohol had undermined a half-century of friendship and driven the Wampanoags of Pokanoket to the point of war” (Salisbury 19). Similar sentiments were being expressed by the

Narragansett, Nianic, and Nipmuc. Amidst these growing tensions, the murder of John Sassamon in 1674 pushed the tenuous peace to a breaking point and precipitated the violence that came to be known as Metacom's War (Lang 16). According to reports, Sassamon was a "praying Indian," a convert to Christianity, who was acting as an informant for the English. When he was found murdered, it was assumed that that he had been killed by Indians as a spy. Three Wampanoags were arrested and executed (Lang 16; Salisbury 21). Following the executions, Metacom led an attack on Swansea, Massachusetts, burning several houses on June 20, 1675 (Lang 17). The English retaliated and over the next six months hostilities continued. In December 1675, the United Colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Plymouth, and Connecticut attacked and massacred the Narragansett in their winter home in the swamps of central Rhode Island (Lang 17). An estimated eighty English soldiers and six hundred Narragansett men, women, and children were killed that day (Lang 17). The attack on Lancaster was part of a continuing Indian offensive started after the Great Swamp Fight. Of the thirty-seven people occupying the garrison in Lancaster that February morning, twelve were killed and twenty-four were taken captive; among the captives was Mary White Rowlandson (Lang 17).

Apparently written around 1677, Rowlandson's narrative erased the complicated history surrounding her captivity. She constructs her story to follow the traditional pilgrim's journey: beginning with her separation from what is known and familiar, followed by a long journey filled with temptations and travail, and culminating in an enlightened return.<sup>10</sup> Like the pilgrim, Rowlandson identifies the second phase, the

journey, as the most important. She begins her narrative with the moment of attack, *in media res*, allowing the reader to experience her own terror and surprise, as well as to mark that moment as the “radical turning point” in her life (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 100). She quickly moves through the frightening moments of attack to focus on the journey itself, “the several Removes we had up and down the Wilderness” (Rowlandson 33). After recounting the 150 miles she traveled in twenty Removes, Rowlandson ends her narrative with a brief recounting of her own and her children’s return to the Puritan community.<sup>11</sup> The bulk of her narrative, however, lies not in the shock of capture or in the relief of return, but in her movement across the land in captivity. Not only does she organize her narrative around a series of Removes, or walks, but several times throughout her narrative she brings herself back from digressions with phrases that stress her journey itself: “But to return to my own Journey”; “But, to Return: we traveled”; “But to return again to my going home”(39, 42, 61). Writing about the experience of pilgrimage, Rebecca Solnit argues, “we are eternally perplexed by how to move toward forgiveness or healing or truth, but we know how to walk from here to there, however arduous the journey” (50). Rowlandson maintains her journey as central to her narrative; although she uses many different methods for finding meaning in her captivity, she continually redirects her readers’ focus to the voyage itself.

Many critics have noted the importance of physical movement in Rowlandson’s narrative; however, most of them devote only a paragraph or two to physical movement and shift their attention to other aspects of the narrative.<sup>12</sup> For example, in her article, “The Journey Between: Liminality and Dialogism in Mary White Rowlandson’s

Captivity Narrative,” Michelle Burnham looks at Rowlandson’s text as a travel narrative in which “personal and spiritual growth become a function of geographic or spatial movement” (71). But Burnham focuses her discussion on the first part of the equation, “personal and spiritual growth,” and she uses Rowlandson’s physical movement to organize her analysis rather than as the focus of her analysis. Similarly, in his study *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning*, Mitchell Breitwieser points several times to the importance of physical movement in Rowlandson’s text, noting the many different kinds of movement in the narrative. Like Burnham, Breitwieser focuses on Rowlandson’s psychological shifts, and he discusses physical movement mostly as a way to imagine psychic movements. Marilyn C. Wesley makes a similar argument in *Secret Journeys: The Trope of Women’s Travel in American Literature*. “For Rowlandson,” Wesley writes, “to report on movement is to create the occasion to report on Mary’s shifting state of mind” (27). While these perspectives on Rowlandson’s movement over the land and her reliance on movement as an organizing principle are instructive, the frequency of Rowlandson’s references to movement, in particular to *walking*, necessitates a closer examination of how walking works as a means, not just a metaphor, of spiritual and personal transformation in her text.

Mary White Rowlandson disregards the orderly sequencing of a diary or chronicle, which Wesley defines as “the available Puritan forms for the organization of private and public experience,” choosing instead to organize her narrative and her understanding of her captivity experience around a series of twenty Removes (23). In doing so, she marks the passage of time by spatial passages into the wilderness.<sup>13</sup> With

each remove Rowlandson finds herself further away from what is known and familiar and further immersed in the wilderness. In her second remove Rowlandson remembers that she “turn[ed] [her] back upon the Town, and travel[ed] with [the Indians] into the vast and desolate Wilderness,” thus beginning her journey into the unknown (34). Organizing her narrative around movement allows Rowlandson to create a “map” of her experience. Rather than imagining herself as connected to the land as territory to be contested and “mapped,” Rowlandson places herself in the position of an explorer tracing her course with her narrative (Faery 65). Though Rowlandson often represents herself as a version of *Judea capta*, waiting on God’s will, her reliance on movement as a central trope reveals her to be an active participant. As she walks into and through the wilderness she becomes more knowledgeable and familiar with what was once unknown. By writing her journey, Rowlandson defines herself not as a passive captive, but as an active and interested pilgrim.

Rowlandson organizes her narrative and defines her experience around physical removes and Biblical passages. Many critics have focused their analyses of Rowlandson’s narrative on her typological use of the Bible.<sup>14</sup> However, none of them have fully examined her Biblical references in the context of physical movement. When these two aspects of her text are viewed together, it becomes apparent that one of the Biblical images she employs most often is walking. In the fifth Remove Rowlandson makes her first explicit reference to Biblical walking when she quotes Psalm 81: “*Oh that my people had hearkened to me, and Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and turned my hand against their Adversaries*” (italics in

original; 40). Critic Dawn Henwood argues, “The Psalms furnish Rowlandson with a public, liturgical language that centers her experience in the communal sphere of meaning....[S]he would have recognized in David’s collection of spiritual songs a Biblical precedent for the public conversion narrative required for church membership” (171-172). Henwood further contends that “the Psalms provided one of the most familiar and trustworthy Puritan paths through the scriptural landscape” (173).<sup>15</sup> Rowlandson includes references to Israel’s failure to walk in the ways of God and their subsequent time in the Wilderness as a way of understanding her own captivity. She, like the Hebrews, is guilty of backsliding, and her journey, like a pilgrimage, is her penance and her redemption. She has not walked in God’s ways and her captivity is the result of that failure as well as an opportunity to return to “*walk humbly with [her] God*” (Mic. vi 8 qtd. in Rowlandson 51).

In addition to connecting her plight with that of Israel, Rowlandson’s inclusion of Biblical references to walking accentuates her physical movement. Scriptural references function as structuring elements in the narrative: her movement through the familiar scriptural landscape provides her with a way of understanding her physical movement through the unfamiliar and threatening wilderness. Throughout the narrative, Rowlandson links Biblical references to walking with moments when physical walking is particularly challenging. As early as the third remove, she pairs a “very wearisome and tedious day” of forced marching with the comment, “I then remembered how careless I had been...and how evilly I had walked in God’s sight” (Rowlandson 35). She struggles to contextualize her physical and emotional displacement and pain by noting that she, like

the Hebrews, has walked “evilly”; her painfully physical walking is connected to her spiritual walk with God. If, as Kolodny points out, she never learns to navigate the physical wilderness on her own, she can begin to understand her experiences by placing the physical landscape alongside the scriptural one (*Land Before Her* 18). Later, in the nineteenth Remove, Rowlandson writes, “after many weary steps, I saw Wachusets hills, but many miles off....Being almost spent, I thought I should have sunk down at last, and never got out; but I may say, as in *Psal.* xciv. 18, *When my foot slipped, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up*” (53). Rowlandson pairs her physical pain and exhaustion with a Biblical passage that employs a physical stumble as a metaphor for a spiritual stumble. Her physical suffering, then, does not mean that she has been abandoned by God, just as her backsliding does not negate her place among the chosen. Instead, her movement in captivity aligns her with the larger Puritan errand, a pilgrimage that purifies her as she wanders in the wilderness. In essence, her wandering and her stumbling prove her status as one of God’s chosen.

Rowlandson’s pairing of scriptural walking with physical walking provides her with a symbolic language for discussing her captivity; however, physical walking imparts a rhythm to her narrative beyond its reflection of Biblical passages. Most often she describes walking as arduous and painful. She frequently writes of “all those wearisome steps” (45) that make her mind “reel” (51) and her “knees tremble” (63). Walking is difficult and exhausting. It demands Rowlandson’s total attention. Following a particularly difficult Remove, she wonders when, “the *Indians* sate down in a Wigwam discoursing, but I was almost spent, and could scarcely speak” (52). Her identity as a

captive is delineated by walking. While the Indians seem to easily shoulder their burdens and walk miles across the land, Rowlandson struggles, even “creep[ing] upon [her] knees” when her strength gives out (45). Physical walking not only reflects her psychological experience of captivity, it shapes that experience.

As a captive, Rowlandson struggles to understand not only her own experience, but the activity of those around her. She attempts to create retrospective order by formatting her captivity around her removes, but the sections of Rowlandson’s narrative are uneven. Some removes involve daylong walks and others don’t cover any literal ground at all. Additionally, the removes do not follow Rowlandson’s expectations. As Wesley argues, “[i]f Mary is expecting to go to Albany, her captors unexpectedly remove to another destination. If she desires to go ‘toward the Bay,’ they arbitrarily change direction and proceed ‘five or six miles down the River into a mighty Thicket of Brush’” (28). Rowlandson presents this erratic travel as indicative of the Indians’ confusing and seemingly pointless movement. She records the Indians “hopping up and down one after another” at a “Powaw” (58), and, in apparent panic at seeing an English scout, “[s]ome of the *Indians* ran one way, and some another” (42). Rowlandson and everything around her keep “moving at a dizzying and indescribable velocity” (Breitwieser 157). Rowlandson endeavors throughout her narrative to make sense of the movement around her.

The Narragansett’s movements are confusing and seemingly erratic, yet they are also strong and efficient. Pursued by the English army, the Indians “marched on furiously, with their old and with their young: some carried their old decrepit Mothers,

some carried one and some another. Four carried a great *Indian* upon a bier” (Rowlandson 39). Rowlandson’s own physical pain and struggle with walking is accentuated by the relative ease with which the Indians move. In fact, she notes that her captors seem able to move across the land with more ease than even the English Army. She observes that the “*Indians* derided the slowness and dulness of the *English* Army in its setting out” (59). Even encumbered as they are with their heavy loads and their young and old, her captors still manage to outpace the English army, a situation she strives to account for as proof of God’s providential plan:

The *English* Army with new supplies were sent forth to pursue after the Enemy, and they understanding it; fled before them till they came to Baquang River, where they forthwith went over safely: that that River should be impassable to the *English*, I cannot but admire to see the wonderful providence of God in preserving the Heathen for farther affliction to our poor Country. They could go in great numbers over, but the *English* must stop. (59)

If her own walking allows Rowlandson a physical and metaphorical space in which to claim agency, the confusing movements of the Indians and of the English Army threaten to destabilize that agency. Writing her narrative permits her a certain degree of retrospective control: through the act of writing *her* pilgrimage she can attempt to incorporate the inexplicable movements of others into a larger providential plan. However, the unknowable body of another walker and the strangeness of the landscape

she walks through is never fully erased or accounted for. Even the ordered walking of a pilgrim is on the edge of the abyss.

Walking marks Rowlandson's entry into liminality, the realm of the pilgrim. "To pass over the limen, the margin, the periphery of the known" O'Grady writes, "is to disappear into the open, the anonymous, the uncarved block" (16). Walking, he contends, brings "the individual directly, physically, into liminality" (O'Grady 53). Rowlandson's walking across an unfamiliar land makes the margin between Puritan communities and the wilderness real and immediate. For example, when she finds that her son is camped a mile away with another group of Indians, she is given permission to walk through the wilderness alone to visit him. As she walks she, "quickly lost myself, traveling over Hills and through Swamps, and could not find the way" (44). Lacking familiar markers, Rowlandson has "lost [her]self" in "the open, the anonymous, the uncarved block." "The liminal state," Victor Turner and Edith Turner write, "has frequently been likened to death; to being in the womb; to invisibility, bisexuality, and the wilderness" (249). Alone in the woods, Rowlandson physically confronts the liminal space of the wilderness. She loses "[her]self" in the unfamiliar landscape of hills and swamps, disrupting her understanding of herself and her experience.

In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit argues that for pilgrims "walking is work" (45). Pilgrims, she avers, "often try to make their journey harder, recalling the origin of the word travel in *travail*, which also means work, suffering, and the pangs of childbirth" (emphasis in original; 46). When Rowlandson writes that she "chose" to go with the Narragansett, she takes ownership of her pilgrimage. She may be

forced to move from place to place, but her actual movement comes through the exertions of her own body. Her representation of her weariness and the pain and discomfort of walking draws attention to her physical body. Literal walking and wandering connects Rowlandson to other pilgrims and to the Puritan errand, for it is through wandering in the wilderness that the Israelites, and now the Puritans, search for their home. For Rowlandson and the Puritans, the pain and uncertainty of movement will be rewarded with the fulfillment of God's promise to "[a]ppoint a Place for my people Israel, and I will PLANT them that they may dwell in a place of their OWN, and MOVE NO MORE'" (2 Sam. 7:10 qtd, in Jacobson 34).

Even when the forced movement has ceased for the day, Rowlandson describes herself as unable to sit still; she is constantly in motion. In spite of the deep fatigue that she often mentions, Rowlandson continues to walk. She writes that following her youngest daughter's death from an injury sustained in her capture, she "could not sit still...but kept walking from one place to another....I was going up and down, mourning and lamenting"(37). Later, when she was unable to find her way to visit her son she again "went up and down moaning and lamenting" (44). Rowlandson pairs her pacing with unhappiness and agitation; unfamiliar with her situation and unsure of her fate, Rowlandson walks. Unlike the purposeful walk of the pilgrim, however, pacing has no beginning and no end. Rowlandson often reminds herself that she should be patient and "*Wait on the Lord*" (38), yet her pacing indicates her inability to be still. Walking, even without a purpose, holds the potential of a destination, of movement out of the liminal state.

When Rowlandson chose captivity over death, she chose a life in motion. Movement, whether it is haphazard, forced, or repetitious, is the power to survive. When she is not traveling with her captors or pacing in the camp, she is still in constant motion: she visits with fellow captives, exchanges her sewing for food, and goes from wigwam to wigwam in search of food and shelter. “Throughout her captivity,” Wesley argues, “Mary understands that the more dangerous course is stasis” (Wesley 29). Survival required adaptation and adaptation meant movement. In the twelfth Remove, Rowlandson writes that after traveling only a short way, “my Mistress gives out she would go no further, but turn back again, and said I must go with her” (45). Even though she had been given a particularly heavy load for that day, on being told she must turn back Rowlandson’s “Spirit” was “very impatient and almost outrageous. I thought I could as well have died as went back” (45). But as a captive she must go with her “Mistress.” Once back in the original camp Rowlandson turns to her Bible for comfort and reads from Psalm xlvi: “*Be still, and know that I am God*”; yet when she tries to be still she finds that she cannot (46). “[D]own I sat,” she writes, “with my Heart as full as it could hold, and yet so hungry, that I could sit neither” (46). Instead she goes “walking among the Trees” to find “six Acorns and two Chestnuts” (46). For Rowlandson, walking held the promise of survival. When she walked she was able to find food, shelter, and she moved closer to the end of her captivity. Interspersed with moments when walking is physically and emotionally draining, Rowlandson writes, “the thoughts of my going homeward (for so we bent our course) much cheered my Spirit, and made my burden seem light, and almost nothing at all” (45), and later, “I went on cheerfully,

(with thoughts of going homeward) having my burden more on my back than on my spirit” (51). To survive her pilgrimage Rowlandson must arrive somewhere, she must return home.

Mary White Rowlandson tells her readers that she wrote her narrative, “the better to declare what happened to me during that grievous Captivity” (33). Unlike a journal or a diary, Rowlandson’s narrative is written retrospectively, after the actual movement of her captivity is finished; however, even in the relative safety of her redeemed home, Rowlandson remains restless and in motion. After her release she and her husband head eastward, with no clear destination, in search of her still captive children (Wesley 29). Later still, when her children have been recovered and the family is reunited, Rowlandson remains restless. Even though she ends her narrative with a passage from Exodus, that commands, “*Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,*” she cannot be still (Exod. xiv. 13 qtd. in Rowlandson 65). She writes that at night, “When all are fast about me, and no eye open but His who ever waketh, my thoughts are upon things past” (64). Her troubled thoughts mirror the aimless pacing of her body in captivity; she is still the captive who understands that only movement can secure survival.

### **Adventure and Social Critique in Sarah Wakefield’s Captivity Narrative**

Almost two hundred years after Mary White Rowlandson’s captivity among the Narragansett and over 1,200 miles to the west, Sarah Wakefield penned her account of captivity following the Minnesota Massacre, *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity*. Unlike Rowlandson, who begins her narrative at the moment of

attack, Wakefield begins with her family's immigration west a year before her captivity. "Although I was nervous [about moving "out of civilization"]," she writes, "I enjoyed that ride, for a more beautiful sight than that prairie, I never have seen" (3). When they approached their new home in the Upper Sioux Agency, she declares, "We found we were to cross this river, and ascend a hill 600 feet high, made it seem as if we were going up to some great castle, for we could see the tops of the buildings in the distance and we all remarked that we enjoyed this as much as pleasure-seekers did their visits to the old castles and scenery on the Rhine" (4). She asserts that "we soon knew we could be very happy, although so far away from civilization" and recalls her comfort and pleasure in "rid[ing] through those woods...unprotected" and ascending to Mr. Riggs' Mission, "a delightful spot" with "enormous hills" that would make "a person at the top and commenc[ing] descending...tremble with fear for a while, but at last they would entirely forget all danger, while looking at the beauty of the scene" (5). In these opening pages, Wakefield presents herself as an adventurer who enjoys the beauty of the landscape and the "very kind and pleasant" Native Americans she encounters (5). As an immigrant to the Minnesota frontier, Wakefield revels in the landscape and her ability to navigate passage. Although her narration of her subsequent captivity is filled with accounts of physical and mental hardships, she continually returns to a celebration of westward movement with herself as the model adventurer, able to survive captivity and, most importantly, through her movement in the West and then in captivity, able to see both the positive and the devastating effects of Euro-America's westward impulse.

By 1861, the year Wakefield and her family traveled to the Upper Sioux Agency, Europeans had already crossed the continent, even though the frontier was not “officially” closed until 1890 (Kolodny *Lay of the Land* 72).<sup>16</sup> Now that the land had been surveyed and initial trails had been blazed, wave after wave of emigrants came west, looking for land and a new life. The promises of the frontier had become firmly ensconced in America’s idea of itself and its destiny. The dominant Euro-American belief was that “[a]nything is possible out there,” contends critic Eric Heyne, “including, as so many utopian colonizers have gambled, human perfectibility” (9). The nineteenth-century frontier was imagined in deeply mythic terms as “the margin of the known opened to the possibility of wonders in the unknown.... [T]he line beyond which beckoned freedom from existing social and political restraints” (Mogen, Busby, and Bryant 5-6). Bolstering the fantasy of the frontier were the dual images of Thomas Jefferson’s yeoman farmer with his “natural” desire to seek land to cultivate, and the hunter-hero “standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources” (Slotkin 213; Lewis 5). These figures and the wide-open landscape they yearned for fueled “the irrepressible American urge to travel in mind and body” (Heyne 11). The western frontier, Wallace Stegner writes, “was not a place but a way, a trail to the Promised Land, an adventurous, dangerous rite of passage” (21). The American rite of passage replaced the Puritan pilgrim with the secular adventurer, seeking land and excitement.

The basic parameters for the classic heroic adventure narrative closely mirror the elements Turner and Turner set forth for the pilgrimage. The hero (pilgrim) departs the

everyday and familiar world to seek power and knowledge and then returns triumphantly (Slotkin 10-11). Richard Slotkin argues that the Euro-American incarnation of the heroic quest involves an attempt to “get back to the primary source of blood-knowledge of the wilderness, the ‘Indian’ mind” (17). The American hero’s search for this “blood-knowledge,” Slotkin argues, is paired with a sense of exile, “the psychological anxieties attendant on the tearing up of home roots for wide wandering outward in space” (18). The space that the American hero wandered was the frontier, which “has meant both the border one crossed to reach new places and the places themselves” (Heyne 6). As a border to be crossed, the frontier in American imagination was continually on the move, and crossing the frontier was “a quintessentially American act, our national (male) rite of passage” (Heyne 7). The American hero, like the pilgrim, finds himself cast out, whether voluntarily or not, and must travel and face physical and mental tests before returning with hard-won knowledge and experience to be integrated into the community, even if the hero himself can never be fully reintegrated.

By the nineteenth century the idealized pattern for imagining male experience on the frontier was crystallized in the structure of the Daniel Boone myth.<sup>17</sup> Boone, as American frontier hero, strides out into the American wilderness, navigating the demanding Western geography and outsmarting the Native Americans he encounters. “Movement is his condition,” Mary Lawlor claims, “and the protean figure takes his limit, his shape, from the matter of forest, as he, mutually limits it....More than anything else, after all, Boone seeks to represent himself by virtue of charting his passage” (26). The mythic western hero inhabited a world defined by masculine movement: “a world in

which Anglo-American men blazed trails, fought Indians, trapped beaver, herded cattle, plowed fields, drank, gambled, and whored” (Murphy 133). The ability to face the physical and mental challenges inherent to his movement into the wilderness spaces is threatened, Lawlor maintains, “by the civilizing process” (26). In other words, the story of the male western hero is threatened by the appearance of the female western heroine, the domestic angel seeking a home on the frontier.

The values of the frontier myth – mobility, versatility, self-reliance, solitude, individuality – were the characteristics of the male hunter-hero, not the nineteenth-century woman. Martha J. Cutter contends that while men’s lives were often defined through “autonomous, external goals such as the search for fame, career, gold, or a wife,” nineteenth century women’s lives were defined through “their love for others, and spurred by relational, internal, and selfless goals” (Cutter 4). Cutter posits that “from 1780 to 1860 Americans were preoccupied with the feminine virtues of purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity – a constellation of attributes known as the domestic saint” (xv). Women, she continues, were required to be “passive, submissive responders’ since... ‘submission was perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women’” (xv). In order to fit into the accepted parameters of virtuous femininity, women in nineteenth-century America were expected to confine themselves to the home. The dominant female virtues were largely characterized by stasis and inaction, whereas the dominant male virtues were characterized by movement and action. Susan Stanford Friedman, drawing on the work of James Clifford, describes these contrasting impulses as “roots” and “routes.” “Roots and routes are,” she argues, “two sides of the same coin:

roots, signifying identity based on stable cores and continuities; routes, suggesting identity based on travel, change, and disruption” (Friedman 153). For women traveling to the American frontier in the nineteenth-century, the expectation that they support “roots” over “routes” meant that to sustain their virtuous femininity they struggled to retain a sense of stability and place as their literal movement necessitated change and disruption.

As wave after wave of immigrants moved west in the early nineteenth century, women found themselves attempting to establish an idealized domestic space in their new homes on the frontier. Even though they faced a long set of difficulties such as “the pain of separation from friends and family, the discomfort suffered during the journey, the unfamiliar openness of the prairie, and the inevitable burdens of frontier housekeeping,” they endeavored to define themselves and foster a sense of rooted stability in their new environments (Kolodny *Land Before Her* 97). Susan Scheckel, discussing the story of Mary Jemison, writes that “the fact that Jemison makes herself at home on the frontier in the capacity of a mother, struggling to find a home for her family, lends to her character certain powers (and stabilizing limitations) implicitly associated with mothers in the context of American domestic ideology during the nineteenth century” (103).<sup>18</sup> Frontier womanhood as experienced by women such as Jemison occupied a precarious space between the passive and delicate domestic saint and the resourceful and capable Western mother. As European-American women continued to move westward, they had to navigate these seemingly contradictory sets of expectations in a wilderness heavily inscribed with male fantasies of heroic adventure.

In *Six Weeks in the Sioux Tepees*, Sarah Wakefield struggles to define and articulate a potentially radical space for white womanhood on the frontier that draws together aspects of the male frontier hero and the idealized American mother. The resulting text joins the tropes of captivity that by the nineteenth century were familiar and expected with a pointed critique of accepted gender roles and the racist rhetoric of westward expansion. As in Rowlandson's text nearly two hundred years before, Wakefield's narrative is structured around movement and walking. Unlike Rowlandson, however, Wakefield's movement precedes and extends beyond the forced movement of captivity. Wakefield steps past the typical captivity narrative and recreates herself as an active heroine who embraces the western land she walks across even as she condemns the ideology that has brought her there.

The Minnesotan frontier that Wakefield traveled to in 1861 was heavily inscribed with hundreds of years of Euro-American fantasies and the materialization of these fantasies in policies of Indian Removal. Patricia Limerick contends, "From the beginning, the usual justification was that Indians were not using the land properly. Relying on hunting and gathering, savagery neglected the land's true potential and kept out those who could put it to proper use" (190). Euro-American settlers had long imagined themselves as the rightful inheritors of the land they essentially stole. Through their hard-work and planning they saw themselves fulfilling the dual roles of the eighteenth-century yeoman farmer and the nineteenth-century intrepid adventurer – risking it all to create an idealized life in a conquered wilderness. Even with the firm belief that they were simply answering the land's need for proper cultivation, Euro-

Americans had a difficult time reconciling their ideals of self-determination with their appalling treatment of Native Americans. Rather than seeing themselves as precipitating the decimation of vital peoples, Euro-Americans created another myth, the “vanishing Indian.” They reasoned that “noble savages could not coexist with civilization” and thus “their decline was fated” (Limerick 182). This was the world that Wakefield inhabited when she recorded her journey to “Indian Country” (Wakefield 3).

When Wakefield’s husband, John, was appointed physician at the Upper Sioux agency, they joined the settlers who had swelled the Euro-American population in Minnesota territory from six thousand in 1850 to over two hundred thousand by 1856 (Castiglia 52). The Wakefields, like many of these settlers, lived among the seven thousand Dakota who had farmed the land since a treaty in 1851 that deeded twenty-four million acres to the United States in return for \$495,000 and reservation land in western Minnesota (Schultz 9-10).<sup>19</sup> The Dakota and the Euro-American settlers lived peaceably until 1862 when a poor harvest, broken promises by area agencies that were treaty-bound to provide food and money for the Dakota, exorbitant prices and corruption in traders’ stores, and the Dakota’s continuous loss of territory to the United States led to a confrontation that came to be known as the Minnesota Massacre.<sup>20</sup> The Minnesota Massacre took the lives of nearly five hundred Euro-Americans and over one hundred were taken captive (Anderson and Woolworth 1; Kestler 351). Internal divisions among the Dakota coupled with a larger number of U.S. troops than the Dakota expected led to their defeat and the conviction of “307 [Dakota] warriors and the utter dispossession” of the Minnesota Dakota people (Castiglia 52).<sup>21</sup>

Wakefield's captivity narrative is one of dozens that came out of the Minnesota Massacre. Wakefield, undoubtedly aware of the outlines and stereotypes of the basic captivity narrative, infuses her text with these pre-existing codes and images to facilitate the deeply critical and even radical charges she levels against Euro-American westward expansion. Ostensibly writing "to vindicate myself, as I have been grievously abused by many, who are ignorant of my captivity and release by the Indians," Wakefield melds the conventions of the captivity narrative with elements of the frontier hero and the domestic saint to complicate Euro-American visions of women, Indians, and the frontier itself (Wakefield 2). Mobility shapes her narrative, from the initial home-founding journey through the movement of captivity to the wandering of the Dakota at the close of the narrative. Though Wakefield's narrative is not organized around successive "removes," like Rowlandson she describes herself as always in motion. Whether moving west with the tide of Euro-American immigrants, marching as a captive with the Dakota, fleeing into the woods to hide from the threat from "bad Indians," critiquing the Army's slow pace, or praising the Dakota's stamina, Wakefield's narrative is never still. By beginning her narrative with a home-founding journey as opposed to beginning in an already stable home and by ending with the wandering and dislocated Dakota, Wakefield reimagines the captivity journey in the context of westward expansion and Indian Removal. She depicts herself as a western traveler who "walk[s] as a mode of making the world as well as being in it" (Solnit 29).

Wakefield situates herself within her domestic role at the beginning of her story, clarifying that her movement west was directly tied to her husband's occupation. With

the first line of the text, she explains, “my husband was appointed physician for the Upper Sioux Indians at Pajutazee, or Yellow Medicine” (3). She follows this statement with her initial impression of “Indian country”: “I could not help exclaiming, ‘Is it here where I am to live?’ for all I saw was one log hut and about six hundred filthy, nasty, greasy Indians....When I first arrived at the Agency I was disheartened, low-spirited, and frightened, for the buildings were situated on a high prairie and as far as the eye could reach was a vacant space” (3). Wakefield recounts that, upon learning that they are to travel thirty miles further west than this desolate area, “I was alarmed” (3). Her initial reaction to the western landscape reveals her anxiety about moving out of “civilization” onto what she sees as a bleak and featureless plain with Indians who seemed to live up to the negative stereotypes with which she was undoubtedly familiar.<sup>22</sup> The reason for her westward movement and her preliminary response to the western frontier are directly at odds with the myth of the popular male hunter-hero, like Daniel Boone who begins his story with the statement, “Curiosity is natural to the soul of man....I resigned my domestic happiness for a time and left my family and peaceable habitation in the Yadkin River, in North-Carolina, to wander the wilderness of America, in quest of the country of Kentucke” (Filson 51). Boone relishes the opportunity to walk away from domesticity into the wilderness, but for Wakefield such a prospect initially fills her with dread.

Wakefield’s impression of the frontier changes quickly, however, when she sees the prairie covered with flowers and tall grass “waving in the breeze” (3). “[I]t reminded me,” she writes, “of a beautiful panorama. It seemed really too beautiful for Nature’s picture” (3).<sup>23</sup> When she first glimpses her new home she remarks that it “resembled a

fort,” and a few lines later she writes that as she approached the Upper Agency she imagined “we were going up to some great castle” (4). She has replaced her initial dread of the forbidding wilderness with the fantasy of a strong military and governmental presence. Instead of the earlier “log hut,” she imagines a fort and a castle, with flags flying “from many of the buildings in honor of our arrival” (4). For Wakefield, as for many other nineteenth-century frontierswomen, such images “overcame women’s initial distrust of the ‘dismal prairie.’ But even more important, the fantasy of a landscape that might figuratively reconstitute some prior domestic community soothed the sense of irrevocable loss” (Kolodny *Land Before Her* 97-98). Wakefield pairs her own increasing admiration for the “grand” and beautiful scenery with the presence of “a blacksmith, farmer, and doctor...a school... [and] a missionary station” (5). In the same paragraph in which she enumerates these signs of Euro-American civic settlement she states, “We soon knew we could be very happy although so far away from civilization” (5). Unlike Boone’s journey *away* from his “domestic happiness,” Wakefield imagines a journey that retains a sense of community. The beginning of Wakefield’s narrative is a home-founding journey, one that “[u]nlike the individualistic, alienating quest...is always to some degree collective” (Stout 45). Wakefield comes to recognize that rather than moving into “a vacant space,” she is part of a larger westward movement, a collective undertaking that she finds initially comforting and eventually deeply problematic.

Once settled at the Upper Sioux Agency, Wakefield revels in her ability to move through the landscape:

I usually, on the Sabbath, attended the Dakota Church, and was much interested in their sermons. Sometimes I would go to Mr. Riggs' Mission, which was situated about two miles above Dr. Williamson's [mission], as a place called Hazelwood. It was a delightful spot, and the rides to the place I enjoyed exceedingly. The scenery around Rush Brook was grand. Enormous hills – almost mountains – were on every side of this stream, and when a person was at the top and commenced descending, they would tremble with fear for a while, but at last they would entirely forget all danger, while looking at the beauty of the scene. ... I often wondered what an Eastern person would think, to ride through those woods, as we did, unprotected. I usually went with my little boy, alone, to Hazelwood, often returning long after the sun was down, and very often passing through the Indian camp. (5)

In this long passage Wakefield establishes the freedom and mobility she enjoyed in the months prior to her captivity. As the wife of a prominent Agency employee, Wakefield presents herself traveling easily to visit two missionary stations.<sup>24</sup> She travels to outposts of civilization and observes the mission churches and schools, rather than traveling into the wilderness simply to experience the wilderness for itself. In this way, Wakefield aligns herself with the aspects of the settled frontier that support her role as a domesticating, christianizing presence. However, while she makes it clear that her movements through the wilderness have appropriate and acceptable destinations, she also relishes her bravery and boldness. She recognizes that her ability to “forget all danger,

while looking at the beauty of the scene” and “to ride through those woods ... unprotected” would surprise and even shock “an Eastern person.” Wakefield connects her freedom of movement with her ability to exceed the constraints of the domestic sphere. By focusing her account of captivity on the story of a woman traveling to and through the Minnesotan frontier, Wakefield challenges the gendered ideology of “women’s stability that supports the central metaphor of men’s travel” (Wesley xiv).

Just over a year after the Wakefields moved to Minnesota, the deplorable treatment of the Dakota reached a boiling point. Annual payments were delayed and food rotted in the traders’ warehouses, in part because they hoped to raise the market value of their already overpriced merchandise; meanwhile, the Dakota starved (Castiglia 52). Finally, in August 1862, the resentment erupted when four young Dakota men attacked a group of Euro-American settlers in apparent retaliation for an insult (Anderson and Woolworth 13). Following the attack, an angry group of Dakota men met and determined to attack the Lower Agency (Anderson and Woolworth 13). Inverting the language of Manifest Destiny, Wakefield writes that Little Crow, a prominent Dakota leader, declared the Dakota “must clear the country of all the whites so they might live” (11).<sup>25</sup> News of the uprising was sporadic and incomplete causing many settlers to mistakenly remain in the path of the Dakota warriors or to run directly toward the fighting when they believed they were running away. As misinformation spread, Wakefield’s husband made arrangements for Wakefield and her two young children to be driven to the Lower Agency by George Gleason, the storekeeper for the Lower Agency’s warehouse who had been visiting the Upper Agency (Schultz 61).

Remembering the ride with Gleason, Wakefield claims, “I rode in great fear that afternoon...I had strong feelings of evil...I became frightened, tried again to persuade him to return. I was so excited I could not sit still and I endeavored to jump out of the wagon. Then he scolded me” (12). Wakefield contends that she sensed something was wrong, and had she been in control, she would have turned the wagon back. As a woman used to traveling alone in the Minnesotan land, Wakefield voices her concern about the safety of their venture, but finds herself constrained by a foolish man who accuses her of being “unpleasant” and “hysterical” (Wakefield 12). Gleason’s inability to imagine that Wakefield might have a valid opinion manifests in his physical control over Wakefield’s body. She cannot leave the wagon and is therefore at the mercy of the driver. Her frustrating helplessness as a passenger is heightened when they are attacked by two Dakota warriors, Gleason is killed, and Wakefield and her children are taken captive. As she is driven away from Gleason’s body by her captors, Hapa and Chaska, she remarks, “I rode in much agony; I knew not where I was to be taken, or what might eventually be my fate” (14). Her initial fear is tied to her unknown destination. While Rowlandson was deeply frightened of moving “into the vast and desolate Wilderness” Wakefield is not frightened so much by a wilderness she has come to find beautiful as she is by her lack of agency, her inability to direct her own body (Rowlandson 34).

Once out of the wagon and on her feet, Wakefield, following the traditional contours of captivity narratives, frequently describes the physical pain and fatigue she experienced as a result of forced marching. Michelle Burnham argues that according to the familiar format of the captivity narrative, “[t]he event of captivity is followed by an

almost incessant mobility, as the captive must travel with the Indians into and through the wilderness” (51). For a nineteenth-century woman conditioned to value stability and rootedness, forced movement and unknown destinations caused physical and psychological distress. Recalling one of the first days of enforced movement in captivity, Wakefield writes, “I thought I would be sun-struck, for we were kept on a constant move” (16). She recounts that she “traveled in great distress, barefoot, trotting along in the tall dry prairie grass,” until “the skin was all off from one foot” (33). The more she walks the more her feet become a focus of her concern: “My feet at this time were very bad; proud flesh as large as a silver dollar was eating into my foot” (35). A few days later she writes, “The last few miles we traveled that day I experienced more pain than I ever did in my life before. I might have been tracked by the blood that ran from my feet and legs....I would certainly die if I had to walk any further” (42). In these passages Wakefield aligns herself with the tradition of captivity writers by focusing on the physical difficulties she faces in a situation where pressure to travel quickly comes from her Native captors who are themselves compelled forward. Her bleeding and blistered feet are “of interest [to nineteenth-century readers] as the locus of affective responses to external stimuli or as [the body] evokes sympathy or other affective responses in others” (Ebersole 146). Her painful feet signal her feminine weakness and buttress the belief that a woman’s proper place is not in the wilderness, but in the safety of the domestic space.<sup>26</sup>

Wakefield’s painful movement as a captive occurs not only in the periods of forced marching with the Dakota, but also when she must run into the woods to hide from the “bad Indians” who want to kill all of the white captives.<sup>27</sup> The first of these flights

occurs early in her captivity when “Chaska’s mother came into her lodge saying that a man was coming to kill me....She told an old man her story, and he said ‘Flee to the woods.’... [W]e ran to a ravine. It was very steep and the banks were like the roof of a house. When we got to the bottom she hid me in the tall grass and underbrush” (17). In this first scare and escape to the woods, Wakefield emphasizes her deep feelings of fear and anxiety. When Chaska’s mother is late in coming to retrieve her once the danger has passed, Wakefield represents herself as helplessly waiting for salvation: “I now began to think she had forgotten me and removed... I knew I could not climb those banks alone, and our bag of crackers would not last long. I now saw starvation as well as other evils staring us in the face. Our situation was truly horrible” (18). She sits fearfully with her “feet in a running brook” (17). As a result, when Chaska’s mother finally returns for her, Wakefield “found I could not stand, from the effects of sitting so long in one position, and my limbs in the water had chilled my blood and stopped circulation” (18). She tells a similar story about a second scare, a rumor that Little Crow was coming to camp to “kill us white women” (23). This time she runs with Chaska’s grandfather who hides her in the center of a haystack (23). She states that once there, “I sat for hours....I could hear water running but dared not come out of my hiding place” (24). When Chaska’s grandfather returns she finds that once again, “[i]t was some time before I was able to stand, as I had sat in one position eighteen hours” (24). Wakefield’s sense of powerlessness is expressed in her lack of mobility. She sits helplessly, recalling earlier images of *Judea capta* waiting patiently for rescue. In these episodes, Wakefield represents herself as a stereotypical feminine captive, reacting instead of acting.

However, Wakefield emphasizes her physical endurance and strength even in these moments of pain and inaction. After both of these experiences, Wakefield notes that she is able to overcome the physical pain. When Chaska's mother retrieves her from the brook, she writes that when she finds she cannot stand "the old woman rubbed me and while doing so said...I must try to walk to her tepee" (19). Even though she "was completely prostrated" by her experience and was "shivering with fear and disease," she was still able to walk three miles and ford the Redwood River (19). Further, they "did not go in paths or roads, but through the tallest trees and thickest brush and among all kinds of berry bushes entwined together, with grape vines and ivy. We did not stop to part them, but tore through" (19). When they finally make it back to Chaska's mother's tepee Wakefield marvels, "I felt comparatively happy" (19). Similarly, when she emerges from the haystack, she writes, "I found I had got to walk several miles. I did not think I could live to walk but strength was given me" (24). Though Wakefield sat helplessly after being forced to run to the woods, her emphasis on her subsequent painful and difficult movement, suggests that she was able to find agency and defy her culturally prescribed helplessness. She revels in her endurance, noting that she found a strength she did not know she had and even felt "comparatively happy."

By the third time Wakefield "fle[es] to the woods," she does not sit fearfully immobile (25).<sup>28</sup> She "sat awhile, and hearing running water I thought I would follow it, and perhaps I might reach the Minnesota river. I took [daughter] Nellie on my back (as I had learned to carry her in that fashion) and we followed the brook some ways" (26). Her progress is eventually inhibited by "a large tree which had fallen across [the brook]

completely impeding our progress. I was obliged to stop or retrace my steps, and I decided to remain, as it was a very good hiding place” (26). This time when “the old woman” returns to find her, she is the one who is anxious and “much frightened” while Wakefield sits calmly in her “very good hiding place” (26). Once Wakefield has been captured she is no longer in control of where and when she moves; however, she continues to challenge expectations by presenting herself as strong, resourceful, and practical. She has learned to carry her baby like a Dakota woman and is no longer disoriented in the wilderness. Instead she carefully considers her situation, observes the world around her, and makes reasonable decisions. In her thoughtful navigation of captivity, Wakefield’s narrative joins other captivity narratives that Christopher Castiglia argues “embody women’s loss of control but also provide strategies for enduring and altering their powerlessness” (12). Although walking is still painful and at the end of her third flight to the woods Wakefield remarks that once again “my feet had become so sore I could hardly walk,” her movement is directed and purposeful (26).

While Rowlandson loses “[her]self” in the wilderness and cannot find her way (Rowlandson 44), Wakefield claims that space, aligning herself not with the pilgrim, but with the adventurer building a home in the wilderness. After being reunited with her son who had been staying at a different camp for a few nights, Wakefield recalls, “This night I was happy. I had my children both in my arms....I sang for the children that night; we ran around on the prairie, picked flowers, and my spirits were as light as air, although I was a prisoner” (36). Wakefield presents herself as at home in the wilderness. Uprooted and captive, she challenges the notion of the frail woman, unable to survive outside of the

domestic space of a Euro-American home. The prairie in this passage is pleasant and inviting. Annette Kolodny argues that by the first decades of the nineteenth century, women began imagining the prairie as “parklike,” resembling “the treed lawns and flower beds with which women had always dreamed of surrounding home” (*Land Before Her* 8). Further, “the prairies invited metaphors of intimacy” (Kolodny *Land Before Her* 8). Wakefield’s depiction of the prairie infuses a feeling of freedom and belonging into the unlikely space of captivity. Her happiness is predicated on her comfort in and enjoyment of the “parklike” prairie and with her family and her identity as a mother with her “children both in [her] arms.” She draws together “roots” and “routes”: creating an identity that bridges stability and movement. In the midst of disruptive travel she establishes a sense of place and belonging.

As she connects “roots” and “routes,” Wakefield begins to identify more strongly with the Dakota women she walks alongside than with other Euro-American women whom she presents as weak and vindictive.<sup>29</sup> After a particularly long and painful walk, Wakefield notes, “I had endured so much the past night, that even squaws seemed like friends, and they proved to be good true friends” (19). Later she writes that she “could not refrain from giving [the old woman] a good kiss. I had learned to look upon that woman as I would upon a mother.... [I]f I could sit with the old woman and have her wash my feet and attend to the sores was all I cared for. I felt as if this was my home” (26). Wakefield identifies the Dakota women as friends and even family members, suggesting a deep attachment and identification that continued to affect her years later when she sat down to write her narrative. Castiglia argues, “[c]ultural definitions of

‘womanhood’...made captives, who survive outside the home using physical and intellectual as well as emotional prowess, distinct in their own eyes from the women of their home culture, who, ‘delicate of frame,’ were fit only for captivity in the parlor” (63). Instead, Castiglia contends, Euro-American women captives in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries turned to Native American women for bonds of “sisterhood” (Castiglia 63). Wakefield’s affection for the Dakota women helps define her identity as a strong woman who is able to survive and even excel in the wilderness.<sup>30</sup>

Like Rowlandson’s portrayal of the physical strength of the Narragansett, Wakefield marvels at the strength and stamina of the Dakota women. When she is forced to walk barefoot because she asserts “squaws go barefoot when traveling” (30), her feet become blistered and sore; however, the Dakota women walk quickly and easily under the burden of heavy loads. Throughout the narrative she mentions the difficulty she faces in matching the pace of the Dakota women she walks with, having to “run to keep up” (34) with “the other *squaws*” who “will trot as fast as a horse” (33), though even the old Dakota women had “eighty pounds to carry” (30). Wakefield’s positive depictions of Dakota women walking barefoot through sharp grass carrying heavy loads challenges what Paula Gunn Allen identifies as the Euro-American “obsession” with “proving that Indians mistreat their women brutally, at every level and in every way – the implication being that civilized people revere women, and savages, who don’t revere them, deserve extermination” (5).<sup>31</sup> Wakefield clearly admires these women’s physical strength and presents them as exceeding the Euro-American ideas about the capabilities of the domestic woman.

Wakefield's portrayal of the movement of Dakota women fuels her critique of the destructive impetus of Euro-American westward drive. "Poor women!" she writes of the Dakota, "how I pity many of them! driven from their good homes, their families broken up and divided. Many of them are as much to be pitied as the whites, and many of them are no more to blame" (19). Wakefield links the treatment of Dakota women by Euro-Americans to the shape of the captivity narrative. Like the stock white woman captive, the Dakota women are uprooted and their families scattered. Euro-Americans disrupt the very domestic image they purport to value. Further, by questioning Euro-Americans' hypocritical treatment of Dakota women, Wakefield connects the mistreatment and devastation of the Dakota with Euro-American society's inability to protect white women.

While Wakefield praises the Dakota women's capable and strong walking, she points out that when arrangements have finally been made for the release of Wakefield and her fellow captives, the U.S. Army, under the command of General Henry Hastings Sibley, moves at a snail's pace. "How we looked for Sibley all the next day," Wakefield writes, "but he did not come....Where could he be? he was only twenty-five miles away" (48). She continues, "The second night we waited for him, an Indian came in saying they had only traveled eight miles, and it was not thirty-six hours since he got our message, and they had camped for the night, spending hours to intrench themselves. An army of over two thousand leaving us, a little handful of persons, with only about one hundred men to protect us!" (48). When they finally arrive, Wakefield comments sarcastically, "But I suppose the troops were fatigued, if they marched all the way from St. Paul as fast

as they did from Yellow Medicine – taking over fifty hours to travel twenty-five miles” (53). Wakefield invites comparison of the army’s slow movement with the efficient, if arduous, movement of the Dakota and of herself while captive. The army’s eight miles in one day contrasts sharply with the day Wakefield walked “without resting even for a drink of water, for sixteen miles,” barefoot and carrying her two children (42). Whereas Rowlandson attempts to rationalize the army’s slow movement with arguments about God’s larger plan, Wakefield employs the discrepancy between the army’s sluggish marching and her own and the Dakota’s efficient walking to critique the army’s incompetence.

Wakefield’s return to Euro-American society does not mark the end of her movement; like Rowlandson’s, her reintegration is incomplete. Castiglia suggests that Wakefield’s critique of U.S. ideology is

bound up in the ironically named ‘Camp Release.’ ...As her experiences in the fort reveal, the project of westward expansion relies not only on an unquestioned discourse of white supremacy; it requires as well a carefully policed system of gender roles in which women are sexually vulnerable, unalterably xenophobic, and physically helpless, requiring the protection and support of white men. (56)

In Camp Release, Wakefield finds herself disrespected and unheard. Clearly expecting to hear about rape or other atrocities meted out upon Wakefield’s body, Col. Marshall informs her, “‘If you have anything of a more private nature to relate, you can communicate it to Mr. Riggs’” (52). When she told them she had nothing more to say,

“[t]hey thought it very strange that I had no complaints to make, but did not appear to believe me” (52). Later Chaska is wrongfully convicted of Mr. Gleason’s murder, and Wakefield was “angry, for it seemed to me as if they considered my testimony of no account; for if they had believed what I said, he would have been acquitted” (54). At Camp Release, Wakefield is back in the realm of entrenched beliefs and assumptions. The men there expect to hear a particular version of captivity and seem unwilling and unable to imagine any other possibility. In response, Wakefield no longer feels the same sort of physical empowerment she experienced in captivity. She, who used to ride through the wilderness alone with her son and has walked dozens of miles in captivity, now does “not wish to walk a quarter of a mile alone” (52). Back in the “safety” of white society, Wakefield feels physically threatened and constrained. She has inverted her understanding of “civilization” and “savagery.” Whereas she once saw the Dakota as “filthy, nasty, greasy Indians” (3), she now contends that while in captivity she “was a vast deal more comfortable with the Indians in every respect than I was during my stay in that soldiers camp, and was treated more respectfully by those savages than I was by those in that camp” (50). Previously she connected freedom of movement to her standing as the wife of an agency physician, now she imagines freedom of movement with the Dakota, who “proved to be good true friends” (19).

Sarah Wakefield’s captivity narrative is not a story of woman’s victimization in the wilderness. She does not sit idly by waiting for rescue, and she resists the binaries of “white and Indian, civilized and savage, masculine and feminine, captivity and liberty,” upon which nineteenth-century ideologies depended (Castiglia 57). She ends her

narrative not with her joyful reintegration into white society, but with a desolate picture of the fallout from the Minnesota Massacre. After the captives were recovered at Camp Release, the vast majority of the Dakota, both those involved in the uprising and those who were not, were captured. Eventually they were transferred to a new reservation, Crow Creek, in Missouri (Schultz 282). “The army on the Missouri, under Gen. Sully, has done a good work,” Wakefield comments, “killing many Indians and destroying their property, while our army has been only enriching the officers, and shielding murderers from justice” (62). She laments, “Now [the Dakota] are wanderers, without home, or even a resting place” (63). By beginning her narrative with her own family’s movement to the frontier and ending with the uprooting and dispossession of the Dakota, Wakefield identifies the paradoxical nature of western movement; for Rowlandson movement meant survival, but for Wakefield movement represents the promise of one community contingent on the devastation of another.

For both Rowlandson and Wakefield the trope of walking serves as a tool for communicating the physical pain of forced walking, the psychological terror of captivity, and the mental strength to claim agency even in the midst of captivity. Despite societal pressures to define captivity as a simple case of Indian depravity and female victimization, Rowlandson and Wakefield craft narratives that offer a different interpretation. The unconscious fissures in Rowlandson’s narrative and the outright claims in Wakefield’s narrative, present an image of the captive woman that incorporates terror and determination, passivity and agency. The imagined and real experiences of their walking bodies provide both women with a means for articulating the complexities

of captivity among the Indians, who themselves were enduring policies of removal that complicated their own relationship to movement and walking.

**CHAPTER II:**  
**“THIS WORLD-THAT-WALKS”:**  
**SUBJUGATION AND SURVIVAL ON THE TRAILS OF NINETEENTH-**  
**CENTURY NATIVE AMERICAN REMOVALS**

In 1864, the same year Sarah Wakefield wrote that the Dakota had been driven out of their homelands and were “wanderers, without home, or even a resting place” (63), the Navajo were beginning their 325-mile walk from their traditional land in the Four Corners area, to Fort Sumner, along the Pecos River in Eastern New Mexico. In all, 8,354 Navajo made the forced trek to Fort Sumner. Four years later when they were finally allowed to return to a fragment of their homeland, nearly a third of those people had been lost to smallpox and other illnesses, depression, severe weather, and starvation (Tapahonso *Sáanii* 7). Both the wandering of the Dakota and the Navajo “Long Walk” to Fort Sumner belong to a long history of contact between Native Americans and Euro-Americans that is “punctuated by removal after removal in tribe after tribe, by lengthy forced marches upon which dozens and more often hundreds or thousands of people died” (Gould 800). The landscape of the United States is crisscrossed with these tragic trails; trails that challenge the myth of the triumphant westering pattern of Euro-American settlements.

By the middle of the nineteenth century these removal trails were becoming much more frequent as removal shifted from being an aspect of aggressive land purchases and deceptive treaties to being an articulated governmental policy. Stuart Banner argues that

this shift was partially the result of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Banner suggests that with the acquisition of the enormous tract of land west of the Mississippi “it was immediately evident that all this new land could be doubly useful in Indian land transactions: it was an asset that could be exchanged for Indian land in the east, and it would simultaneously give selling tribes a place to go when they sold their land” (193). At first this tactic seemed to work as thousands of eastern Native Americans voluntarily migrated west in the beginning of the nineteenth century; however, by the early 1820s the eastern states were growing rapidly and “there were still tens of thousands of Indians living east of the Mississippi” (Banner 194). In the years that followed, both state and federal governments increased pressure on the eastern tribes to move to Indian Territory, but many refused to leave their lands. In May of 1830, Congress passed the Removal Act, legislation that authorized the exchange of public domain in Indian Territory for the lands of eastern tribes. Though this act did not significantly change existing laws, its approval provided the government with the funds and, more importantly perhaps, the official policy to move forward with removal.<sup>32</sup> Following the Removal Act, the westward migration of eastern Native Americans increased as some bands continued to relocate on their own, others traveled under government agents, and some, “deemed hostile for their continuing resistance, traveled in chains” (Marks 90).

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the divestment of millions of acres of land and the wrenching of thousands of Native peoples from their traditional lands.

According to Paula Mitchell Marks:

Through the decades of intense struggle in the eastern heartlands, from the 1810s to mid-century, more than a hundred thousand natives, members of nearly thirty tribes, were removed, or removed themselves, across the Mississippi in response to white pressure. In the 1830s and 1840s, they relinquished 100 million acres in the East in exchange for “32 million western acres and 68 million dollars in annuity pledges.” (90)

Removal did not only affect eastern tribes; in the West, many peoples were forced to give up the majority of their lands or were uprooted entirely. The scope of dishonesty and injustice this history suggests extends beyond the legal and moral problems inherent in dislocating so many peoples and essentially stealing their land. Separation from traditional homelands disrupted Native American identity and community formation and cohesion. Explaining the centrality of place to Native communal and individual identity, Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna) argues, “Human identity, imagination and storytelling were inextricably linked to the land, to Mother Earth, just as the strands of the spider’s web radiate from the center of the web” (21). Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux) similarly writes:

We are the land. To the best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea that permeates American Indian life; the land (Mother) and the people (mothers) are the same. As Luther Standing Bear has said of his Lakota people, “We are of the soil and the soil is of us.” The earth is the source and the being of the people, and we are equally the being of the earth. (119)

For many Native American groups, the connection between individual, community, and land creates a sense of communal identity that transcends simplistic understandings of home and of self. Larry Evers contends that, “[b]y imagining who and what they are in relation to particular landscapes, cultures and individual members of cultures form a close relation with those landscapes....A sense of place derives from the perception of a culturally imposed symbolic order on a particular physical topography” (“Words and Place” 212). The links that have long joined Native American peoples and particular landscapes form the core of cultural identity and a sense of belonging. Forced removal enacted a violent division of the people from their land that dislocated them in both place and space. Movement away from the land imposed a movement away from a coherent identity.

This is not to suggest that pre-contact Native American peoples were immobile. Indeed, the history of the movement of Native peoples across the American land precedes and challenges the notion that prior to the forced movement of removal Native groups inhabited stationary homes. Marks argues, “The groups we have come to know as tribes did not inhabit a static world before the arrival of Europeans” (xviii); rather, they shifted in response to circumstances such as environmental conditions, seasonal changes, and confrontations and confederations between groups. Although most Native groups had inhabited particular regions for generations by the time Europeans arrived, Native people were hardly motionless within their lands. While many of these groups identified particular locations as deeply sacred homelands, they also experienced freedom of movement over large tracts of land. Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe) links Native

American mobility directly to issues of sovereignty. “Native sovereignty,” he states, “is the right of motion” (*Fugitive Poses* 182). When Euro-Americans, who equated fixity with civilization, cited Native mobility as a sign of “savagery,” they restricted movement and therefore impeded sovereignty.

Vizenor asserts, “Natives have been on the move since the creation of motion in stories; motion is the originary” (*Fugitive Poses* 55). Vizenor links mobility to the origin of Native peoples; movement within stories and across land is inseparable from identity. “There is no finished story,” Reid Gómez (Navajo) suggests, “because like the people, it too is always in motion. It is a breathing and changing thing. Like the landscape, it will exist and continue on long after this writing and your reading – in motion, with no final words and no retractions” (159). Vizenor and Gómez trace the strands of story, movement, and identity to a common and ultimately unreachable origin. For many Native American peoples, identity and worldview are intimately bound up in land, story, and physical freedom, all of which are marked by the always present potential for change and movement. Gunn Allen articulates this connection when she writes, “human beings play an intrinsic role in the ongoing creation. This role is largely determined by the place where the tribe lives, and the role changes when the tribe moves” (73). Vizenor’s claim that “stories of natives on the move are common” (*Fugitive Poses* 49), reinforces the centrality of motion in many Native American cultures, appearing in both actual physical movement and the fluidity of story.

Perhaps the Native American stories that most poignantly express the linkages between language, movement, and cultural identity are trickster narratives. Trickster

narratives appear in Native American cultures across the United States. Though Trickster may take a variety of guises, Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee/Irish) points out that “almost all trickster narratives in Native American tradition” begin with a variation of the phrase “Trickster was going along” (Owens 228).<sup>33</sup> Tricksters are wanderers, moving always on the margins of the community, challenging interpretations and “transforming the chaotic to create new worlds” (Smith 2). Tricksters, Jeanne Smith asserts, are “liminal beings” who “dwell at crossroads and thresholds and are endlessly multifaceted and ambiguous” (7). Tricksters, she continues, “reinvent narrative form. The trickster’s medium is words.... [Trickster] becomes the author and embodiment of a fluid, flexible, and politically radical narrative form” (Smith 11). “[I]n continual transit through all realms marginal and liminal” (Hynes 35), the trickster figure in Native American traditions suggests the possibility of fluidity, movement and multiple meanings.

Vizenor contends that Native American oral traditions are “language games, comic discourse rather than mere responses to colonialist demands or social science theories.... Tribal literatures are the world rather than a representation” (*Narrative* 4). Vizenor challenges critics and scholars who minimize written tribal literature as merely a response to Euro-American colonialism or reduce its importance to the level of representation. He argues that Native American tribal literature cannot be thus contained and in fact defies and transgresses any move to contain it. Tribal literatures are more than simple stories or responses to Euro-American colonialism; rather, such literature reflects a longer tradition of living storytelling that serves to reflect and create communal identity. Like tribal literature, Trickster also transcends the boundaries placed around

him. “The trickster is a communal sign, a comic holotrope and a discourse,” Vizenor writes, “not a real person or a tragic metaphor in an isolated monologue” (*Narrative* 196). Because Trickster stories usually contain a character or characters identified as “Trickster” who gets himself into trouble, it is tempting to identify Trickster simply as a character just as it is tempting to reduce tribal literature to a definite interpretation; however, as Vizenor insists, such a temptation must be resisted because it denies Trickster discourse its full power.

Native American Trickster discourse “is a communal sign” relying on four voices: “the author, narrator, characters and audience” (Vizenor *Narrative* 188). The interaction between the four voices creates a polyglossia – a complex and multivoiced story with no clear “true” or “correct” version. Trickster is always in motion, always reinterpreted, and reimagined. Andrew Wiget argues that traditional Trickster narratives “shift the burden of meaning from the cognitive sphere to the moral one....Instead of asking, What is Truth in the matter – an unanswerable question... – one must ask, What is right?” (92-3). The circling, contradictory Trickster narrative exposes the limitations of “official” historical accounts and suggests that cultural survival rests not in the certainty of factual truth, but on the shifting ground of interpretation, adaptation, and ethics.

Trickster narratives reveal the vital links between language and survival. Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) writes, “Indigenous wisdom traditions throughout the world hold great reverence for the sacred power of words and stories; these stories can create the world or destroy it, and each person is called upon to treat words carefully....And often these stories are concerned with our ideas of *home*” (emphasis in original; 46). In

traditional Trickster stories and in contemporary stories that draw on trickster discourse, the bonds between Native people and homelands are reinforced and complicated. Just as trickster discourse warns against singular interpretations, tribal literature that engages with concepts of “home” and identity cannot be contained in myopic readings based in Western European and Euro-American literary traditions. Justice, arguing for a tribal-centered criticism, suggests that “an understanding of community [is] important to a nuanced reading of the text” (10). To avoid being “tricked” into misreading and partial understanding, readers must consider specific cultural and tribal contexts and histories.

Justice argues that non-Natives most often represent nineteenth-century forced removal as “a regrettable but temporary blight on the innate virtue of the United States and its citizenry” (47). However, he continues, for many Native American groups removal is not simply a historical event that happened in the past. Instead, removal is “a trauma that continues to reverberate in the memory and cultural expressions” (Justice 47) of Native groups today. The removal trails that are etched across the American landscape disrupted traditional migration routes, hunting paths, and lifeways. In many Native American oral and written narratives the legacies of that disruption continue to shift and develop with the living memory of the people.

Though there were multiple removal trails, two that left some of the deepest scars were the Navajo “Long Walk” and the Cherokee “Trail of Tears.” Thousands of Navajo and Cherokee were forced along these routes en masse. For the Navajo, the Long Walk was followed by a return to their sacred homeland, while for the Cherokee, the Trail of Tears ended with the necessity to adapt to a new home. In both cases, the walkers and

their descendents identify these removal trails as significant events in their histories. Both removals continue to appear in Native writings as historical trauma and also as sites for reimagining and redefining issues of sovereignty and self-determination. As thousands of Navajo and Cherokee trudged along these trails away from their traditional lands, movement, particularly walking, became a site of complicated and conflicted meanings. Native American writers and storytellers frequently use images of walking to grapple with complex issues of sovereignty and self-determination, traditional storytelling, and narratives of the deep personal and cultural damage caused by forced removal.

The body of written and oral stories from the Navajo Long walk and the Cherokee Trail of Tears is large and multifaceted. This chapter will necessarily focus on a few select and representative texts. The section on the Navajo Long Walk will center on the oral histories recorded in the anthology *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period*. This text offers a collection of forty narratives told by the relatives of survivors of the Long Walk to Navajo interviewers and translators. Together these stories present a rich tapestry of experiences and memories. This section will also include discussion of Tiana Bighorse's text *Bighorse the Warrior*, a collection of Tiana's father Gus Bighorse's stories. The section will end with an analysis of Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso's poem "In 1864," which tells the story of Tapahonso's great-grandmother's experiences on the Long Walk. The section on the Cherokee Trail of Tears analyzes Diane Glancy's (Cherokee) novel *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears*. This novel, though a fictional account written by a single author, is told through the experiences of over forty narrators

as they walk along the Trail of Tears to Indian Territory. While these texts do not cover all of the nuances of Navajo and Cherokee experiences along removal trails, examining these texts together allows a discussion of some of the important ways Navajo and Cherokee storytellers and writers employ images of movement and walking to challenge conventional historical records and propose new ways of thinking about the relationship between native cultures, land, story, and walking itself.

### **Navajo Memories of the Long Walk**

I shall tell my children about the horror, and they shall tell their children. We can never forget what happened. In the future, if we survive, we must remember every detail. We must remember that we were made to walk the whole distance in the shadow of their guns. That we were made to bear their contempt in silence. We did not know if we would live from one day to the next. We did not know if we were marching into oblivion.

(Morris 23)

Navajo writer Irwin Morris's text, *From the Glittering World: A Navajo Story* (1997), brings together traditional Navajo stories, family narrative, and memoir. Morris begins his text with the Navajo creation and emergence story, an account of how the Navajo came to be in the fifth or "glittering" world. He then narrates a story of the Long Walk, the Navajo's subsequent internment at Fort Sumner, or *Hwééldi*, and their journey back to their homeland, *Diné Bikéyah*. The rest of the text is primarily composed of stories from Morris's own life, punctuated by a few more traditional tales, including a chapter

dedicated to a story of “*Ma’ii jool dlooshiI* (Peripatetic Coyote).” By framing his own memoir with traditional sacred and secular stories and a relation of the Long Walk, Morris identifies the Long Walk period as a critical moment in the evolving consciousness of the Navajo Nation. L.R. Bailey suggests that “[e]ven after their release from captivity, Navajos would reckon all future events from that day” (1).<sup>34</sup> In addition to pointing to the centrality of the Long Walk in Navajo history, Morris’s joining of the Navajo origin story with the story of *Hwééldi* also suggests the key importance of movement and walking in Navajo cultural identity.

The Navajo story of creation and emergence traces the people’s movement from the first world to the fifth world. The story begins in the first world, called Running-Pitch place, or *Jahdokonth* (Klah 39). The first world is inhabited by spirit people, *Nílch’i Dine’é*, and the Holy People, *Hashch’éeéh Dine’é* (Morris 3). Different versions of the story include different accounts for why the people left the first world, and who they were. For example, in Hasteen Klah’s version of the story, First Man and First Woman were in the first world from the beginning, whereas in Irwin Morris’s version, they were created from ears of corn in the Fourth World. However, each version recounts the journey from one world into the next and the creation of more animals and geographical features in each world. As the people move from world to world they learn how to plant and reap corn and other crops, incest taboos are established, witchcraft is created, and First Man and First Woman people the world. By the time they emerge into the fifth, or glittering, world, many Navajo traditions and sacred places have been developed and the people bring with them an extensive collection of stories. In the fifth

world, First Man finds a baby who becomes Changing Woman. Changing Woman “made more people by rubbing skin from under her arms and from under her breasts. These were the four original clans: *Honágháahnii*, *Bit’ahnii*, *Hashtl’ishnii*, and *Tódich’li’nii*” (Morris 15). The boundaries of the new homeland are marked with “four sacred mountains made of soil from the lower worlds” (Morris 12). Morris ends his version of the creation and origin story by writing, “It is said that so long as *Diné* remain within this boundary, we will have the blessings and protection of the Holy People. So long as we remain within these boundaries we will be living in the manner that the Holy People prescribed for us” (15).

*Diné Bikéyah*, the Navajo’s homeland, stretches over thousands of square miles, so being “in place” does not preclude the possibility of movement over large areas land. According to Klah, movement is a vital aspect of traditional Navajo stories. “[E]ach Medicine Man travels in search of his knowledge,” he contends. “The Gods also are great wanderers. [...] The country where the hero of myth wanders, or where the believing Navajo now lives, is very full of possibilities of adventure and mystery and power” (18). Larry Evers argues that “the principal theme of [Navajo] songs, motion, is a major theme in all of Navajo culture. It is estimated that there are over 350,000 distinct conjugations of the verb ‘to go’ in Navajo. It is the most common verb in the language, somewhat equivalent to our verb ‘to be’” (“By this Song I Walk”). Many traditional Navajo ceremonial songs and chants repeat refrains of “walking,” “moving,” and “wandering.” For instance, the song “House Made of Dawn,” that occurs on the ninth night of the Night Chant concludes:

Happily, as they scatter in different directions, they will regard you.

Happily, as they approach their homes, they will regard you.

Happily may their roads back home be on the trail of pollen.

Happily may they all get back.

In beauty I walk.

With beauty before me, I walk.

With beauty behind me, I walk.

With beauty below me, I walk.

With beauty above me, I walk.

With beauty all around me, I walk.

It is finished in beauty,

It is finished in beauty,

It is finished in beauty,

It is finished in beauty. (Bierhorst 329-30)

This chant suggests the power of walking home along the “trail of pollen.”<sup>35</sup> The walking of the people within the chant is mirrored by the movement of the chant itself; the progression of the Night Chant suggests the rhythm of footsteps as the people journey home.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, a section from one of the versions of the Blessingway recorded by Leland Wyman repeats the phrase “I walk out” at the end of each line (*Blessingway* 535-536), and another version repeats the phrase “as I thereby go about” (*Blessingway* 561-562). Many of the ceremonial songs recorded by Klah use similar phrasings. For example, Klah’s “The Old Age Spirits” repeats the refrain “From far away they are

coming” (154), both of the songs he includes from the “First Puberty Ceremony” end each line with “she moves” (152-153), and his “Song of the White Shell Prayer-Sticks” repeats, “I wander about, I – beautiful – wander about” (157).<sup>37</sup> Wyman writes that Navajo chantways are “[t]he means for bringing dangerous elements under control, exorcising ghosts, restoring harmony, curing disease, and rendering the patient immune to further contamination” (*Mountainway* 5). Evers suggests that in the chantways it is specifically *movement* which restores balance: “In the chantways themselves the idea of restoration through ritual motion is central. As the hero of the Night Chant story approaches his goal, he is encouraged by his supernatural companion; ‘Fear not. Your body is holy. You are holy as you travel.’ The very act of traveling sanctifies” (“By this Song I Walk”). The preponderance of images of moving and migrating across land in these songs in addition to the rhythmic movement of the repeated lines indicate that a key method of achieving balance is through walking.

Luci Tapahonso writes that many secular and informal Navajo stories also “indicate distances over a wide area, mostly desert, sometimes mountain” (“Come” 76). “Distance,” she argues, “is perhaps important only in the convenience of renewal, of going back to renew yourself. This philosophy accepts adaptation, and it allows for change. Renewal is possible wherever there is distance, and wherever there is space and land” (“Come” 80). Tapahonso’s statement suggests that being “in place” and being in movement are not separate ideas for Navajo people, but rather depend on one another to create a sense of identity and the possibility of renewal. Unlike the neighboring Pueblo peoples, the Navajo did not become townspeople but kept moving freely over their land

(Arthur, Bingham, and Bingham 87). Walking across *Diné Bikéyah* provides a sense of connection to the landscape and a validation of cultural and personal identity.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Navajo people's ability to move freely across their homeland was being threatened. Policies of Native American Removal set into motion in 1830 with the signing of the Indian Removal Act continued to reverberate as the United States pushed its boundaries westward. As Euro-American explorers and settlers imagined themselves embarking on a triumphant westering journey, they found their progress impeded by the thousands of Native American peoples who had lived on these lands for centuries. The land was not empty or free from conflict. In the American Southwest, Euro-American settlers found a pre-existing struggle for land and resources among the New Mexicans of Spanish and Mexican descent, the Navajo, and other tribes such as the Comanche and the Ute.<sup>38</sup> Raids on sheep and cattle were frequent as were forays to steal women and children to be sold into slavery. Although these attacks were perpetrated both by and against the Navajo, blame was placed squarely on their shoulders.<sup>39</sup>

With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 that marked the end of the war between the United States and Mexico, the New Mexican territory became part of the United States. In the ensuing years the U.S. government met several times with Navajo leaders in an effort to arrange treaties; however, they did not take into account that the Navajo did not have a central governing body, but "constitut[ed] a series of autonomous groups with highly localized leadership patterns" (Iverson 25). Often these groups were organized around matrilineal kinship clans. The majority of these scattered

groups had no voice at the treaty table. So when Governor David Meriwether proposed a treaty to a gathering of 1,500-2,000 Navajo in 1854, the treaty only reflected the agreement of a small faction of the Navajo people (Bailey 66). The treaty included “a reservation designated by the President of the United States, annuities, and the protection by the government from New Mexican encroachments” (Bailey 67). On July 18, the treaty was ratified and the Navajo “received the first in a series of reservations that would gradually reduce their lands to but a fraction of what was traditionally theirs, and a continued effort to move [them] westward” (Bailey 70).

In the years that followed, pressures continued to mount and raids and skirmishes with the U.S. army persisted. In addition, Navajo lands were beginning to be seen as rich sources of wealth because of their potential for grazing and mining. In 1862, the new military commander of the territory, James Carleton, proposed a policy against the Navajo whereby they would be gathered

“little by little, on a reservation, away from their haunts, and hills, and hiding-places of their country, and then...to be kind to them; there teach their children how to read and write; teach them the arts of peace...; the truths of Christianity. Soon they would acquire new habits, new ideas, new modes of life; the old Indians [would] ...die off, and carry with them all their latent longings for murdering and robbing.” (qtd in Bailey 148)

The campaign against the Navajo commenced in July of 1863. The first blow was the destruction of the Navajo’s fields and planting grounds “within a forty mile radius of Cañon Bonito,” the site of Fort Defiance in the southern portion of Navajo country near

Window Rock on what is now the border between Arizona and New Mexico Arizona (Bailey 156). When winter came, the Navajo had to contend with not only military pressure, but also starvation. As a result, more and more groups traveled to Fort Defiance and surrendered. On March 4 of 1864, more than 2,000 Navajo began the nearly three-month Long Walk to Fort Sumner in eastern New Mexico. They were followed by thousands more.

The conditions the Navajo found at *Hwééldi* (their name for Fort Sumner) were terrible. Because attempts at farming were thwarted by insects and the elements, “the government provided rations which amounted to about twenty ounces a day per person” (*Oral Histories* 8). Wood for cooking was scarce and the drinking water was alkaline. Clifford Trafzer writes, “[t]hose who survived starvation, disease, and the freezing weather were expected to work, digging canals, building hogans, tilling fields, and building a fort” (194). The reservation at Fort Sumner was little more than a concentration camp. In 1868, prominent Navajo leaders including Manuelito and Barboncito traveled to Washington to take up their peoples’ plight with President Andrew Johnson (Trafzer 239). Though Johnson did not commit himself to a course of action, he sent General William Tecumseh Sherman and Samuel Tappen to Fort Sumner to assess the situation (Trafzer 240).<sup>40</sup> Once there, Sherman negotiated an agreement with the Navajo: they would be allowed to return to a reservation on their homeland.<sup>41</sup> In the middle of June 1868, the first groups of Navajo began the long journey home.

Recorded in recent decades and narrated by the descendents of the walkers, Navajo accounts of removal and return provide a complex picture of the Long Walk from

Navajo country to Fort Sumner and their return walk four years later. Though diverse in their length, focus, and purpose, many of these stories are linked through a recurrence of several key themes which often are tied to portrayals of walking. Storytellers describe the difficult and painful movement the walkers experienced, the added weight of carrying children that parents and grandparents struggled with, and the army's killing of those too weak or tired to keep up. However, they also recall moments when the walkers reclaimed their agency by singing as they walked and the painful but ultimately triumphant walk home.

For the Navajo, the Long Walk changed the meaning of walking and moving across the land. The walking they experienced on the journey to *Hwééldi* broke their bodies and displaced them from their land. Away from *Diné Bikéyah*, they discovered that "the land does not know us" (Morris 20). The Long Walk threatened to disrupt the vital links between movement, land, and identity; forced migration robbed the people of their freedom of movement and therefore their sovereignty. Yet despite the physical and mental hardship, images of walking also offered a vital means of redefining the horrors of forced migration. In the Navajo accounts of the Long Walk period that have circulated for generations within families and clans, images of walking offer a language for expressing pain and renewal; the tragedy of removal and the power of reclaiming the freedom to walk across *Diné Bikéyah*. Like Trickster discourse, descriptions of walking in these narratives defy singular interpretations and encourage listeners and readers to reassess their preconceptions of the historical events of the Long Walk.

In the early 1970s, Ruth Roessel, Director of the Navajo Studies Program at the Navajo Community College, led an effort to collect oral stories of the Long Walk “handed down by the Navajo people themselves and which reflect the Navajos’ view of the events described” (Roessel xii). All of the stories in the anthology were “collected by Navajos from Navajos and translated by Navajos” (Roessel xv). Many of the family stories collected in the resulting text, *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period*, describe the Long Walk itself very briefly; however, nearly all of them include the detail that the journey was made “on foot.” For example, in his retelling of his grandparents’ account of the Long Walk, Charley Sandoval recalls, “I was never told about the number of people who made the journey, but they traveled on foot” (142). Florence Charley’s great-grandmother told her they “walked all the way hundreds of miles” (149). Ernest Nelson’s grandmother told him a similar account of the journey: “Almost all of them had to walk the whole way – maybe three hundred miles or more” (172). Mose Denejolie’s grandparents, “told us they helplessly walked the whole way” (242). In these brief accounts, images of walking serve as a method for expressing multiple ideas at once. Sandoval, Charley, Nelson, and Denejolie convey the hardships endured as well as the distance their relatives were forced to travel away from their homeland. Sandoval points out that although he doesn’t know how many Navajo traveled to *Hwééldi*, he knows that they walked the whole way, and both Charley and Nelson include the idea that the people walked a long, long way. Further, Denejolie’s use of the word “helplessly” stresses the emotional toll of forced walking. The emphasis on forced walking over a long distance highlights the deep suffering caused by uprooting the Navajo. If movement within *Diné*

*Bikéyah* provides a space for healing and renewal, the forced movement of the Navajo away from *Diné Bikéyah* disrupted cultural cohesion and threatened to destroy the people on physical and psychic levels.

Another thread that appears in several Long Walk narratives is reports of Navajo who are killed by the army for failing to walk fast enough. Trafzer argues that the army's murdering of Navajo who are too sick or tired to keep up is "one of the most common themes running through the Navajo oral tradition" (193). The Navajo storytellers who share these accounts present them as moments of deep inhumanity and tragedy.<sup>42</sup>

Howard Gorman shares a story handed down through generations of his family:

[The Long Walk] was inhuman because the Navajos, as they got tired and couldn't continue to walk farther, were just shot down....This is how the story was told by my ancestors. It was said that those ancestors were on the Long Walk with their daughter, who was pregnant and about to give birth....[T]he daughter got tired and weak and couldn't keep up with the others or go any further because of her condition. So my ancestors asked the Army to hold up for a while to let the woman give birth. But the soldiers wouldn't do it. They forced my people to move on, saying that they were getting behind the others. The soldiers told the parents that they had to leave their daughter behind. "Your daughter is not going to survive, anyway; sooner or later she is going to die," they said in their own language. "Go ahead," the daughter said to her parent, "things might come out all right with me." But the poor thing was mistaken, my

grandparents used to say. Not long after they moved on, they heard a gunshot from where they had been a short time ago. “Maybe we should go back and do something, or at least cover the body with dirt,” one of them said. By that time one of the soldiers came riding up from the direction of the sound. He must have shot her to death. That’s the way the story goes. (30-1)

Gorman’s story lays bare the deep physical and emotional struggle faced by the Navajo on the Long Walk. The brutal killing of the pregnant woman reveals a larger assault on women and families. In *Bighorse the Warrior*, Tiana Bighorse tells a similar story.<sup>43</sup> Narrating in the voice of her father she states, “People were shot down on the spot if they say they are tired or sick or if they stop to help someone. If a woman is in labor with a baby, she is killed. There is absolutely no mercy” (34). In Gorman and Bighorse’s accounts, the inability to keep moving is met with death; beyond the physical and emotional pain of walking away from *Diné Bikéyah*, the Navajo are forced to walk at a particular pace and in a particular way. In these accounts the people find their subjectivity removed and their survival is intimately bound up in their ability to keep on walking. Further, women are killed because they are in labor and people are killed if they stop to help someone who can no longer walk, suggesting an attempt to destroy familial as well as communal bonds through removal.

In the narratives they tell about imposed walking that disrupts communal identity, the storytellers also integrate images of walking that reclaim and bolster those damaged connections. One of the images that emerges is that of parents carrying their children

along the trail. Rita Wheeler's grandfather told her about the "slow process" to *Hwééldi* and the "babies and some children being carried by their parents and relatives" (84).

Herbert Zahne's grandfather had a brother who "was just a little boy, not old enough to travel on foot; so he carried the boy on his back the whole way" (232). Ernest Nelson relates, "The women folks and the men folks carried most of the children, and when they got tired others would take turns" (172). On one level, carrying children conveys the brutal physical effect of the forced walk; if those who cannot keep up are killed, one would assume that, were they not carried, these children too would be killed, and carrying them makes the walk much more difficult for their parents and relatives.

However, beyond illustrating the physical and emotional toll of the walk, these images of walking while carrying children also indicate a refusal to accept the destruction of communal and familial identity. In the midst of the horrors of the Long Walk, many of the storytellers include these descriptions of cooperation and compassion that redefine even brutal and forced walking as an experience with the potential to strengthen bonds.

In reimagining the Long Walk as a potential site to redefine experience by refusing the cultural destruction of removal and insisting on communal strength and support, several walkers incorporate traditional Navajo stories and chants into their narratives. Such inclusions work to reintegrate the experiences along the walk into a larger narrative of the Navajo people. Reid Gómez (Navajo) argues, "The stories are alive; we participate in them, along with the ancestors – the spirit beings – and with our enveloping land base. The storyteller has participated in the movement of the people, their travels, and their escapes, all experienced within the context and creation of the

stories” (160-61). He continues, “Everything is changing. Everything is remaining the same. The stories do not change but have innumerable versions and allow unlimited possibility in the changing world, countless possibility for making more stories and restoring *hohzo* [a Navajo term meaning a state of beauty]” (165). By including traditional songs and stories, the Navajo walkers and storytellers perform an act of integration and resistance. For example, Tezbah Mitchell relates the story her grandmother told her about running away from *Hwééldi*. After running into some nearby mountains, the girl saw a brown bear that seemed to motion to her. “This big animal,” Mitchell relates, “was her guide and protector for three days as they traveled together” (252). In this story, Mitchell’s grandmother aligns herself with stories of Sun and Changing Woman who often had bears as guardians and protectors (Pavlik 479). By connecting her experience on the Long Walk with those of central figures in traditional Navajo story and song, Mitchell’s grandmother creates a sense of continuity and strength. Her individual story becomes another version of Sun and Changing Woman and so participates in a larger communal story.

Stories of resistance and escape also connect to trickster discourse. Bighorse tells the story of a young man seeking to escape capture and transportation to *Hwééldi*. He finds himself cornered on a steep cliff. “[W]hen he gets to the edge, he looks down,” Bighorse relates. “It is a long way down there. Then he sees a tree called *ch’ódeenínii* (Douglas fir). This is a young, really tall fir tree. He doesn’t stop to think. He just jumps off the cliff and catches the tip of the tree, and the tree doesn’t break. It just bends down like rubber. [...] It puts him on the ground safely, and the tree flips back up” (25). When

the soldiers get to the edge of the cliff they look down and see him walking away on the bottom of the canyon. “They can’t figure out how he ever got down there in the canyon” (25). Though not a traditional Trickster story, this anecdote connects to Trickster’s penchant for misdirection and confusion. Further, like Trickster, the young man in the story is able to utilize his deep understanding of the land to evade the soldiers who are part of a larger mission to remove him from the land that they know nothing about. Narratives of escaping or otherwise thwarting the army through superior geographical knowledge open a space in the oral stories of the Long Walk for the possibility of reimagining and rethinking interpretations. Bighorse’s story warns the audience not to emulate the army who cannot fathom how the man reached the bottom of the canyon safely; the story warns against rigid thinking and easy understanding. Vizenor argues that trickster narratives disrupt attempts to isolate and translate experience into a single meaning. “The trickster,” he writes, “is not a presence or a real person but a semiotic sign in a language game, in a comic narrative that denies presence” (*Narrative Chance* 204). The story of the young man escaping capture and detention by tricking the army disrupts any pat definition of the Long Walk and draws attention to the possibility of imagining an alternate history.

In addition to drawing connections between experience and cultural knowledge through story, the storytellers also remember the walkers’ use of story and song on the trail itself as a means of understanding and claiming the Long Walk. Bighorse states, “Everybody has to know something – maybe a ritual or a song – to be safe from the enemies or starvation or sickness or freezing. They have to remember, to keep it in their

mind when the enemies are all around them....There is a song too. They call it a traveling song, wherever you go it keeps you safe....This is how lots of Navajos survive” (26-7). John Beyale, Sr. tells the story passed on to him that his great-grandfather, Gish’néétíní, “sang the Blessing Way ceremonial song all the way” (*Oral History* 42). Gish’néétíní’s singing is an act of reclaiming power and redefining experience. The Navajo trace the origin of the Blessingway to “just after the Emergence at Emergence Place rim itself” (Wyman *Blessingway* 6). The Blessingway is thus explicitly tied to *Diné Bikéyah*, and singing the Blessingway while walking links the walk to the journeys within Navajo sacred traditions.

For many Navajo storytellers, the return from *Hwéeldi* to *Diné Bikéyah* marked the return to the part of them that exists in a particular landscape. Avery Luna (Navajo) explains, “If we have to move to a new place...if we go away from the things that make us what we are, we will no longer be the same people” (qtd. in Arthur, Bingham, and Bingham 217). Though filled with pain and difficulty, the walk back did not have the same sense of isolation and despair because they were returning to their homeland. Manuelito, one of the Navajo leaders, reported, “When we saw the top [of one of our four sacred mountains] ... we wondered if it was our mountain, and we felt like talking to the ground we loved it so” (qtd. in Marks 181). Tiana Bighorse’s father recalls the reaction of one elderly Navajo woman who, when she sees Mount Taylor in the distance, cries out, “‘Mountain! We are home!’ and she faints. Then she gets really sick, and she dies two days later – dies from being so happy” (56). Harry Pioche’s grandfather told him that “[a]fter the Navajos returned to their homeland, the condition of the land returned to

normal. It was believed that the Navajo land needed THE PEOPLE to inhabit it in order to prosper” (*Oral History* 95). Once the journey back to *Diné Bikéyah* is completed, both the people and the land are able to find balance. Movement, story, land, and people are brought back into alignment and the Diné have reclaimed their subjectivity through the recovery of their freedom to walk across their land.

Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso draws upon oral narratives in her poem about the Long Walk, “In 1864.” Tapahonso’s poem reflects the living memory of the Long Walk, the idea that “[t]o the Navajo, the Long Walk happened last week” (Iverson qtd. in Bighorse). In her poem Tapahonso remembers the still living stories of the Long Walk, and in so doing, she participates in the ongoing recollection and reclamation of history. She builds her poem through an accumulation of stories that reshape the linear structure of time, allowing “the ‘past’ to intrude into the ‘present’” (Gould 799). Movement across distance remains a central image: As the speaker’s car passes near Fort Sumner she recalls a story about a Navajo electrician who once put up power lines here, and his story recalls the story of the Navajo Long Walk. The land evokes stories filled with images of walking that bring together the physical journey of the Navajo with movement and migration in the Navajo tradition. The constellation of stories and meanings signifies a living and continuing people.

“In 1864” begins with the speaker and her daughter driving along the highway near Fort Sumner, New Mexico. As they drive they tell stories and the “stories and highway beneath / became a steady hum. The center lines were a blurred guide” (*Sáanii* 3-4). Tapahonso creates a new way of moving; whereas the cadence in traditional

Navajo chant may take on the rhythm of foot falls, here story takes on the steadiness of a car whizzing down the highway. Though the agent of motion is changed, story and movement across the land remain intertwined.

The first story the speaker tells her daughter is a recent story, one that happened “a few winters ago” (6). In the story, an electrician installing power lines in that part of eastern New Mexico looks out across the plains and notices that “The land was like / he imagined from the old stories – flat and dotted with shrubs” (11-12). Left alone at the campsite one evening he “heard the cries and moans carried by the wind / and blowing snow. He heard the voices wavering and rising / in the darkness” (18-20). He understands that he is hearing the voices of his ancestors who were forced to *Hwééldi*; the land has absorbed their pain. He sings, “humming songs / he remembered from his childhood....He sang for himself, his family, and the people whose spirits / lingered on the plains, in the arroyos, and in the old windswept plants” (20-4). The electrician seeks to balance the pain and anguish he hears in the voices on the plain through traditional Navajo songs. However, the pain of the Long Walk remains linked to the land and he decides that he must return to *Diné Bikéyah* to find balance: “The place contained the pain and cries of his relatives, / the confused and battered spirits of his own existence” (30-1). The electrician recognizes the lasting impact of the Long Walk; the horror and tragedy of the forced march to *Hwééldi* continue to reverberate in the very land the walkers crossed over. He is reminded of the importance of his own land, his own home.

At the end of the story of the electrician, the speaker and her daughter stop for “a Coke and chips” (32), and then resume their storytelling. The speaker begins the next

story with the words of her aunt: “My aunt always started the story saying, ‘You are here / because of what happened to your great-grandmother long ago’” (33-4). By using her aunt’s opening, the speaker recalls the traditional openings of stories and ties the story, herself, and her daughter to their family history. Further, the line break after “‘You are here’” emphasizes the connection of the story to the land and the audience’s place in *Diné Bikéyah*.

The bulk of the speaker’s story of the Long Walk centers on the journey itself. Tapahonso’s retelling of the Long Walk echoes the oral family stories of the Long Walk. She, like them, emphasizes the distance they walked, the children they carried, and the fate of those who fell behind. Further, in her retelling she takes on the voice of her great-grandmother and tells the story in first person. “The journey began,” the speaker tells her daughter,

and the soldiers were all around us.

All of us walked, some carried babies. Little children and the elderly stayed in the middle of the group. We walked steadily each day, stopping only when the soldiers wanted to eat or rest.

We talked among ourselves and cried quietly.

We didn’t know how far it was or even where we were going.

All that we knew for certain was that we were leaving Dinetah, our home.

...

We had such a long distance to cover.

Some old people fell behind, and they wouldn’t let us go back to help them.

It was the saddest thing to see – my heart hurts so to remember that.

Two women were near the time of the births of their babies,

and they had a hard time keeping up with the rest.

Some army men pulled them behind a huge rock, and we screamed out loud

When we heard the gunshots. (50-66)<sup>44</sup>

The poem creates a sense of community and historical consciousness. Like Tiana Bighorse, the speaker tells the story of the Long Walk in the first person, making the events immediate and real. The first person voice, Tapahonso writes, “is the stronger voice and truer to the person who originally told the story” (*Sáanii xi*). As she and her daughter drive along the same land, they relive the pain and fear of the Long Walk and time becomes irrelevant. Just as the center line of the highway blurs, so too does the line between past and present. The two journeys become one, though one is in a car in the late twentieth century and the other is on foot in the mid-nineteenth century. Even in the recitation of a story of cultural disruption Tapahonso’s poem insists on the strength and endurance of a people with a long history of walking. “We walked steadily,” remembers the speaker (51).

Storytelling is necessary for the psychological, cultural, and *physical* survival of the Navajo. Tiana Bighorse writes in her father’s voice, “I want to talk about my tragic story, because if I don’t, it will get into my mind and get into my dream and make me crazy....That is why we warriors have to talk to each other. We wake ourselves up, get out of the shock. And that is why I tell my kids what happened, so it won’t be forgot” (81-2). Bighorse stresses that the importance of storytelling goes beyond the preservation

of a particular story or event. Similarly, Tapahonso's speaker stresses the centrality of story:

There were many who died on the way to *Hwééldi*. All the way we told each other, "We will be strong as long as we are together."

I think that was what kept up alive. We believed in ourselves and the old stories that the holy people had given us.

"This is why," she would say to us. "This is why we are here.

Because our grandparents prayed and grieved for us." (78-80)

The speaker ends the story by returning from her great-grandmother's voice to her aunt's voice. In her aunt's voice the speaker reminds her daughter of the importance of the story itself. Just as the walkers kept themselves alive through their belief in themselves and their stories, the speaker's aunt called on her, as the speaker calls on her own daughter, to continue to believe in the power of stories and in particular the power of the story of the Long Walk. Further, in repeating the words "we" and "us" and the speaker draws attention to Navajo identity as unified and consistent across time and space.

Tapahonso employs the oral histories of the Long Walk that emphasize the role of story and place in survival. Like the electrician who sings for himself, his family, and the voices of his ancestors, those same ancestors also reach to story and song for strength and renewal. The stories provide communal coherence and suggest that even in the face of adversity and pain the Navajo can draw upon their stories and the land itself to walk with agency and determination.

Tapahonso's poetry, Morris's writings, and the oral stories of countless Navajo people create a powerful, multivocal narrative of the Long Walk. Through the multiple versions of the story told in the voices of many different storytellers, the meaning of the Long Walk resists a single interpretation. The story of the Long Walk is a story of trauma and loss, but it is also a story of community and survival. That many of these stories turn to images of walking for a site to express both cultural fragmentation and cultural continuance suggests the deep connection between imagination and mobility. By reimagining and identifying with the significance of walking the Long Walk, Navajo storytellers and writers open a space that challenges historical "facts" and encourages cultural cohesion and survival.

**Reclaiming the Cherokee Trail of Tears in Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear***

We walked across a huge land. It had entered us. Along with the  
cornfields we left. I was full of trees. Full of corn. Full of walking. My  
feet churned inside me at night as if they entered my body when I slept.

(Glancy 176)

Set during the 1838 Cherokee Trail of Tears, twenty-four years before the Navajo Long Walk, Cherokee writer Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* (1996) follows the path of the third detachment of Cherokee forced first from their homes in northern Georgia, northeastern Alabama, southwestern North Carolina, and southeastern Tennessee into stockades around Cherokee country and then from the stockades along the approximately 900-mile northern route from the Cherokee Agency at

the western tip of North Carolina to the land west of the Mississippi River designated as Indian Territory. The novel is told from the perspectives of more than forty characters including Cherokees, soldiers, bystanders, and ministers, but the primary story follows the Cherokee woman, Maritole, and her family. In imagining the experiences of the trail walkers, Glancy draws upon fragmented Cherokee narratives of the trail, traditional Cherokee myths and stories, letters and diaries from ministers, missionaries, and soldiers, and historical records. What emerges is a compelling story of a community that transforms the violence and fragmentation of forced movement into a source of renewal, identity, and power. Like the Navajo on the Long Walk, Maritole and her fellow walkers survive through their ability to remember and claim their identity via their stories and their physical and spiritual connection to the land they walk across. Glancy's characters locate their strength and continuance in the fluidity of migration and story.

Long familiar with Euro-American land-greed, the Cherokee had recognized adaptation as a key survival strategy and actively sought to cultivate individualistic and societal traits valued by Euro-American society.<sup>45</sup> Paula Mitchell Marks suggests, "The Cherokees' well-tended plowed-and-fenced fields, their increasingly educated population, and their vigorous New Echota government clearly demonstrated their ability to remake their nation along European-American lines without losing its distinctiveness and self-sufficiency" (68-9). However, in their covetous zeal for acquiring Cherokee lands, many settlers and state and federal officials continued to imagine the Cherokee as "wandering savages" who lacked the knowledge and ability to tend and develop the land. Historian Grace Steele Woodward writes that rather than being impressed with Cherokee

“advancement,” ““Georgia flew into a mighty rage. Denouncing the Cherokees as savages, Georgia abandoned both dignity and ethics and through her government, press, and courts, began, in 1820, a vicious attack upon the Cherokees that was to continue for eighteen years”” (qtd. in Conley 106).

With the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and increasing pressure from white settlers, the Cherokee nation began to fracture. Those who favored negotiating a removal treaty with the government felt that continued resistance endangered the Cherokee’s prospect at brokering any sort of profitable deal and risked further violence from white settlers and officials. Finally, in 1835, approximately 300 Cherokee met with U.S. government negotiators in New Echota, Georgia. There a committee of twenty negotiated a treaty of total removal. “None of these men,” Conley argues, “had been authorized by the government or the people of the Cherokee Nation to sign a treaty” (141). Yet the illegal treaty held, and when the Cherokee continued to resist, the federal government sent squads of troops to search out and forcibly remove the Cherokee to dozens of stockades where they were held until the army was ready to start moving them west in 1838. Along the grueling, several-months-long journey to Indian Territory an estimated 4,000 to 8,000 Cherokee perished.<sup>46</sup>

Prior to their tragic experience on the Trail of Tears, the Cherokee culture was filled with stories of movement and migration. In her collection of essays, *The West Pole*, Glancy suggests that for the Cherokee “the agency of travel was renewal” (2). Storytelling, she contends, “says that we began in chaos and forever make cover for the waters over which we exist. And that migration trails still have to be walked. Because in

migration one becomes strong. That is the point of migration” (*West* 32). Migration and storytelling work together, Glancy suggests, to strengthen community and to participate in the remembering and remaking of culture. Even though Glancy characterizes the Cherokee as a largely “sedentary Woodland tribe” who “didn’t migrate,” migration trails etch their way through many traditional Cherokee stories (*West* 2, 28).<sup>47</sup> For example, the most reprinted Cherokee origin myth is the one collected by James Mooney in the late nineteenth century. In this story, the world was covered in water and the animals lived on a rock in the sky that was very crowded. Looking for a new place to live, the animals sent Dâyuni’sî, Water-beetle, to discover what was below the water. Water-beetle dove to the bottom and brought up soft mud, which grew in every direction until it became the earth. The earth was then fastened to the sky with four cords. However, the surface of the earth remained flat, soft, and wet. So Buzzard flew out over the land, flapping his wings and drying the earth. When he came over the Cherokee homeland he was very tired and flew low over the ground. His wings struck the earth and created the valleys and mountains the Cherokee consider sacred. The story goes on to chronicle the creation of animals, plants, and finally people (Mooney 239-40). This story places the Cherokee in their homeland with the creation of the earth; they do not migrate there from another place on the land. Yet the story essentially pairs migration with creation: the movement from the sky rock is made possible by the creation of the world.

As with the Navajo emergence story, there are multiple versions of the Cherokee origin story. These versions also suggest a migration to the Cherokee homeland from somewhere else. One, a southward migration story, was originally recounted by a

Cherokee storyteller to an Englishman named Alexander Longe in 1717 (Conley 1). The storyteller relates:

“[We] belonged to another land far distant from here, and the people increased and multiplied so fast that the land could not hold them, so that they were forced to separate and travel to look out for another country. They traveled so far that they came to another country that was so cold....Yet going still on, they came to mountains of snow and ice.... [We] passed on our journey and at last found [ourselves] so far gone over these mountains till we lost sight of the same and went through darkness for a good space, and then [saw] the sun again, and going on we came to a country that could be inhabited.” (qtd. in Conley 2)

Additionally, a third Cherokee origin story shares the theme of migration from a far off place, though this time that place is an island off the coast of South America. After suffering attacks from seventy different tribes, this version relates, the Cherokee fled the island and wandered for a long time before settling in the Cherokee homeland (Conley 5).

<sup>48</sup> In one form or another, all three of these versions trace the way the Cherokee came to be in their homeland, the center of the earth. However, a crucial difference between these two stories and the origin story Mooney collected is that they are stories of both migration and separation. In these two stories the Cherokee are forced out of their original homeland because of overpopulation or aggression from other peoples. The Cherokee are split apart, with some moving off in search of a new land and some staying behind. Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) contends that while much was lost in these

migrations, the accounts “provid[e] a possibility for community healing through the principles of peoplehood: an engaged relationship with their new homeland, a rededication to the ceremonial history of the People, [and] the renewal of kinship and familial ties” (52). The stories themselves offer these healing principles. “In [the Cherokee] tradition,” Glancy argues, “people do not simply speak about the world, they speak the world into being. What we say is intricately intertwined with what we are and can be. To the Cherokee people, all things in the world have a voice – and that voice carries life. Storying gives shape to meaning” (*West* 66). Each time one of these stories is retold, the storyteller and the audience remember and recreate their connection to the land and to one another. These origin stories reveal and create the vital links between the people, the land, language, and movement.

Trails and paths wind through many other traditional Cherokee stories, reinforcing the links between the people and their homeland. In the Cherokee story of the origin of corn, Selu’s body is moved over the earth and where her blood falls, corn grows (Mooney 245). The story of the first fire centers around the animals’ repeated attempts to take fire from a hollow sycamore tree on an island and carry it home (Mooney 240-41). The trickster tale of Terrapin and Rabbit involves a footrace over four mountain ridges (Mooney 270). Movement in all of these stories reflects back to survival and a sense of place. Vizenor argues, “The sovereignty of motion is mythic, material, and visionary, not mere territoriality, in the sense of colonialism and nationalism. Native transmotion is an original natural unison in the stories of emergence and migration that relates humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other

creations” (*Fugitive Poses* 183). The centrality of motion, Vizenor suggests, is both described by the stories and reinforced by the act of creating and transmitting those stories. The movement of the narrative, the movement within the narrative, and the physical movements across the land are bound together in storytelling.

Diane Glancy was born in 1941 in Kansas City, Missouri. With a Cherokee father and a mother of German and English descent, Glancy grew up between two very different worldviews. She was raised in a Euro-American community and visits to her Cherokee family were few. She writes that growing up, “I had no clear image of myself as a native person. I was a part-Cherokee living on land that has belonged to another tribe” (*West* 2). She recalls, “we weren’t Cherokee enough to be accepted as Indian, nor was I white enough to be accepted as white. I could walk in both worlds; I could walk in neither” (*Cold* 2). Yet, Glancy contends that, “the Native American voice is the one I hear when I write” (*West* 11). She writes that the voices of her Cherokee ancestors spoke to her as she traveled: “They were there beside the highway riding their spirit horses. Migrating with me” (*West* 28). Glancy connects her own Cherokee mixed-blood identity to the movement of travel and the movement of language and story.

Glancy’s novel *Pushing the Bear* follows a group of Cherokee as they narrate their experiences along the Trail of Tears. The novel opens with the historic moment U.S. soldiers began to roundup the Cherokee and move them to stockades in preparation for removal to Indian Country, a moment following years of court and Congressional decisions that slowly stripped many of the eastern tribes of their right to self-governance and their ancestral land. In the novel Maritole and her family are captured and retained in

a stockade on the Hiwassee River in North Carolina. Glancy's novel, like Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative, is organized spatially, following the path the characters walk. Each section begins with the date the Cherokee enter a new state, the name of the state, and a map representing a segment of the Trail of Tears. Amy Elias argues that the structure of the novel "point[s] to how time and space are newly joined in an unnatural reversal of traditional Native American land/time values. What would be a natural link between time (as myth) and space (as landscape) for the Cherokees had become a surreal, nightmarish terrain, unnaturally segmented by surveyor's lines and cut off from their mythic history" (199). By prefacing each section of the novel with Euro-American designations for space and time, Glancy calls attention to the place of the Trail of Tears within the official American histories of westward progress and the myth of the noble savage who obligingly vanishes as Euro-Americans settle the land. Yet the structure also emphasizes the centrality of movement across land. The trail walkers move from North Carolina in September, 1838 across Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, and Arkansas, and finally to Indian Territory, which is today the state of Oklahoma, in February, 1839. And as they walk they are profoundly changed, not just in the negative sense suggested by Elias, but also in a way that allows the characters to embrace their Cherokee identity even while they are experiencing the horror of forced removal. Maritole tells her sister-in-law, "The old land won't forget us, Luthy. We carry it within us wherever we're going" (87). Just twenty pages later Maritole's father states, "[The new land] waits for our hands to bring it life. It knows already we are coming" (107). The land transcends the boundaries placed on it by surveyors and mapmakers. Old land

or new land, Maritole argues, “‘it’s still the same land. Your boundaries don’t mean anything to us’” (125). The trail walkers resist the artificial division of land into states and territories. For Maritole, the land retains its power and its connection to the people: “‘In the mountains (East). In the new territory (West). There would be...a remnant. The land was their power. They were of the earth. The turtle island. They were the...everlasting people’” (151). Glancy calls attention to the centrality of land and movement in the trail walkers’ understanding of community and self, an understanding that is simultaneously fractured and recreated.

The seven sections of the novel correspond to the seven states or territories the walkers pass through. Each section is broken up into brief accounts from several of the trail walkers, their stories overlapping and creating a rich, polyvocal narrative. These multiple voices indicate the novel’s connection to Native American storytelling traditions and also offer an alternate and potentially radical understanding of the place of the Trail of Tears in Cherokee history. The more than forty narrators of *Pushing the Bear* provide readers with a sense of communal storytelling; together their voices suggest multiple ways of experiencing and surviving removal. Some of the voices are those of historical figures, like Chief John Ross, anthropologist James Moody, or Reverend Bushyhead, who led the third contingent of Cherokee along the Trail of Tears. Other voices are those of fictional characters representing the real people who walked the Trail. And still other sections are narrated by communal voices, such as “Voices as They Walked,” “Voices in the Dark,” and even “The Soldiers.” Together these voices form a narrative that is the story of a community, not a single character. In her book of essays, *The West Pole*,

Glancy proposes a new term: “*Coyosmic*. Literary theory according to Coyote” (63). Such a theory would seek to understand Native American literatures from a “tribal-centered criticism....A moving process of saying a story” (63). *Coyosmic* criticism turns on Trickster aesthetics: misdirection, multiplicity, humor, fragmentation, and fluidity. As a *coyosmic* text, *Pushing the Bear* offers alternate ways of understanding the history of the Trail of Tears. Elias argues that the multiple narrators reclaim the Trail and insist on incorporating it as “a *part* of their history” rather than allowing it to “indicate the annihilation of their history” (199). The voices of the trail walkers relocate the Trail of Tears from the tragic story of “the vanishing Native” and turn the Trail into a symbol of cultural strength and the continuation of tradition.

While the structure and narrative voices of *Pushing the Bear* point the reader to the importance of movement and fluidity in cultural continuity, the characters themselves are always moving physically across the land. Throughout the text the narrative voices emphasize physical walking, both its difficulty and its potential for transformation. In the first pages of the novel Maritole remembers the moment when the soldiers came to take her and her husband to the stockades. “My feet would not walk,” she recalls, “and the soldier held me up by my arm. I walked sideways and fell into the cornstalks at the side of the road....I walked like my grandmother before she died, when her knees wouldn’t hold” (4-5). Another walker, Anna Sco-so-tah, similarly relates, “My legs wouldn’t walk....For a moment I thought I was a hen. I flopped on the ground. My brown feathers in the dust” (7). Maritole and Anna experience the moment of removal as a violent separation from the land and physical control of their bodies. As Maritole falls

into the cornstalks she reasons, “They couldn’t remove us. Didn’t the soldiers know we were the land? The cornstalks were our grandmothers....The cornstalks waved their arms trying to hold us. Their voices were the long tassels reaching the air. Our spirits clung to them. Our roots entwined” (4). Disconnection from their homeland disrupts their sense of connection. Anna, alienated from her sense of self, connects her inability to walk to the idea that she has ceased to exist as a woman and has turned into a hen. Maritole recalls the traditional story of Selu, the Corn Mother, who is the spiritual and physical source of the Cherokee. When Maritole imagines her ineffectual body as the frail body of her grandmother she both illustrates her lack of physical power and links herself to the Cherokee’s land and history through the cornstalks that she also recognizes as her grandmothers, as a part of the Cherokee. In these early moments Maritole and Anna understand the Trail as movement away from self, land, and community. As their legs buckle under them and their bodies refuse to walk, they resist separation from their land and their history – grandmothers, animals, corn.

As the characters move onto what will become known as the Trail of Tears, they continue to stress the physical and emotional pain of walking. Elias argues that the narrative voices in *Pushing the Bear* present a Cherokee perspective that “reveals [the Trail of Tears] to be the act of shattering cultural and psychic inhumanity that it was” (201). “The splintering of self into a new, colonial subjectivity is a multiple fracture,” she continues. “Maritole and other survivors of the Trail march must contradictorily renounce their subjectivity in order to perform as colonial subjects. Fragmentation occurs at the level of the psyche itself” (Elias 202). This painful shattering and

splintering of self and community exists outside of representation; the trail walkers cannot fully express such a profound fragmentation. Elaine Scarry argues that pain “does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (4). On the Trail the walkers experience this inarticulateness, the inability to express their pain in language. Quaty Lewis, one of the women walking with Maritole and her family, relates, “In the wagon I heard the old man’s voice moaning. I put my hand to my neck and felt it stir. I didn’t know if it was his voice or my own throat talking” (10). For the trail walkers, particularly in the first half of the novel, physical and psychic pain is too deep to articulate in language. Maritole’s father explains, “Even the sleep of the Cherokee spoke. At night our moans were night crawlers under the weight of the removal” (43). Just as language contracts into moans, movement is reduced from walking to crawling like a night crawler, or earthworm.

Scarry argues that “though there is ordinarily no language for pain, under the pressure of the desire to eliminate pain, an at least fragmentary means of verbalization is available....These verbal strategies revolve around the verbal sign of the weapon or what will eventually be called here the language of ‘agency’” (13). Actual pain cannot be articulated in language, but the *agent* of pain can stand in for the pain itself. As the narrative voices struggle with representing their experience on the Trail, they continually return to images of walking; walking, or the inability to walk, becomes the site of expressing physical pain and cultural disconnection. The voices in *Pushing the Bear* turn to images of walking to describe and therefore limit and control pain; walking as the

cause of pain is also the site to contain pain. Maritole describes her experience of the Trail in Tennessee, the first state they walk across: “Nothing but our feet walking west. The wagons slipping, people crying, soldiers hitting horses, some of them screeching under the whip” (73). The first sentence incorporates the description of violence and fear that follows. The wagons, crying people, violent soldiers, and screeching horses are contained in the sentence, “Nothing but our feet walking west.” Their identity restricted to only their “feet walking,” the walkers are further disconnected from their land and history. Their “feet walking” provide a site for expressing the pain and fear that are too vast and incomprehensible to articulate.

One of Glancy’s narrators, a traditional Cherokee Holy Man walking the Trail with Maritole remembers a conversation he had with Reverend Bushyhead, the Cherokee minister leading their attachment of walkers. The Holy Man comments: “the trail we marched didn’t make sense. It didn’t fit into an understanding of the Christian God. ‘Slip between the worlds,’ I told [Rev. Bushyhead], ‘like our feet slip over the snow’” (128). Elias asserts, “The Cherokee Trail of Tears was, finally, *not* a rational event. It was not an event that one can ‘make sense of’” (200). Instead of “making sense of” the senseless, the Holy Man refocuses on the movement of his feet over the snow and utilizes the concrete experience of walking as a way to grasp the Trail which is essentially ungraspable. As the walkers continue to move over land and through time, they find themselves unable to imagine their destination; they only know they are “marching west toward darkness, toward death” (Glancy *Pushing* 58). Past and future fade away and the world seems composed only of walking. Like her comment, “[n]othing but our feet

walking,” (73), Maritole observes, “We marched as though we weren’t in our own bodies....We didn’t know where we were walking, but we walked silently, following the ones before us” (67-8). Pages and states later she notes, “Even the corn walked. The spirits walked. Even the Great Spirit walked. That’s what we all did in this world-that-walks” (217). As the people walk, so does their world. Sacred entities – corn, spirits, the Great Spirit – all walk alongside them. Walking becomes the only action that can be comprehended; while the reasons behind walking are impenetrable, the walking itself is material and real.

As the narrative voices turn their focus to the action of their bodies, walking suffuses their experience on the Trail and their bodies seem to walk even when they are resting or sleeping. Maritole’s older brother, Tanner, watches his wife Luthy as she sleeps fitfully: “Her legs still walk in the spasms of her delirium” (87). Similarly, when resting at night Maritole notices that her “legs jump with exhaustion” (183). “My feet felt like they were walking,” she remarks, “My legs tingled. I always dreamed they were moving. My knees felt hollow and my legs jerked. I put my hands on them, tried to quiet them like the animals I tamed. I spoke softly to them, told them to be quiet and quit their walking, but they did not hear” (210). Luthy and Maritole’s bodies are in some ways beyond their control and even their understanding. Spasms and jerking muscles reinforce the physicality of their experience, and walking becomes the only concrete reality on the Trail. Images of walking convey a constellation of experiences that are fundamentally unfathomable. Walking encompasses the pain and dislocation caused by the Trail, as well as the possibility of hope and renewal.

Disconnected from their homeland and moving toward the unknown and the unimaginable, the Cherokee on the Trail turn to walking as a potential site to *make* sense of the senseless. War Club, another of Maritole's fellow walkers, reasons with himself:

“What'll we do now?” I asked.

“Why don't we walk?” I answered myself.

“Yes, that's what we'll do” I joined.

“Walk,” I said.

“Walk,” I repeated our conversation.

“Walk,” I repeated once more.

“Walk,” I said to myself again. (188)

Overwhelmed by the incomprehensibility of “this world-that-walks,” War Club recognizes walking not as something forced and alien, but as something he chooses. “Why don't we walk?” he asks himself. By answering, “Yes, that's what we'll do,” War Club begins the process of reimagining the Trail as an event that he can choose to participate in and therefore redefines the meaning of walking. Glancy depicts the Reverend Bushyhead, the Cherokee minister who led the third detachment of Cherokee along the Trail of Tears, similarly struggling to redefine and control walking: “Even the Lord God was a sojourner!” he recalls. “But what did it mean?...Giving our land, that wasn't really ours, back to God. Then we could travel. Maybe that was the idea. If it would help the people walk, then I would tell them” (134). Like War Club's conversation with himself, Bushyhead's ponderings reflect the desire to transform walking from something forced from the outside into something that empowers the

walkers with a sense of agency and even purpose. He turns to his Christian beliefs and imagines the Cherokee wandering like the Hebrews: expelled from their homelands and wandering in pain and hunger, but with the possibility of eventually finding a new place to reside. Faced with the irrationality of the Trail, the walkers begin to look for the possibility to claim and reimagine movement in their own terms.

Yet the image of walking remains elastic and complex, and even as the narrative voices attempt to redefine the Trail, the idea and experience of walking resists easy and simplified explanations. Knobowtee's brother O-ga-na-ya relates a conversation in which the speakers taunt overly rosy interpretations of the Trail:

“In the early days, when we were in the old territory, a Cherokee man wasn't a warrior until he killed or took a prisoner. How many enemies have we conquered in our history? Catawba, Creek, Seneca.”

“You sound like Chief Ross,” Knobowtee said. “You know how he goes on –”

....

“Let's not be discouraged,” Quaty said under her breath.

Now Knobowtee had others talking like him.

“*We must forgive each other, O-ga-na-ya. That's what we learn on the trail. Anger is our enemy.*” Who was Knobowtee mocking now in his North Carolina dialect?

Someone made a choking sound.

“We become human beings through our trials”

“We learn how to feel the soldiers’ bayonets,” Anna Sco-so-tah said.

“We learn how to walk and walk,” Mrs. Young Turkey said.

....

“We learn to walk,” My mother sat beside Aneh, my sister.

“Yep,” Knobowtee answered. “Walk.” (98-9)

The characters bitterly mock the advice of Cherokee leaders such as John Ross and missionaries invoking Christian platitudes. They reveal these methods of coping to be overly simplistic and misleading. As they play with language and dialect, the characters bring into play the language games of trickster discourse. Andrew Wiget argues, “Because what we know is rooted in what we believe, Trickster tales...shift the burden of meaning from the cognitive sphere to the moral one. When the crux of interpretation is recognized as a dilemma, the interpretative stance changes” (92-3). Questioning O-ga-na-ya’s adoption of political and Christian interpretive methods, Knobowtee undercuts what he understands as his brother’s inadequate attempt to incorporate the Trail into a longer Cherokee history of struggle and survival. Such an approach, Knobowtee argues, reduces the significance of the Trail into a single interpretation. He equates O-ga-na-ya’s comments with the impossibility of containing the Trail in trite phrases such as, “we become human being through our trials” or “anger is our enemy.” Knobowtee reveals the hollowness and deceptiveness of these platitudes; they attempt dismissing the horrors of the Trail with the simple idea that struggle makes a people stronger. Knobowtee favors the interpretations of Mrs. Young Turkey and his mother who suggest that the only idea large enough to contain the complexities of the Trail is “we learn to walk.” The phrase

suggests a recalibration of the walkers' relationship to movement itself, a relearning of what walking might mean. The forced marching along the Trail of Tears is a stark contrast to traditional hunting paths and migration routes. Rather than attempting to account for the Trail with overly simplistic interpretations, the walkers favor an interpretation that recognizes the impossibility of containing the constellation of experiences that make up the Trail. "We learn to walk" explodes the attempt to interpret the Trail by offering an image that is at once simple and complex, suggesting the physical movement of the people on the Trail and the complicated personal, cultural, and psychic movements generated by removal.

As Glancy's characters resist the application of politicians' and missionaries' simple interpretations, they begin to reimagine the Trail through their own understanding of themselves as a people. Former Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller integrates the Trail into the larger story of a people who are "survivors of a battle to gain control of our own lives and create our own paths instead of following someone else's" (212). Similarly, in his discussion of Native American storytelling, Reid Gómez (Navajo) notes that "mobility is an act of resistance. Imagination and creativity, practices in an understanding of sovereignty as motion, enact an ideological living and resist physical and spiritual containment" (152). Mobility, Gómez suggests, is inherently about imagination and creation. For the narrative voices in *Pushing the Bear*, walking provides an opening for resistance and agency, a way of creating a different trail even as their feet follow the path delineated by the U.S. government. "Walk steadily," Maritole's father advises her, "and maybe you can forget you walk" (103). Later Maritole hears her

ancestors urging her to keep going: “They said to keep walking. The spirits who had held the raft across the huge Mississippi River told me the road would come to an end and I would see a new land” (210). Maritole’s father and ancestors hint at another option, the prospect that Maritole can *choose* how to walk. After Maritole hears her ancestors’ voices she relates, “When I got up the following morning, I tied a rope around the waist of my skirt and trousers to keep them up. I marched on holding my father’s hand or Luthy’s hand, telling the boys it was a little farther each time they asked” (210). By tying up her pants and realigning herself with her family Maritole takes control of walking the Trail. Another of her fellow walkers, Terrapin Head, makes a similar decision: “[M]y legs pump as if my heart was in them. My feet slip in the snow. My hands pump. My head slarps. Har. I am Big-heart-walking-all-over” (79). Terrapin Head’s act of renaming himself and reimagining walking ties him to the adaptive and resistant qualities of Trickster. Terrapin Head gives himself a new name illustrating not his identity as a captive forced along the Trail, but as a person with agency “walking-all-over.”<sup>49</sup> Further, he envisions the parts of his body uniting in the rhythm of walking as Maritole holds her family members’ hands and walks with them as one. These are moments when the walkers shift the meaning of walking; rather than walking on in pain and delirium, they choose to walk with strength and community.

In reimagining walking as a potential site for strengthening communal unity and identity, Maritole and her fellow walkers draw connections between the power of walking and the power of story. One of the walkers identified only as The Basket Maker argues that “[t]he trail needs stories” (153). Stories, for The Basket Maker, create

meaning and allow patterns to emerge. Maritole's father continues The Basket Maker's thought: "how much more like a basket were our stories? They held our fear and hurt and resentment and anger. They gave us a place to order our disorder, a direction for our directionlessness" (158). Language and stories allow the walkers to begin to narrate their own walk by incorporating their experiences into both traditional stories and new stories made on the Trail. As she walks Luthy perceives the connections between language, land and walking. She muses to herself, "*I am part of the earth as I walk. I am the harvested crops. I should not mind the trail any more than the corn minds the harvest. When I hear the voice of the corn, I know I'm part of the earth....It doesn't matter if I walk or cause the walking. Voice speaks for all who come and go. It travels through time*" (italics in original; 214). Unlike the trite interpretations the walkers mock in O-ga-na-ya's section, Luthy's vision of walking establishes a complex understanding of walking and agency. Language and story transcend simple ideas of storytelling and enter a nuanced relationship with land and identity. By connecting land and language with the movement of the trail walkers, Luthy places the specific experiences of the walkers within a larger framework that "*travels through time.*" This connection, Luthy silently reasons, "*[is] in the corn. It's in the boys. All the same. It doesn't matter*" (214). Luthy's comment, "*It doesn't matter*" is not a statement of despair and defeat; rather it is a realization that her personal experience is reflected and reinforced by a larger communal experience. Her family's life is part of the community and the land, they are not separate. Another walker, Anna Sco-so-tah, articulates this connection by referring to the Cherokee as the earth itself: "We were the land. The red clay people with mouths that

would talk” (179). Maritole also understands this connection when she notices a leaf rustling in the wind. “I watched it again,” she says. “It was telling the story of our march. I would have the tongue of a leaf. I would tell our story, I thought” (172-3). Language opens a space for Luthy, Anna, and Maritole to begin to voice their experience on the Trail. And by articulating experience they can begin to interpret and understand the significance of walking the Trail.

Many of the narrative voices in Glancy’s novel turn to traditional Cherokee stories to illuminate possible ways to interpret walking the Trail. Silko argues that Native American storytelling “comes out of an experience and an understanding of that original view of Creation – that we are all part of a whole; we do not differentiate or fragment stories and experiences” (50). In Cherokee culture, Justice argues, stories “connect the multiple threads of tribal consciousness and experience to illuminate the complexities of Cherokee historical and cultural traditions” (50). Similarly, in an essay from *The West Pole* Glancy writes, “The voice always connects to the something it speaks into being, and bring with it not only the thought or spirit of the speaker but also the accumulated voices that ride upon any single voice”(West 69). In Glancy’s novel, one of the effects of the Trail is to create a sense of disconnection between the walkers and between the walkers and the land. Waking in the dark, Maritole notes that the “fires [have] gone out....The earth was strange to me now” (27). Later she recalls, “I felt separate. On my own. Individual. I’d heard that word. Now I knew what it meant” (201). Maritole struggles along the Trail; though at times she recognizes connection and community, at other moments she feels that walking the Trail has divided her from her community and

left her alone. Her husband, Knobowtee, has abandoned her to walk with his mother and siblings, ignoring matrilineal Cherokee custom that dictates that a husband joins his wife's family. Maritole's own mother and baby have died early on the Trail. She is left often feeling isolated and disconnected. To combat the growing sense of separation, Maritole and the other walkers begin to trace the contours of traditional stories on the Trail. One of the most prominent of these is the Cherokee story of Selu, the woman who brought them corn.

According to James Mooney's version of the myth, Selu is married to Kana'ti, the Lucky Hunter. They live with their son and an adopted son, the Wild Boy. One day the boys follow Selu into the storeroom to see where she gets the corn she feeds them. They see her leaning over a basket and rubbing her stomach and armpits. As she rubs, corn tumbles into the basket.<sup>50</sup> Thinking that Selu must be a witch, the boys decide they must kill her. Selu, anticipating their plan, tells them, "when you have killed me, clear a large piece of ground in front of the house and drag my body seven times around the circle. Then drag me seven times over the ground inside the circle, and stay up all night and in the morning you will have plenty of corn" (Mooney 244). Though they follow her directions poorly, the boys do drag her body over the ground and where her blood falls, corn grows (Mooney 242-45).

The narrative voices in *Pushing the Bear* return often to the story of Selu. The walkers understand Selu's blood as a parallel to their own painful walking and as a reminder that through her blood Selu became part of the earth. This understanding of the relationship between the Cherokee and the earth informs Maritole's reaction when she is

first captured by the army. She falls into the cornstalks, her grandmothers, on the side of the road. There, she asserts, “our roots entwined” (4). As the Cherokee walk the Trail these entwined roots continue remind the walkers of connection and place, even when they are full of pain and despair. As she was taken from her cabin Mrs. Young Turkey relates “I went inside myself to remember a story so I could walk to the afterlife. It was Selu ... I thought of, who gave the Cherokee corn....Selu watched me coming” (55). Tanner similarly states, “The blood of Selu, who gave us corn, also gave us strength to walk” (182). The story of Selu draws together the Cherokees’ ideas about the land and communal strength. Maritole’s father tells his fellow walkers, ““We can feel the corn move our bodies. We can get up. We can go on”” (83). The story of Selu combats the fracturing effect of the Trail by insisting on the continued connections between the walkers and between the walkers and the land. Even in death Selu’s blood continues to nourish the Cherokee. Selu’s connection to the land illustrates that the Cherokee can also survive without becoming dislocated from the earth and their identity.

By remembering traditional stories as they walk, the walkers underscore the link between land, story, imagination, and identity. N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) asks, “Do you see what happens when the imagination is superimposed upon the historical event? It becomes a story. The whole piece becomes more deeply invested with meaning” (“Man Made of Words” 105). The narrative voices in Glancy’s novel overlay their personal experiences on the Trail with traditional stories and in so doing shift the meaning of the Trail itself. Knobowtee notes, “Sometimes I thought the corn walked with us. I could almost feel its hands” (21). Later he looks at the line of people walking

behind him and imagines them as “kernels on a corn cob” (62), an image similar to Maritole’s vision of the walkers “crowded together row after row like corn in a field” (31). When Knobowtee and Maritole envision themselves and their fellow walkers as corn, they reimagine the power of story to bind the people with each other as part of the land. Selu’s story transcends the field of “myth” and becomes part of the people themselves. The story provides a space for strength and agency.

The walkers’ recognition of the potentially radical power of story and language is reinforced by the appearance of Trickster in the traditional stories the narrative voices share. In the novel, Glancy provides a version of the story of Box Turtle and Deer in the Cherokee syllabary and a word-for-word English translation.<sup>51</sup> Box Turtle challenged Deer to a footrace to the crest of the seventh mountain.<sup>52</sup> Deer, knowing how much faster he was, quickly accepted the challenge. Before the race, Box Turtle enlisted several of his relatives to station themselves along the route with one of them waiting at the finish line. As Deer raced along, each of the turtles called out to him as he passed. And when Deer was in sight of the finish line he saw Box Turtle crawling across in front of him (*Pushing* 194-195). Elias contends that this particular story is “an anticolonial allegory about how weak or small animals can outsmart powerful animals through wit and wile” (194). Yet this story is also about movement and survival. In a footrace across seven mountains, Trickster Turtle confounds Deer and wins the race. Box Turtle undermines Deer’s understanding of the rules of the footrace; Deer believes he is seeing Box Turtle ahead of him at every turn when in fact he is seeing a double or look-alike. Barry O’Connell argues that a Trickster narrative “keeps its readers in motion and, to the extent

it succeeds in this endeavor, its subjects...themselves remain in motion, as alive as human beings and cultures can be and, in actuality, always are” (O’Connell 68). The story of Trickster Turtle is a wandering discourse that is always shifting and displacing the storyteller and audience as well as characters within the story. The story of Box Turtle and Deer encourages the storyteller and audience to reassess their own certainties about the world around them. Elaine A. Jahner contends, “Trickster enacts the fact that human knowing is always mediated by all the distortions that follow from the simple fact of human corporeality....Trickster reminds people that there is ... no absolute conjunction between knowing and seeing and presence” (55). The story of Box Turtle alerts the trail walkers to the fact that there are multiple ways of understanding and interpreting walking the Trail. The walkers’ movement is reflected and refracted in the movement of Box Turtle and Deer along their race and new possibilities begin to emerge.

Louis Owens (Choctaw/Cherokee/Irish) maintains that “traditional storytelling is a syncretic process, necessary to the adaptive, dynamic nature of American Indian cultures – that quality requisite for cultural survival”(9). In *Pushing the Bear* the story of Trickster Turtle opens a space for that syncretic process. In the last entry of the novel, Maritole relates that in the new land she sometimes thinks about “Quaty’s story of the Trickster Turtle. I had heard Luthy telling it to her boys again. I told it now to the orphans. There was a turtle at the starting line in the old territory. There was a turtle at the finish line in the new. Our Cherokee nation had become two to survive” (233). Maritole’s application of the story of Trickster Turtle acknowledges the place of traditional stories within contemporary Cherokee life. Justice notes that in the Cherokee

origin stories, migration to the Cherokee homeland was not undertaken by all of the people. Rather, “[w]hatever the reason for emigration, the result in each narrative is fragmentation of the original tribal body into two main groups: those who fled or were forced away, and those who remained in the broken homeland” (Justice 51). However, Justice contends, the stories give hope for the eventual mending of that fragmentation, a time when the people will combine into one again (52). Maritole follows her thoughts on the story of Trickster Turtle and ends the novel with the hope that one day the rift in her marriage will be mended: “Maybe someday he would touch me. Maybe someday love would come” (233). Maritole’s hopes for her own family mirror the larger hope of a restoration of the Cherokee nation to wholeness. The Cherokee origin stories and Quaty’s Trickster story do not end with their telling; rather, they gain power and relevance through subsequent rememberings and retellings. Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux) writes that storytelling “has prevented the complete destruction of the web, the ultimate disruption of tribal ways. The oral tradition is vital; it heals itself and the tribal web by adapting to the flow of the present while never relinquishing its connection to the past” (45). In Glancy’s novel, traditional Cherokee stories function as a vital junction in the cultural web; in these stories movement, survival, adaptation, community, and continuance meet and join.

As the narrative voices find significance and empowerment in myths such as the story of Selu’s gift of corn and Trickster Turtle, they draw connections between their physical movement over the land and the narrative movement of story and language. According to Knobowtee, “The stories fueled my walk. Yes” (144). Another Trail

walker, Alotohee, draws together the strength of language and story with the specific story of Selu. He narrates, “The cold made noises travel. Voices from across the field. If I open my mouth, sometimes the faraway sounds enter....Yes. The sound inside me. It brings the land inside, too. I see it when I close my eyes. I feel it in my chest. I carry the cornfields with me” (98). As Knobowtee and Alotohee recognize the contours of traditional stories in their own experiences they begin to realize the power and possibility that recognition brings them. “Yes,” they both affirm, acknowledging the rightness of fusing language, land, and movement. They learn that as the spirit of Maritole’s mother suggests, “*Riding on your voices you can walk*” (italics in original; 72). Storytelling yields a space for articulating and interpreting walking, and also facilitates and mirrors that walking. As the walkers cross into Indian Territory, Knobowtee notes, “We’d make a way into it with our words” (227). Another walker, Lacy Woodard contends, “the voices made the path on which we walked” (95). Storytelling has vitality beyond the figurative or metaphoric; language *acts*. The fluidity of language and story makes survival possible, a dynamic action that the narrative voices connect to the complex movement of walking itself. Language makes a way into the new land, it creates a path, it provides fuel and energy, and it acts as a vehicle for walking. Whereas the pain and fear of walking once actively destroyed language, through storytelling language can also act to manage and reimagine walking and imagine and domesticate the new land.

Out of the vitality of language, the walkers begin to understand the strength in redefining the Trail and claiming the ability to walk. Addressing “the people who seemed to be giving up” Knobowtee says, “We walk together and we’re strong....We

walk. Ugh. Why? We're driven into ourselves like dogs howling. We walk all day. At night our feet still walk. Our feet move in sleep. Our legs jump. Our rib bones cry. Say to one another, we move like wind in the cornstalks. Something happens when we walk" (219). Later Maritole echoes his words, "I want to walk. I feel something happen in me as I walk. Something small and strong begins to grow...I have hope and strength that you can't see" (228). As they walk "something happens," something vital is reformed through the fluidity of movement. Knobowtee and Maritole find strength and even the possibility of renewal in learning to walk correctly. Knobowtee explains, "I could almost believe we were walking a holy walk. As a unit. A people. One kernel following another. Our voices united. If we could be one in our walking, we would make it to the new territory. All of us had a part. And if some were silent, it would be like a cob with kernels missing" (62). "Right walking" is connected here to "right speaking." N. Scott Momaday suggests, "in a profound sense our language determines us; it shapes our most fundamental selves; it establishes our identity and confirms our existence, our human being. Without language we are lost, 'thrown away.' Without names – and language is essentially a system of naming – we cannot truly claim to be" ("Man Made of Words" 103). Knobowtee takes this equation further by claiming that the generative act of speaking extends to how movement is understood and imagined. Survival, in other words, is dependent on the way embodied experience is imagined and narrated. When Maritole asserts that she "*want[s]* to walk" she recognizes that walking can be a space for recovering communal identity from being rendered an object of history. Whereas initially her legs buckle and her "feet would not walk" (4), through the communal act of

remembering and retelling stories, Maritole and her fellow walkers discover the powerful effects of claiming walking as a site of cultural expression and reconstitution.

In reimagining the Cherokee Trail of Tears through stories of walking, Glancy, like Tapahonso and the Navajo storytellers, redefines experience. In their texts, imagination and walking are linked. These writers and storytellers imagine their people as Trickster, who ““never dies, he gets killed plenty of times, but he always comes back to life again, and then he goes right on traveling”” (Gary Snyder qtd. in Bright 18). Their stories dislocate movement across land from the limited and tragic story of cultural destruction and relocate it into a complex symbol of both subjugation and strength.

The stories of the Long Walk and Trail of Tears emphasize the continuing life of the people and of the stories themselves. Daniel Heath Justice argues that for the Cherokee “continuity *through* change is the underlying understanding of Cherokee presence. Distance is arbitrary; geography is less binding than its perception” (178). Similarly, Luci Tapahonso writes that “[d]istance is perhaps important only in the convenience of renewal, of going back to renew yourself. This philosophy accepts adaptation, and it allows for change. Renewal is possible wherever there is distance and wherever there is space and land” (“Come” 80). Justice and Tapahonso’s comments suggest that even given the differences between Cherokee and Navajo cultures, both cultures understand that story, movement, and land are vital in the continuity and adaptation of the people. In the philosophies the two writers lay out, continuity and change are not separate, but are clearly linked, and that link is movement – physical movement as well as mental adaptability and narrative flow. When read through the

specific stories and histories of Cherokee and Navajo cultures, these stories of trauma and removal point toward this more complex understanding of movement and walking. As the fluidity of story and language resists a singular interpretation, these stories of the Long Walk and the Trail of Tears challenge their audiences to rethink the meanings of forced marching, migration, and homeland.

**CHAPTER III:**  
**PERIPATETIC PHILOSOPHERS: WALKING, RHYTHM, AND NATURE IN**  
**THE EARLY WRITINGS OF JOHN MUIR AND MARY AUSTIN**

In the late summer of 1867, five years after Sarah Wakefield's captivity among the Dakota and one year before the first Navajo were allowed to return to their homeland, John Muir started a walk from Indianapolis through Kentucky and the traditional Cherokee homelands in North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee to the Florida coast.<sup>53</sup> Like the treks of Wakefield, the Navajo, and the Cherokee, Muir's walk was an experience which changed the course of his life; sauntering through the American land marked Muir's entry into the life of a botanist, Rambler, and nature writer. He shares with these other walkers a drive to commemorate his experience in language and an acknowledgement that the walking itself is a noteworthy and significant event. However, as a Euro-American man, a scientist, and an emerging nature writer, Muir's experience differs from theirs in important ways. Unlike the Navajo, Cherokee, or captive Euro-American women, Muir *chose* to move into the wilderness and his walk was undertaken with purpose and agency. Muir's emphasis on walking was not born from a need to reclaim a lost agency in the face of violence and captivity, rather it was the result of his passion for the land and his quest to understand and celebrate the richness of the American environment.

Twenty-one years after Muir's walk to Florida, Mary Hunter Austin began her lifelong relationship with the desert when she moved from Illinois to California with her

family and began a series of short rides and rambles over the land. Unlike Muir, Austin's experience in the wilderness was defined not only by walking, but also by riding in coaches and on horseback and later by being driven in cars. However, like Muir, Austin recognized the importance of walking in experiencing and writing about the natural world. Austin shared Muir's interest in scientific observation and nature writing, and she envisioned walking as the link between science, nature, and writing. As a result, in Austin's writing, the cadence of language, the descriptions of the landscape, the flow of narrative, and the actions of her narrators and characters are saturated with the pace of the footfall. Walking provides her with a rhythm and imagery to express her thoughts about the relationship between person, place, and writing.

In writing about walking and in walking itself, Muir and Austin entered an already well-established tradition of Euro-American explorations and observations of the American land. This tradition stretches back to the first European explorers who reached the shores of America and initiated the convention of linking observations of the land with physical movement. Critics such as John Elder and Robert Finch recognize that "contemporary nature writers characteristically take walks through landscapes of association" (Elder and Finch 26). However, these walks are common in much of the genre of nature writing, not just that of contemporary writers. For example, in *Letters from an American Farmer*, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur repeatedly notes his "constant walks" which afford him the opportunity to observe the land (57). Similarly, William Bartram's nature writing takes the form of travel literature. And walking figures prominently in the texts of iconic nature writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John

Burroughs, John Muir, and Mary Hunter Austin, as well as contemporary writers such as Gary Snyder, Terry Tempest Williams, and Ann Zwinger. Throughout the tradition of American travel and nature writing, writers have linked observations of the natural world with the pace of walking. Therefore, to truly understand nature writing it is necessary to consider the centrality of walking.

In the introduction to his seminal text, *Desert Solitaire*, Edward Abbey exhorts his reader to get out of the car. “[Y]ou can’t see *anything* from a car; you’ve got to get out of the goddamned contraption and walk,” he rants, “better yet, crawl, on hands and knees, over sandstone and through the thornbush and cactus. When traces of blood begin to mark your trail you’ll see something, maybe” (xii). In his typically brash way, Abbey champions the idea that to properly *see* the land you have to engage with it physically; one cannot know the land, Abbey argues, by viewing it through the car window or the window of someone else’s text. Rather, one must move bodily into the wilderness. In his text *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing*, Scott Slovic contends “[m]any literary naturalists imitate the notebooks of scientific naturalists, or the logbooks of explorers, or even the journals of non-scientific travelers in order to entrench themselves in the specific moment of experience” (4). Nature writing, according to John Daniel, is an attempt to achieve an understanding of the natural world that ““can only happen by taking the time to enter the natural world, to engage it, to not only run our eyes along its surfaces, but to place ourselves among its things and weathers – to let it exert, at least for intervals in our lives, the ancient influences that once surrounded and formed us”” (qtd. in Slovic 175). Rebecca Solnit makes a similar argument, but she takes it a step further by

suggesting walking as an important method for experiencing and connecting with nature. “If the body is the register of the real,” she writes, “then reading with one’s feet is real in a way that reading with one’s eyes is not” (70).

John Muir and Mary Hunter Austin are two nature writers who most exemplify the practice of knowing the land through bodily movement. Both writers are recognized not only for their descriptions of the American wilderness, but also for their identities as great walkers. Muir’s writerly self is inseparable from the image of him rambling into the wilderness. And Austin’s nature writing is infused with her nature walks, both real and imagined. For Muir and Austin, as for Rowlandson, Wakefield, and those who marched along the Trail of Tears and the Long Walk, walking acts as both a literary trope and a record of lived experience. Walking affords the walkers agency to move their own bodies and exert a degree of control over their experience of the world. For Muir and Austin walking in the natural world meant walking away from societal expectations about “proper” American behavior and goals. Muir walked away from the practical life of a laborer and Austin challenged societal strictures regarding nineteenth-century Euro-American womanhood as she walked into the twentieth century. Further, in walking away from their expected lives, Muir and Austin cultivated a sense of the sacred in Nature and an increased recognition of the wilderness as a site of mysterious forces and rhythms beyond human understanding and control.

This chapter will focus on exploring the place of walking in Muir and Austin’s early literary efforts: Muir’s journal posthumously published as *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, and Austin’s first book length publication, *The Land of Little Rain*. With their

careful attention to the scientific details and broader spiritual significance, both texts belong to the category of nature writing. For Muir and Austin, walking is not only an important method of moving to wilderness places, it is also an action that links them to the rhythms of those places. They both consider the multiple ways walking provides a means of entrance into nature: as a metaphorical Nature pilgrimage, as physical transportation from town to countryside, and as a method for aligning one's body with the ebb and flow of the natural world.

### **John Muir's Thousand-Mile Walk**

On the evening of March 6, 1867, John Muir was working late at the factory of Osgood and Smith in Indianapolis, repairing one of the machines used in the manufacturing of carriage implements. Wrestling with the heavy belting on the machine, Muir briefly lost control of a file he was holding and stabbed himself in the right eye. For a moment he stood stunned, and then gazed in horror as aqueous humor dripped from his eye and his sight began to fade. An assistant present in the workroom heard Muir whisper, "My right eye is gone, closed forever on all God's beauty" (qtd. in Turner 125). He was able to walk home, but within a few hours his left eye also failed in sympathetic reaction. Lying in his bed, blind, Muir waited for his eyes to recover. And while his employers, J.R. Osgood and C.H. Smith, visited his sick room and promised him a promotion when he returned to work, Muir's attention had shifted from his factory job to the natural world. He wrote to his close friend Jeanne Carr that when he thought his vision loss would be permanent he would have "gladly died on the spot, 'because I

did not feel that I could have the heart to look at any flower again” (qtd. in Turner 127). When he found he would recover his sight he wrote, “I wish to try some cloudy day to walk in the woods where I am sure some of Spring’s fresh born is waiting” (qtd. in Turner 127). In the months that followed, Muir’s eyesight slowly improved and he began to venture into the woods for long botanizing walks, enjoying the natural world that he thought the accident had forever removed from his sight. At the end of the summer he was ready for more, and on September 1<sup>st</sup> he left Indianapolis and took the first steps on the long walk that would carry him over mountains, through swamps, and finally to the Florida coast. The potentially tragic factory accident had propelled Muir into the role of the wandering naturalist, the role that has become inseparable from his identity in the American imagination.

Though he was nearly thirty at the time he walked away from Indianapolis and the life of a factory worker, in many ways his life began at that moment. John O’Grady contends that this walk “br[oke] the orbit of home, inaugurating a ten-year pilgrimage to the wild,” and that it was the beginning of “John Muir walking, climbing, pursuing his desire, to-ing and fro-ing” in the wilderness (47). Muir’s journal of this walk, published posthumously as *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, was not only his first literary effort and the first significant account of a long-distance walk, it also initiated the image of a sauntering Muir that became central to his persona in both scholars’ and laypersons’ views of Muir (Solnit 126; Hall and Mark 217). Whatever else he became known for – botany, geology, environmentalism, preservation – Muir is perhaps best recognized walking alone in the American wilderness. Yet despite the omnipresence of the image of

a moving and walking Muir, scholars have largely relegated their analysis of the trope of walking in Muir's texts to brief asides and footnotes. Instead, critics have chosen to examine Muir through the lenses of environmentalism and scientific observation, Romantic and Transcendental writing, American westward expansion, and religious influences.<sup>54</sup> While all of these lenses offer insight into Muir's life and work, they ultimately sidestep a vital aspect of Muir's writing that offers a way to link all of these approaches. Central to discussions of Muir's work as a foundation for modern environmental and scientific naturalism, an extension of Transcendental thought, a facet of the larger westward movement of the nation, and even a religious articulation of humanity's place in the world, is the physical movement of walking. Beginning with *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, Muir's writing insists on the necessity of walking for a proper experience and understanding of Nature. Muir suggests that by moving into the wilderness through the power of his own body, he enters the rhythms of the natural world and achieves a mental and physical connection with the wilderness. Examining Muir's depiction of walking in *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* affords a deeper understanding of Muir's developing philosophy of Nature as a site for physical and spiritual strength and sanctuary.

Though Muir had taken long walks in the natural world before, his walk to Florida marked the moment when walking, observing the natural world, and writing first fully converged in his life. From this journey forward, these three elements would remain inseparable and would come to define Muir for generations of readers, conservationists, and scholars. His plan, he recorded in his journal, "was simply to push

on in a general southward direction by the wildest, leafiest, and least trodden ways I could find, promising the greatest extent of virgin forest” (1-2). Muir claims that his goal is not only to explore, but to explore the land which is least known, to walk where the fewest had walked before. Michael Cohen contends that when Muir started out on his walk he was aware of making a fresh start. Cohen argues, “[Muir] was attempting to reestablish a new set of values congruent with the laws of the Universe” (5). Muir inscribed the front flap of his journal with the words: “John Muir, Earth-planet, Universe,” an identification that reoriented Muir physically and intellectually. He refashioned himself as a citizen of the universe, a diffuse identity that challenged his previous role in the factory. Yet even as he endeavored to strike out on his own both in both physical and intellectual ways, he was not without guides. When Muir walked out of Indianapolis that late summer day, he packed his bag with a plant press to preserve specimens, a volume of Robert Burns’ poetry, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, a copy of the New Testament, and his journal (Buske 4). Muir’s choice of texts suggests that he was already framing his experience through western scientific, literary, and religious traditions, fields that he had been long acquainted with.

Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland in 1838, to a quiet, “poetical” mother and a strict Calvinist father (Turner 11). His father, Daniel, had converted to an evangelical form of Presbyterianism as a young man, but continued to search out the perfect church that combined “zealotry and contentment” (Turner 28). This restless search led Daniel to immigrate to the United States with his family in 1849. The new denomination he followed there was the Disciples of Christ, a Calvinist church that promised a “reversion

to the warm and simple ways of the primitive Christian church as it was believed to have been in the days of Christ's ministry and just after" (Turner 29). The Disciples held that "man failed to appreciate his place and instead chose to rebel against God...Left to its own devices [humankind] would continue to do so" (Williams 6). Frederick Turner contends that Muir's father reflected this stance with his "unrelievedly grim" view of "the earth and all earthly life" (68). The elder Muir "incessantly enjoined his children to regard themselves as soul-sick sinners in the eyes of an angry God and to view the world as a vale of sorrows and a place of snares through which the undeserving pilgrims were fated to pass on their way to judgment" (Turner 69). Muir's father saw the natural world as a negative wilderness, a place of trial and suffering. Like the Puritans before him, he "translated their hardships in the New World as God's testing of his chosen people – a necessary prelude to everlasting salvation" (Carroll 2).

The Muirs settled on a farm in rural Wisconsin where Daniel insisted on a backbreaking routine of work for everyone, including Muir and his siblings. The only time Muir was free to experience the woods, lakes, and streams around him was late in the evenings and on Sunday afternoons. The Calvinism of his father "held that one sure way to recognize a sinner was that he delighted in looking at natural objects, for such objects were fated for eventual destruction, and so delight in them was an offence against the Lord" (Turner 69). Thus, because of the harsh disapproval of his father, Muir's time in the natural world was constrained and limited; however, his thirst for knowledge and experience kept his feet turned toward the woods and his mind questioning the severe doctrine espoused by his father.

As Muir struggled with the strict Calvinism of his father, he worked to redefine his relation to the sacred. One of the places he turned was toward the Presbyterianism of his mother. Whereas his father's faith posited the natural world as fallen and sinful, his mother's faith positioned the natural world as a path to serving God. Presbyterians saw two ways to answer the question, "How do we know God?" (Williams 6). One was through the scriptures. The other – as espoused in the 1566 Belgic Confession, one of the central doctrines of the European Reformed Churches – was "by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as the most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters [as in the letters in a book] leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely his power and divinity" (brackets in original; qtd. in Williams 7). The Belgic Confession suggests that just as one can glean God through the reading of the scriptures, one can also read the text of the natural world to find God. Positioned between these two contrasting views of Nature as fallen wilderness and as a path to knowing God, Muir experienced the conflict that had shaped Euro-American perceptions of the natural world since the first Puritans settled on the coast.

Further enriching Muir's religious worldview were the literary texts he read voraciously as a teenager and later as a student at the University of Wisconsin. Muir read Shakespeare and the Romantic poets, Milton, Plutarch, Henry David Thoreau, Alexander Von Humboldt, and others. He also discovered the wandering tradition of his fellow Scotsmen who "had fanned out through the breadth of the [American] continent as trappers, scouts, and fur traders" and others, like Mungo Park, who explored the African

continent with an eye to the natural world (Turner 64-5). These texts and his own experiences in the natural world provided Muir with an alternate vision even as he continued to follow a more conventional and responsible path through study at the University of Wisconsin and his job at the factory of Osgood and Smith. When Muir finally broke away from his expected life in Indianapolis, these earlier experiences with literary texts helped guide his reactions to and interpretations of his journey.

When Muir set out on his walk to Florida, steeped in the religious traditions of his parents, he carried both the New Testament and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Milton's text further complicated the tension between the religious visions of the natural world that Muir had inherited from his parents. Dennis Williams argues that Muir read Milton "for his interpretation of paradise and mankind's place in the scheme of Nature" (129). Williams suggests that Muir interpreted Milton's poetry to mean that "humanity occupied the lowest position because it had fallen from its lofty estate by choosing to disobey its Creator and live disharmoniously with fellow beings" (12). Though Muir's interpretation echoed Daniel Muir's belief that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, the meaning of this disobedience was viewed differently by father and son. Whereas Daniel saw the fall as proof of humanity's innate depravity, his son interpreted the fall as indicating that Nature was not made to serve man. In their undepraved state Adam and Eve lived in harmony with the natural world of the garden. Thus, the ideal state, the Edenic vision, was one in which humans took their proper place in the order of the world. Since the fall humans worked to realign themselves with the divine order, and, Milton suggests, that divine order could be glimpsed in the natural world.<sup>55</sup>

If one of the reasons Muir was drawn to *Paradise Lost* were the glimmerings of Eden it posited in the natural world he loved, another factor in his decision to carry the text with him to Florida might have been the poem's repeated invocation of wandering in nature. Stanley Fish traces Milton's use of the trope of wandering throughout the poem, noting its occurrence in descriptions of Adam and Eve in the garden and later in the wilderness, the fallen angels, the serpent, the four "wand'ring" streams in Paradise, and even the stars as they pursue a "wand'ring course" (Fish 130-141). Fish argues that while "for the fallen Adam and Eve, wandering seems at first to represent exile and hopelessness," it is later shown to be "the movement of faith, the sign of one's willingness to go out [into the wilderness] at the command of God" (140-141). Muir's own wandering to Florida, walking on both established roads and "vine-tied...pathless wanderings," resonated with the themes of *Paradise Lost* (*Thousand-Mile* 89). Like Adam and Eve, Muir wandered through the wilderness to glimpse paradise and God.<sup>56</sup>

As Milton helped to shape Muir's religious thinking, Alexander von Humboldt influenced his scientific mind. Linnie Marsh Wolfe contends that "Certain books...had a large share in shaping Muir's career. Pre-eminent among them were the travel writings of Alexander von Humboldt" (82). Indeed in an 1865 letter Muir asserts, "'How intensely I desired to be a Humboldt!'" (qtd. in Hall and Mark 218). Alexander von Humboldt was a German naturalist and explorer who lived from 1769 until 1859. Between 1799 and 1804, Humboldt traveled in Latin America, exploring and describing it from a scientific perspective.<sup>57</sup> C. Michael Hall and Stephen Mark suggest that one of Humboldt's most influential practices was his insistence on studying plants within their

proper environments and observing organic relationships and the harmony of ecological interactions (220-21). Humboldt's writings emphasized the importance of experiencing the natural world in its own terms. Joseph Amato writes, "Humboldt did his science on foot. He traveled more than six thousand miles walking, leading a mule, and paddling a canoe...He traveled day in and day out over the course of five years on foot...Humboldt shaped the passionate intellect that directed the ever faithful foot toward nature on a pedestrian journey" (116-17). Humboldt, Amato suggests, saw a link between walking and imagination, between physically immersing oneself in the natural world and understanding that world more completely. As Mary Louise Pratt argues, Humboldt imagined "nature in motion, powered by life forces many of which are invisible to the human eye" (120). When Muir "desired to be a Humboldt!" he desired to be both a scientist and a walker, to bring his physical body into contact with the wilderness as a means to comprehend Nature more deeply.

As a scientific walker, Humboldt influenced the Romantic and Transcendental writers who moved beyond the confines of the garden and "turn[ed] to nature on foot" (Amato 117). These writers also played an important role in Muir's development as a nature writer, and in his pack alongside the New Testament and *Paradise Lost*, Muir carried a volume of Robert Burns's Romantic poetry. For the Romantics, walking was "a way to free the captive self from the artificial, urban, and mechanical world and to connect to one's true inheritance," that is, with nature (Amato 104). Celeste Langan argues that walking "is the framing issue of Romantic form and content" (14). For the Romantic poet "freedom is walking" (Langan 20). Walking in the natural world

represented an avenue to escape the deadening influences of modernity and to reclaim a measure of authenticity and self-determination. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, identified by Amato as the “father of romantic pedestrianism in Europe and North America,” declared in 1770, “I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs” (qtd. in Amato 108). Though he acknowledged that he walked because he was too poor to travel otherwise, Rousseau celebrated the physical and mental freedom afforded by walking (Amato 108; Solnit 17). “There is something about walking,” he wrote, “which stimulates and enlivens my thoughts. When I stay in one place I can hardly think at all; my body has to be on the move to set my mind going” (qtd. in Solnit 19). Rousseau and the Romantic poets joined walking with thinking and therefore with writing. Walking served as a means and a metaphor for expanding the mind and experiencing the world.

On the other side of the Atlantic nearly one hundred years after Rousseau’s influential writings were published, Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were influenced by both scientific and literary walkers in their conception of the natural world. In the famous “transparent eyeball” passage in *Nature* Emerson writes, “In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature” (29). Yet while Emerson celebrated the link between the natural world and spiritual experiences, he rarely chose to venture far into the wilderness.<sup>58</sup> Thoreau, on the other hand, saw the connection between the experience of immersion in Nature and spiritual epiphany as more than a

poetic metaphor. While Emerson extolled the importance of immersing oneself in the natural world, Thoreau took to his feet and walked into the wilderness. In his eulogy honoring Thoreau, Emerson emphasized Thoreau's "endless walks," (399), describing him as one who "would probably out-walk most countrymen in a day's journey....The length of his walk uniformly made the length of his writing" (402). For Thoreau, as for the Romantic poets, walking, language, and freedom were inseparable. Thoreau wrote in his essay "Walking," that proper saunterers have "no particular home, but [are] equally at home everywhere" (180). Finding "home" everywhere they walked provided the walkers with the comfort and familiarity to move freely.

Further, for Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau, freedom of movement in the natural world was intimately connected to spirituality. Thoreau contends that "saunterers in the good sense" are always going "to the Holy Land in their walks" (180). They have "a direct dispensation from Heaven to become...walker[s]" (181) and "naturally go to the fields and woods" (183). "I am alarmed," he asserts, "when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit" (183). Thoreau ties his experience of freedom while walking to the divinity of Nature. He contends the goal of walking is to achieve a sense of freedom that is also a sense of the sacred: bodily movement into the sacred space of Nature facilitates mental movement toward divinity and freedom. Thoreau ends "Walking" with the hope that "we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light" (205). As Lawrence Buell claims, Thoreau imagined "the

whole process of nature rambling as ‘sauntering’ in the sacred sense – as a kind of pilgrimage” (329). Thoreau, like Emerson, saw a correspondence between the natural and the spiritual; by experiencing Nature, Thoreau sought to find unifying patterns and spiritual fulfillment.

Cohen suggests that “Muir took as his model” the “tradition of rhetoric” in Thoreau’s “Walking” (140). Like Thoreau, Muir saw salvation in Nature, the possibility of regaining entry to the Holy Land, the “flowery Canaan,” by moving bodily and mentally through the wilderness (*Thousand-Mile* 88). As a “stranger in a strange land” Muir recalls the language of Moses as he searches for admission to the Promised Land (176). However, unlike Moses, Muir saw the natural world as both wilderness and Promised Land – at times he imagined himself moving through the wilderness to gain access to the Promised Land and at other times he envisioned the wilderness itself as the Promised Land. Baptized and reborn in the “spirit-beams” of Nature, Muir charts a footpath into the American wilderness (*Thousand-Mile* 212). Walking into Nature required a relinquishing of artificial paths and an acceptance of Nature’s flow.

It was against this backdrop of cultural beliefs and influences that John Muir chose to walk into Nature. In walking and, perhaps more importantly, in *writing* about his walks, Muir joined a pre-existing conversation about human mobility and experience in the natural world, the world supposedly uncontaminated by human interference. Through the course of his wanderings, Muir drew on scientific, literary, spiritual, and mythic understandings of the American wilderness and the relationship between

wilderness, humanity, and the sacred. Appropriately, as John O'Grady points out, his story begins with a walk (47).

His story begins with this epic walk both because it marked the beginning of his life as an exploring botanist and because he recorded his experiences in the journal which became his first serious literary effort (Buske 4). In 1916, two years after Muir's death, the journal of that walk was published in an edited form as *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. The editor, William Frederic Badè, cites three sources for the edited text:

(1) the original journal, of which the first half contained many interlinear revisions and expansions, and a considerable number of rough pencil sketches of plants, trees, scenery, and notable adventures; (2) a wide-spaced, typewritten, rough copy of the journal, apparently in large part dictated to a stenographer; it is only slightly revised, and comparison with the original shows many significant omissions and additions; (3) two separate elaborations of his experiences in Savannah when he camped there for a week in the Bonaventure graveyard. (xxv-xxvi)<sup>59</sup>

Though mediated by Badè, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* provides readers with the early iteration of Muir walking alone across the American land. The persona that later developed into "John o' the Mountains," an image fused with Yosemite and Hetch-Hetchy, was first born in the woods of the American South and the pages of Muir's first major journal.

In *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, walking is a constant though elastic image. Walking is sometimes pleasurable and easy and other times difficult and even painful.

Sometimes Muir walks along defined roads and sometimes he takes unmarked routes. Yet regardless of the ease of walking, the rhythm of Muir's physical body echoes the rhythms of Nature and writing itself. Rebecca Solnit points out that in composing the first significant account of a long-distance walk, Muir's journal is organized episodically (126). As such, the journal follows Muir's movements from place to place and mirrors the rhythm of his physical body. In walking and in writing about walking, Muir merges distance "with time into movement" (O'Grady 53). In his journal Muir considered the different physical manifestations of walking in terms of his relationship to Nature, science, and the sacred. Movement, whether easy and rambling or difficult and slow, becomes a means for reading his place in the cosmos.

Muir's eye injury marked the end of his attempt to fulfill a conventional life in manufacturing and the beginning of his turn toward the natural world, his true passion. As he walked away from his previous life in Indianapolis, he celebrated walking as the means of moving fully into his new life as a wandering botanist. Early in his journal Muir writes of setting off on his walk "joyful and free" (1) and of his "resolution to pursue my glorious walk" (26). In these moments, Muir focuses on the liberating aspects of walking and frames walking as a means of escaping from a world that he found confining and limiting. He lauds his own abilities as a walker, able to thwart a thief on horseback because he "was too good a walker and runner for him to get far" (17), and noting his pleasure in taking long walks "after sundown" even in areas purported to be rife with ghosts and alligators (59). Elsewhere he considers taking a boat down the Chattahoochee River in Georgia but concludes that doing so "would be less profitable

than a walk” (51). In these moments of ecstatic walking Muir celebrates his ability to walk into the natural world, reveling in his strength and physicality. Eschewing familial and societal expectations that manhood is defined by sober, responsible labor, Muir positions himself alongside figures like Daniel Boone, as a man whose masculinity is delineated by his ability to experience the joy and freedom of physically moving into the wilderness.

In describing walking in terms of strength, positive benefits, and ecstasy, Muir begins to hint at the nature philosophy he develops later in the Sierra Madre Mountains – his belief, articulated in *John of the Mountains* (1938), that he can ““Gain health from lusty, heroic exercise, from free firm-nerved adventures without anxiety in them, with rhythmic leg motion in runs over boulders requiring quick decision with every step....Then enjoy the utter peace and solemnity of the trees and stars....Feel a mysterious presence in a thousand coy hiding things”” (Muir qtd. in O’Grady 63). In Muir’s formulation, supported by western scientific, literary, and religious teachings, access to the sacred in Nature depended on a physical body that was hardy enough to stride into the heart of the wilderness. Like Thoreau, Muir read the sacred in the natural world and celebrated his own ability to immerse himself in Nature and therefore in the sacred. Though it took several more years before Muir truly developed his nature philosophy, even in his early walk to Florida he began to recognize the value in moving physically into and with the flow of the natural world. As he walked he gained a heightened experience of the landscape. Echoing the language from Emerson’s transparent eyeball passage in *Nature*, Muir notes that in walking “presently you lose

consciousness of your own separate existence: you blend with the landscape and become part and parcel of nature” (*Thousand-Mile* 212). Where Emerson writes, “I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God,” Muir removes God as the referent and refocuses the passage on Nature (29).

Emerson imagines Nature as a path to experiencing God, but Muir imagines Nature as the goal, as itself the divine.

In passages such as these, Muir envisions himself as reentering Eden, and in so doing reaching the divine. He imagines that he has found in “these flowery wilds...God’s family, unfallen, undepraved, and cared for with the same species of tenderness and love as is bestowed on angels in heaven or saints on earth” (*Thousand-Mile* 99). “Here,” Muir declares in Kentucky, “is the Eden, the paradise of oaks” (15). In these moments Muir describes the natural world as having a “joyous inseparable unity” and “divine harmony” (70-71). In language that hints at the ecstatic expression Muir later uses to describe California, Muir positions himself within Eden. Walking, therefore, in such passages, is not an action that will take him to a particular destination. Instead, walking allows him to explore the Eden in which he is already immersed.

Significantly, the natural world that Muir walked through was actually alive with human settlements and human history. For most of his journey, Muir walked from settlement to settlement, disliking the inconvenience and potential danger of sleeping outside. Additionally, Muir’s path took him through an American South that had very recently been the site of bloody Civil War battlefields and was, at the time of Muir’s walk, struggling through the first years of Reconstruction. Further, much of the land

Muir crossed over was very recently the homeland of the Cherokee, Muscogee, and Seminole peoples who had been forcibly removed to “Indian Country” in what is now Oklahoma. Muir’s journal, however, largely depopulates the landscape. Cohen argues that Muir “tried to step out of history” and into a wilderness distinct from human trials (26). Thus, while he does acknowledge meeting and accepting hospitality from white Southerners and recently freed slaves, the majority of his journal imagines a wilderness separate from human presence. In one of the few passages where Muir records encountering former slaves, he writes that their presence somehow defiles the pristine natural world. Standing with two former slaves next to a campfire, Muir’s “attention was called to a black lump of something lying in the ashes of the fire. It seemed to be made of rubber; but the women bent lovingly over the black object and....the rubber gave strong manifestations of vitality and proved to be a burly negro boy, rising from the earth naked as to earth he had come” (106-7). Muir follows this startling observation with the contention that nakedness is “not quite in harmony with Nature. Birds make nests and nearly all beasts make some kind of bed for their young; but these negroes allow their younglings to lie nestless and naked in the dirt” (107). Muir’s description reveals his disgust at humans whom he imagines as less natural and less admirable than the wilderness, a disgust that continues in his later writings, most notably in *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911).<sup>60</sup> Reflecting on the relationship between “Lord Man” and animals, Muir clearly states his preference for non-human nature: “I have precious little sympathy for the selfish propriety of civilized man, and if a war of races should occur between the wild beasts and Lord Man, I would be tempted to sympathize with the bears”

(*Thousand-Mile* 122). As a result of this attitude, Muir focuses his journal on the non-human and largely writes the inconvenience of human presence out of his text. In the mode of Euro-American exploration narratives and even contemporary Euro-American Nature Writing, Muir imagines himself largely alone in the wilderness, experiencing the power of the natural world.

Yet the natural world is not always welcoming and walking is not always easy and ecstatic in *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. Rather, his journey is often painful and difficult, beset by physical and mental obstacles. In Florida, Muir gazes on the ocean and muses that he “almost forgot at times that the glassy, treeless country was forbidden to walkers” (178). And even on dry land, he notes, “only a small portion is free to man” (179). Even within that land that he considers to be “free to man,” Muir finds that he faced multiple difficulties, from tangled swamps and briars, to sand dunes, to darkness and rain, to his own physical limitations. Muir frequently comments that he “walked...till wearied” (5) and “laboriously scramble[d]” (161). One afternoon while botanizing in the Florida swamps Muir records that he lost the path and “had a sore weary time, pushing through the tanglement of falling, standing, and half-fallen trees and bushes, to say nothing of knotted vines as remarkable for their efficient army of interlocking and lancing prickles as for their length and the number of their blossoms” (118). The distance he had to cross was not great, he notes, “but a traveler in open woods can form no idea of the crooked and strange difficulties of pathless locomotion in these thorny, watery, Southern tangles” (119). His progress is further impeded by the muddy “lagoons” and “ponds” he has to wade through that filled him with the constant dread of

“plant[ing] [his] feet on an alligator” (119). Though undertaken by choice and far removed from the eastern woods Rowlandson walked or the Midwestern plains and forests navigated by Wakefield, Muir’s difficult traversing of the Florida swamps seems to echo their experiences. In these passages, Muir, like Rowlandson and Wakefield, stresses the physical difficulty of walking through the wilderness. As he struggles through the dense and soggy Florida swampland, he imagines that his progress is blocked intentionally. The thorns and vines were an “efficient army” obstructing his path and preventing his passage. However, at the end of this particular adventure in the swamp, Muir finally makes it back to the home where he is staying for a few nights and is greeted by the homeowner with praise for his “singular good fortune and woodcraft” (121). So, while Rowlandson and Wakefield emphasize their difficult wanderings as a path towards claiming a measure of agency even in captivity, Muir connects his difficult walking with his identity as a strong and competent man, at home in the American wilderness and able to transcend obstacles.

O’Grady contends that even when the going is fraught with obstacles and the “unnamable wild” threatens to impede his progress, Muir believes that “the wild may be *walked through*” and “such wild walking requires a commitment” (49). Indeed, until he is temporarily halted by an illness that changes his plans, Muir remarks on seemingly insurmountable obstacles and then records surmounting them. For example, when he first entered Florida he observes,

Florida is so watery and vine-tied that pathless wanderings are not easily possible in any direction....Short was the measure of my walk to-

day...Frequently I sank deeper and deeper until compelled to turn back and make the attempt in another and still another place. Oftentimes I was tangled in a labyrinth of armed vines like a fly in a spider-web. At all times, whether wading or climbing a tree for specimens of fruit, I was overwhelmed with the vastness and unapproachableness of the great guarded sea of sunny plants. (89-90)

Once again, Muir imagines the natural world as intentionally blocking his path by guarding a “sea of sunny plants” behind a “labyrinth” of “armed vines.” Muir describes the Florida swamp as an organized military safeguarding the beauty of the natural world by blocking his progress and forcing him to retreat and change course. Further on he describes the swamp as an inhospitable wilderness as he searches for a haven to pass the night. He “walked rapidly for hours in the wet, level woods, but not a foot of dry ground could [he] find” (94). The unwelcoming night is punctuated by “[h]ollow-voiced owls” and “all manner of night sounds...from strange insects and beasts” (94). Muir’s long night of walking in the wilderness becomes a kind of long night of the soul; he is surrounded by strange sights and sounds and is physically tested in his attempt to navigate the tangled swamps. He comments, “All had a home but I” and connects his wandering to “Jacob on the dry plains of Padanaram” (94). Muir links his own walking with the story of Jacob who was sent out of Canaan to find a wife in Padanaram and on his journey in the wilderness dreamt of a ladder that went to heaven. God appeared to Jacob in his dream and said, “I will give to you and to your descendants this land on which you are lying. They will be as numerous as specks of dust on the earth. They will

extend their territories in all directions, and through you and your descendants I will bless all the nations. Remember, I will be with you and protect you wherever you go” (Genesis 28. 13-15). By linking his own night in the wilderness with the story of Jacob, Muir underscores the eeriness of the wilderness while also insisting on the rightness of his wandering there. In other words, the difficulties he faces point not to the sense that the wilderness is unfit for man, but rather to the sacredness of the wilderness and his own chosen state. Muir, like Jacob, faces a long night in the wilderness and is tested.

Muir often describes his sense of being alone in the unknown wilderness by referencing the story of another biblical patriarch. Muir refers to himself as a “stranger in a strange land,” the same language used by Moses in Exodus 2:22 (176). Gazing at a “company of...tillandsia-draped” trees outside Savannah, Georgia, Muir writes that he was “awe-stricken as one new-arrived from another world” (69). Later in the swamps of Florida, he sketches a similar portrait of himself as a stranger: “lonely to-night amid this multitude of strangers, strange plants, strange winds blowing gently, whispering, cooing, in a language I never learned” (93). Once again he imagines himself in language that recalls the wandering of Jacob and Moses in the wilderness. And like these biblical predecessors, Muir also ties this sense of strangeness to a journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land, writing that in spite of the sense of strangeness, “I thank the Lord with all my heart for his goodness in granting me admission to this magnificent realm” (93). Muir frames his difficult passage as a kind of pilgrimage – the strenuous and arduous journey through the swamp was rewarded with entrance into a sacred wilderness.

In this section and throughout the text, Muir merges descriptions of a strange and sometimes even threatening natural world with careful scientific observation. In bringing together these different ways of seeing and describing nature, Muir follows in the writing and botanizing footsteps of Alexander von Humboldt. Mary Louise Pratt suggests that in his writings Humboldt sought to counteract the tendency for travel writing to indulge in “on the one hand, a trivializing preoccupation with what he called ‘the merely personal,’ and on the other, an accumulation of scientific detail that was spiritually and esthetically deadening.” Humboldt’s solution, Pratt contends, was to “fuse the specificity of science with the esthetics of the sublime” (121). Muir continues this tradition, juxtaposing detailed scientific notes with spiritual and literary reflections. At one point as he struggles to negotiate the swamp, he “caught sight of the first palmetto in a grassy place, standing almost alone” (92). He records that the palmetto, a kind of palm tree, “was indescribably impressive and told me grander things than I ever got from a human priest” (92). Describing the palmetto as a “specimen,” Muir relays careful observations about the tree’s size and color:

This, my first specimen, was not very tall, only about twenty-five feet high, with fifteen or twenty leaves, arching equally and evenly all around. Each leaf was about 10 feet in length, the blade four feet and the stalk six. The leaves are channeled like half-open clams and are highly polished, so that they reflect the sunlight like glass. The undeveloped leaves on the top stand erect, closely folded, all together forming an oval crown over which the tropic light is poured and reflected from its slanting mirrors in sparks

and splinters and long-rayed stars. I am now in the hot gardens of the sun, where the palm meets the pine, longed and prayed for and often visited in dreams. (93)

Muir smoothly transitions between cool, scientific description and vivid, emotionally charged ruminations. The palmetto is first described in objective terms. It is twenty-five feet tall and the leaves are 10 feet long. He also notes that the close proximity of palm and pine indicates a transitioning between ecological zones. Muir does not simply provide a scientific study, however. Muir enhances these observations with aesthetic reflections: the light is “poured and reflected from its slanted mirrors” that sparkle like stars. And he describes the shift between ecological zones as a landscape previously imagined only in dreams. Muir’s scientific writing follows the example of Humboldt. He frames the strange and potentially threatening wilderness through science and art and thereby renders it inspirational.

By the time Muir reaches the Gulf Coast of Florida, he is extremely weak and ill with a malarial fever. Whereas earlier physical pain had enhanced his sense of himself as a wanderer embarking on a new life in the wilderness, malaria checks his progress and forces him to stop. He recalls, “the fever broke on me like a storm, and before I had staggered halfway to the mill I fell down unconscious on the narrow trail among dwarf palmettos” (128). He awakens from this initial swoon and “[s]ubsequently...I fell again and again after walking only a hundred yards or so...I rose, staggered, and fell, I know not how many times, in delirious bewilderment” (128). Throughout his illness and long recovery, Muir returns repeatedly to his inability to walk. He remembers, “I had night

sweats, and my legs became like posts of the temper and consistency of clay” (129). As soon as he is able to get out of bed, he “crept away to the edge of the wood, and sat day after day beneath a moss-draped live-oak” (129). In his passive state, Muir observes the plants and animals around him, noting that they all are in motion even as he is immobile. It is in his recollection of this time of immobility that Muir puts forward what is potentially his most radical theory – that the natural world was not made to serve man: “The world, we are told, was made especially for man – a presumption not supported by all the facts” (136). He concludes that “[f]rom the dust of the earth, from the common elementary fund, the Creator has made *Homo sapiens*. From the same material he has made every other creature....This star, our own good earth, made many a successful journey around the heavens ere man was made, and whole kingdoms of creatures enjoyed existence and returned to dust ere man appeared to reclaim them” (139-40). Cohen remarks that in these pages Muir begins “the bold and arduous task of reexamining values he had absorbed during his first thirty years of life” (25). And, certainly, by questioning the age of creation and the centrality of man, Muir upends a central tenet of Christian doctrine. Yet what Cohen and other critics have missed is that in his journal Muir links these new conceptions of the natural world with mobility. It is when he is rendered immobile that he begins to see more clearly the rhythms and motions of the natural world. His walk is no longer about man traversing a static wilderness; it is about man entering the realm of a rhythmic, living Nature. As in Milton’s depiction of a world that replicates the wandering of Adam and Eve, Muir imagines himself walking both through and with Nature.

As his journey progresses, Muir begins to note the rhythms of the natural world and allows those rhythms to determine his own movement. He regularly leaves the roads to chart his own way, referring to his method as “pathless wanderings” (89) in the “trackless woods” (93). Yet he finds that even in walking away from manmade trails, he is able to plot his course by following the sometimes unclear movements of the natural world. He often follows streams and rivers, looking to them for direction, noting “[m]ost streams appear to travel through a country with thoughts and plans for something beyond” (101). Seeking a route through the strange land of Florida he observes that the streams are “at home [and] do not appear to be traveling at all” (101). However even when the meaning or destination of the streams is hidden from him he recognizes a sense of flow and rhythm in the movements of the water. When he watches a storm from a boat off the coast of Cuba he writes, “I could see no striving in those magnificent wave-motions, no raging; all the storm was apparently inspired with nature’s beauty and harmony. Every wave was obedient and harmonious as the smoothest ripple of a forest lake” (146). In this early text, Muir is beginning to recognize an alternate rhythm, one that, unlike human arrangements of time and space, is less concerned with destinations and appointments. In his walk from Indianapolis to Florida’s coast, Muir begins to realize that in order to truly understand and study the natural world he must alter the rhythms of his body to more closely match the rhythms of nature.

Corey Lee Lewis argues that in his later writings Muir fashions his language to “correspond with the rhythm and movement of water” (105). By the 1880s, Lewis contends, Muir began to consciously mimic the rhythm of water in the rhythm of his

prose. Further, Lewis quotes Muir's essay, "Exploration of the Great Tuolumne Canyon" (1873) in which Muir fuses his prose and his physical movements with the rhythms around him: "I drifted from rock to rock, from stream to stream, from grove to grove....When I came to moraines, or ice-scratches upon rocks, I traced them back, learning what I could of the glacier that made them" (99). Cohen argues that Muir "knew that the order of things was deep, and that man was shallow, that the order of things was eternal, and that man was mortal" (42). In other words, while Muir may not have fully understood the rhythms of nature, he believed that there was a meaning there, that the rhythm and flow of the natural world had value and significance. In his early journal of his walk to the Gulf, Muir began to understand the existence of a larger pattern in the natural world: "The substance of the winds is too thin for human eyes, their written languages is too difficult for human minds, and their spoken language mostly too faint for the ears" (173). Muir was beginning to realize a key aspect of the nature philosophy he developed later in life. He was beginning to transform from someone who was "traversing the land in a random way" to someone who was "blending into [the land], following its own laws" (Cohen 43). In *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911) Muir articulates his vision of natural rhythms more completely:

...we are reminded that everything is flowing – going somewhere, animals and so called lifeless rocks as well as water. Thus the snow falls fast or slow in grand beauty-making glaciers and avalanches; the air in majestic floods carrying minerals, plant leaves, seeds, spores, with streams of music and fragrance; water streams carrying rocks both in solution and in

the form of mud particles, sand, pebbles, and boulders. Rocks flow from volcanoes like water from springs, and animals flock together and flow in currents modified by stepping, leaping, gliding, flying, swimming, etc. While the stars go streaming through space pulsed on and on forever like blood globules in Nature's warm heart. (236)

Muir's prose echoes the wandering theme in *Paradise Lost*. Just as Milton proposes that humans and the natural world go "wand'ring," Muir presents all of Nature flowing and moving in similar patterns. To fully experience Nature, Muir believed that he had to physically enter that flow, to walk, saunter, scramble, and wander in patterns that he knew were there even when he did not understand their aim.

Muir's understanding of Nature and his place in the natural world arises alongside his developing practice of walking. As he traces his alternately ecstatic and frustrating, easy and challenging walk from Indianapolis to Florida's Gulf coast, Muir navigates through the complex cultural values connected to walking in the wilderness. Approximately halfway through his journal he writes: "But let children walk with Nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life, and that the grave has no victory, for it never fights. All is divine harmony" (70-1). For Muir, physically experiencing Nature's rhythms through walking links scientific and sacred views of Nature. Entering the rhythm of the natural world allows him to examine it more clearly; he is able to recognize and study the cyclic and rhythmic patterns that

unite the natural world, patterns that hold the key to both science and the sacred. In this early walk, Muir begins to develop his nature philosophy: through walking one is able to more fully and clearly study Nature and physically experiencing Nature draws one into closer contact with the infinite.

### **Mary Hunter Austin's Rhythmic Desert**

In 1888, twenty-one years after John Muir walked into the wilderness on his way to the Gulf, Mary Hunter was moved to California's San Joaquin Valley with her mother and two brothers and began her wilderness sojourn. While Muir was propelled into the wilderness by an industrial accident, Hunter found herself thrust into the desert by a family in which she had no voice. Her mother decided they would leave their home in central Illinois and join Mary's older brother Jim in California, and as a young, twenty-year-old unmarried woman, Hunter was constrained to comply. John O'Grady comments that Hunter "never suffered the sort of wanderlust that characterized the lives of men like John Muir" (123). Muir felt duty-bound until his accident to make a living and *not* walk into the life of a wandering botanist, while Hunter was duty-bound to leave Illinois for what seemed to her to be an uninhabited wilderness.

In his ignorance about the desert, Jim Hunter had filed claims on land without irrigation in the San Joaquin Valley, about twenty miles south of Bakersfield. The land was bordered on three sides by mountains: the Sierra Nevada to the east, the Tehachapi and Temblor ranges to the south, and the Coast Range to the west. The Hunters moved into a one-room cabin with bunk beds, tarantulas in the walls, and supplies a two-day

wagon trip away in Bakersfield (Fink 42). Soon after the first year, the Hunters realized that the lack of water doomed any hopes they had of a thriving farm. Southern California was in the midst of a terrible drought, a situation that was difficult for Midwestern settlers to comprehend (Fink 44). In the spring of 1889, General Beale came to inspect his property, the Tejon Ranch, which abutted the Hunters' claim. Seeing the Hunters' desperate situation, he offered them the opportunity to run an old stage hostelry as a roadside inn. Beale also took an interest in Mary's curiosity about the land and people of California. Beale possessed a wealth of information about California and the West and he walked and rode with Mary in the vicinity of the Tejon Ranch, answering her questions and introducing her to the ranch hands, Basque shepherders, Spanish-speaking *vaqueros*, and Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute peoples who lived and worked in the area (Fink 45-46).

Mary Hunter's days on the trails of the Tejon fueled her imagination and became the basis for later literary works, especially her first book, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903). For despite the struggles the family faced and her own initial reluctance, Hunter reflected that her experience in the desert led her to write "for the first time directly, in her own character" (qtd. in Pryse xi). She described her experience of riding into the California desert much later in her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*:

There was something else there besides what you find in books; a lurking, evasive Something, wistful, cruel, ardent; something that rustled and ran, that hung half-remotely, insistent on being noticed...Beauty-in-the-wild, yearning to be made human. Even in the first impact, Mary gave back a

kindred yearning; it was in her mind that all she needed was to be alone with it for uninterrupted occasions, in which they might come to terms.  
(187)

Walking around the Tejon country and talking with and learning from the people she encountered, provided Hunter with a sense of security and belonging. As a woman who was socially awkward and ill at ease, Hunter found a community in the desert.

Financial realities were destined to cut short Hunter's sojourn. In September 1889, she began a teaching job at the Old River Primary School, about ten miles from Bakersfield. She boarded with the Pyle family and through them met Stafford Wallace Austin, who went by Wallace. Wallace was "intelligent and cultured in speech and manner" and Mary was excited to find someone with whom to engage in serious conversation (Fink 54-55). In turn, Wallace saw Mary as "a modest, serious-minded young woman who, with her sturdy pioneer heritage, would make a good wife" (Fink 55). In May 1891, Mary and Wallace were married.

Very early in the marriage it became clear that both Mary and Wallace had had unrealistic expectations of one another. Mary was not the woman Wallace saw her as: she hated housework and was by this time fully engrossed in her writing. And Wallace was not the serious minded intellectual Mary had hoped for. He listened politely, but was uninterested in the ideas Mary wrestled with. Even their shared love of camping failed to bring them together. Wallace "liked to break new trails and set his own pace," while Mary preferred a slower pace with more time to observe the natural world (Fink 108). While Wallace's "inexperience and ineptitude for agriculture" foretold the failure of his

many ventures, Mary immersed herself in writing. Then, in 1892, Mary discovered she was pregnant and the Austins moved to Lone Pine in the Owens Valley, east of the Sierra Nevada.

Perhaps as the result of a long, difficult delivery or of a genetic inheritance from Wallace's family, Austin's daughter, Ruth, was mentally disabled, and she was left completely in Mary's care (Pryse xiii). In order to make time to write, Austin found it necessary to physically restrain her daughter for hours each day. Meanwhile, her marriage to Wallace was suffering from prolonged separations and financial worries. Austin's years in Owens Valley were marked by domestic struggle: in 1905 she decided to commit her daughter to an institution, and in 1907 her marriage finally ended after years of discord and separation. However, her experiences with the people and the land of the California desert provided her with inspiration that lasted for the rest of her writing life.

When Ruth was still a baby, Austin resumed her desert walks around Lone Pine. One of her favorite destinations, according to her biographer, was "the Indian [settlement] up George's Creek" (Fink 73). There Austin visited with a group of Southern Paiutes, in particular a basket maker named Seyavi who became the model for characters in several later stories. In the afternoons she spent with Seyavi and her family Austin listened avidly to traditional Paiute stories (Fink 73). She also accompanied the younger Paiute women as they cut willow for baskets and was taught about the principles underlying the Paiute practice of prayer by Tinnemaha, a medicine man (Fink 87). She participated in Paiute life as much as she could, finding a sense of peace and community

that was lacking in her own home. She was particularly struck by Tinnemaha's teachings about the relationship between land, prayer, and rhythm. Austin felt drawn to what she understood of the Paiutes' way of life and began to integrate her understanding of rhythm into her writing.

At this time, John Muir was tramping through the Sierra Madre Mountains, following Nature's patterns and the patterns of thought determined by previous European and Euro-American writers and scientists. Austin also was intrigued by the rhythms and patterns Tinnemaha helped her to glimpse in the natural world. However, where Muir looked to western writers and scientists as a starting point for interpreting these rhythms, Austin sought to distance herself from these masculine traditions. Instead of mining western cultural traditions, Austin turned to Native American worldviews – views Austin imagined as more “authentic” and closer to the essence of the land itself. She eventually “became convinced... [that] the mold of Amerind verse...is the mold of the American experience shaped by the American environment” (Austin *American Rhythm* 42). In response to her understanding of Native American stories and worldviews combined with her experience in the desert, Austin rooted her life and her writing in movement: the rhythms of the seasons, the heartbeat, the footfall, and the flow of the natural world around her. She envisioned a harmony between the land, the animals, the human body, and language – a harmony she represented in the rhythms of walking.

As a “reluctant – indeed *involuntary* - pilgrim to the wild” Austin's experience had a different site of departure from Muir's; and while she, like Muir, was invested in uncovering Nature's rhythms, she envisioned a different source and a different meaning

behind them (O'Grady 140). While Austin did not fully articulate her understanding of these rhythms until later in her writing life, in her early work, *The Land of Little Rain*, movement in the form of walking informs and determines the rhythms of the text. Austin's language reflects the steady rhythm of the heartbeat and the footfall. As such, walking serves as what Austin would term a "glyph" – a symbol of a more complex meaning that is not fully expressed. Austin utilizes walking as a glyph that represents the physical movement of the body through space, the motions of thought, the vastness of the land, and the constant and mysterious rhythms that unite human, animal, and land. Austin rejected the patterns of life for an American woman at the turn of the century and found new patterns of correspondence between the movements of her body and the American land.

Whereas Muir's subject in *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* is the walk itself, Austin's subject in *The Land of Little Rain* is the land. Muir records himself walking into the wilderness, walking into nature's rhythms, but Austin is already there. Her text reflects a more established relationship with the sacredness of the natural world and with the rhythms that order it. Even though *The Land of Little Rain* was her first major engagement with nature, it was published fifteen years after she first entered the California desert and as such represents the writing of someone who has been working out her relationship to the wilderness for some time. As a person familiar with the patterns of the wilderness from the more intimate and personal experience of living in the land day to day as opposed to a person walking into the wilderness as an observing traveler, Austin's understanding of the natural world diverged rather strikingly from

Muir's. While both writers viewed patterns and rhythms as fundamental to Nature and as a reflection of the sacred, Muir's wilderness was sublime and dramatic and the rhythms he saw there connected to a mysterious and majestic sacredness. Deborah Paes de Barros suggests that "[f]or Muir, nature is a way to be reborn and returned to God" (59). In contrast, Austin's natural world is more intimate. The rhythms and patterns she traces are quieter, and the land is personal. Further, Muir depopulated his wilderness and focused on the non-human for access to the sacred, while Austin observed both the human and the non-human in search of harmony. This is not to suggest that Austin saw the land as any less significant or that she dismissed the sacred quality of the land. Rather, she imagines a natural world that includes the presence of human communities. John O'Grady contends that whereas nomadic writers such as Muir and Thoreau sought a spiritual "presence" through walking, Austin "did not have to seek the presence – it came to her. She was naturally adept at the practice of the wild" (127). Austin recognized this "presence" in the rhythms of the land that were reflected in the patterns of animal and human life in the desert. Her quest was not to discover that presence, but to align herself with the rhythms she already knew.

Like Muir, Austin's perception of the natural world was colored by previous generations of writers and thinkers. Beginning her writing career in the late nineteenth century, Austin was familiar with the work of the Transcendentalists and the tradition of rural women's writing. Of particular interest to many critics are the ways Austin's representation of Nature connects to and challenges paradigms set forth by the Transcendentalists.<sup>61</sup> For example, where Muir followed the Transcendental practice of

looking to Nature for spiritual experience, Austin complicated this quest. O'Grady argues that in part because of the freedom accorded to them as white men, Thoreau and Muir largely "confine[d] themselves to what might sarcastically be called the holiday side of the wild," while Austin was more profoundly aware of the "'shadow side'" of Nature (125). Paes de Barros similarly asserts that Austin's "westward road is noticeably not transcendent; instead, it offers both a darker vision of loss and a critique of women's social position in the West" (62). O'Grady and Paes de Barros suggest that Austin's experience of Nature as an ecstatic expression of the divine was influenced by her position as a woman at the turn of the century.

Austin was born into a closed off, protected world. As Carolyn Heilbrun points out, "Safety and closure, which have always been held out to women as the ideals of feminine destiny, are not places of adventure, or experience, or life" (20). While Austin was certainly not a captive in the sense of Mary Rowlandson or Sarah Wakefield, she shared with these women a culture that championed stasis and physical restriction for women in contrast to mobility and adventure for men. Benay Blend asserts that while Austin was not the only woman writing about nature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "early female nature writers generally placed familial responsibility before their writing," thereby "uph[olding] orthodox patterns of home and family" (32). Austin rebelled against this formula, but she still lacked the freedom that men like Muir enjoyed, and as a result her interaction with the wilderness was necessarily more complex and conflicted. While she celebrated Nature, she saw more there than a route to spiritual articulation. For Austin, the land was both beautiful and mysterious. Austin recognized

the “presence” sought by the Transcendentalists, but she understood it to be always beyond human grasp. As a woman in Euro-American society, Austin understood that certain experiences were denied her. This knowledge allowed her to recognize those aspects of the natural world that also were closed to her. While Muir may have forced his way when paths were tangled or meaning was elusive, Austin apprehended a certain “tricksiness” in the land, something that evaded definition (Buell 177). She tried to understand this elusive quality by turning to Nature’s rhythms.

Austin viewed the land as “polyrhythmic,” filled with the “reverberating motions of the universe” (Zolla 192). She explored and theorized about these rhythms throughout her writing life, but her most complete articulation of her engagement with Nature’s rhythm came in 1923 with the publication of *The American Rhythm*. Part literary theory and part poetic “re-expression” of Native American verse, *The American Rhythm* posits that the rhythm of the land shapes the life possible there and that as humans adjust themselves to the preexisting rhythm of the land, their thought and literature will also be molded. She writes, “the passing of the perception of rhythmic forms in our environment – as the roll of thunder or the run of wind in tall grass – through the sensorium into the subconscious, is experiential in its nature. It leaves a track, a mold, by which our every mode of expression is shaped” (*American Rhythm* 3). She continues, “the intellectual appreciation of such sequences is not enough. There must be a series of motor impulses started somewhere, before the experience is appreciated as rhythmic” (3-4). She argues that the rhythms of the land and the rhythms of the human body converge in a “wave-like motion” that gives rise to the manner of life lived in the American land and the quality of

poetic expression created there (5). In essence, the rhythms of land, body, and thought converge to create a life and literature that is uniquely American.

Although *The American Rhythm* was published twenty years after *The Land of Little Rain*, it provides a useful critical framework and vocabulary for analyzing the earlier work. Austin invites such a reading in *The American Rhythm* when she writes, “Only a few months ago, I had occasion to turn back to one of my desert books, written eighteen years ago and scarcely looked at since, I discovered the first paragraph striking without intention into the irregular tug and release of the four horse Mojave stage and of the eighteen-mule borax team, from which my association with the scenes described was almost never freed” (14-15). Austin suggests that though at the time of her earlier text she had not yet consciously formulated her theories about place and language, the rhythm and stress patterns in her early writing manifest the link between the manner in which the land determines how it can be traveled, rhythm, and writing.

Austin terms this interplay between land, rhythm, and language the “landscape line” (*American Rhythm* 54). The landscape line, she explains, is “the leap of the running stream of poetic inspiration from level to level, whose course cannot be determined by anything except the nature of the ground traversed....The length of the leaps, and the sequence of pattern recurrences will be conditioned by the subjectivity coordinated motor rhythms associated with the particular emotional flow” (*American Rhythm* 55-56). Austin’s definition of the landscape line is slippery and difficult to pin down. On the one hand, she suggests that the landscape line could serve as an analytic device: that by analyzing the landscape line in literature one could discover the land to which the writer

is responding.<sup>62</sup> Yet on the other hand, as James Rupert argues, her concepts are not “practical tools for literary analysis, but she...open[ed] new territory and, to this day, few have followed her” (“Mary Austin’s Landscape” 389). He suggests that though Austin “is never clear enough to make the concept readily accessible to her readers and critics,” in describing the landscape line Austin is “not specifying a new analytical tool, but voicing an insight created on a personal, intuitive level” (“Mary Austin’s Landscape” 380). He continues, “[w]e are not dealing with anapests for the desert and couplets for the plains, but a deeper idea of the structure and flow of emotion and idea. The structure of a thought and the rhythm of its development, as molded by the environment and the emotion” (382). Rupert’s explanation of the landscape line points to the importance of comprehending the complexity of the concept. He is correct in his contention that Austin does not use a particular metrical foot to correspond directly with a particular geographical feature. Rather, the rhythms and patterns that suffuse her writing flow from the arrangement of the words on the page as well as from the rhythm and meaning within the physical land and the physical body traversing it. Austin envisioned an active participation in the rhythms of the land and of American literature.

In *The American Rhythm* Austin suggests that the “Europeanly derived American” is generally too removed from the rhythms of the land to grasp the kind of immediate correspondence between bodily rhythms and rhythms generated by the land (31).<sup>63</sup> For a more complete expression of the landscape line Austin looks to Native American ceremonies and stories. “All this time,” she argues, “there was an American race singing in tune with the beloved environment, to the measures of life-sustaining gestures, taking

the material of their songs out of the common human occasions, out of democratic experience and the profound desire of man to assimilate himself to the Allness as it is displayed in all the peacock splendor of the American continent” (*The American Rhythm* 19). Chelsea Blackbird and Barney Nelson write, “unlike the Transcendentalists, Austin found a ‘holistic awareness’ not by going to India but by going to Indians. This, [Michael Castro] argues, answers ‘Emerson’s call for a uniquely American poetry’” (187). Rather than looking East with the Transcendentalists in order to experience the “Allness” with the land, Austin turns West for her understanding of Native American beliefs and ceremonies to access the convergence of land, body, mind, and the sacred. And she saw the route to accessing this state of convergence in rhythms.

Austin believed that “all Amerind literature was rhythmic” (“Non-English Writings II” 612). Native American peoples, she writes, “hit upon the idea of rhythm, vibration, as being the secret harmony, the ululating voice, the cry beaten into rhythm with the hand” (“Non-English Writings II” 617). Further, she writes that in Native American songs “It is even possible to dispense with words altogether, but the translator will go astray who contents himself with the words and does not put into his work the rhythm pattern and the emotion of the melodic intervals” (Non-English Writings II” 618). Austin’s assessment of Native American stories and worldviews certainly retains much of the ethnocentrism of her time. Her use of the past tense in the above passages, for instance, reflects Austin’s belief that Native Americans belong to the past. Elsewhere in “Non-English Writings II” this view is stated more plainly: “[Amerind] life is rapidly passing away and must presently be known to us only by tradition and history” (633).

Further, her view that “[t]he homogeneity of the Amerind race makes it possible to detect environmental influences with a precision not possible among the mixed races of Europe” is in line with the view of the larger Euro-American society at the time that Native Americans shared a single culture across the United States (“Non-English Writings II” 630).<sup>64</sup> However, she also saw value and “literariness” in Native American story and verse that was largely ignored by her contemporaries.<sup>65</sup> While her view that Native Americans were closer to the rhythms of the natural world was tinged by contemporary beliefs in cultural hierarchies, Austin viewed Native American ways of thinking as a model for creating a uniquely American literary tradition. The rhythms of Native American verse, she argues, offer Euro-American writers a path to follow to an authentic and unique American literature.<sup>66</sup>

Austin contends that the rhythms of the American environment are reflected not only in the rhythm of Native American verse, but also in their accompanying bodily movements. She argues that through dance and drum beats Native Americans are able to more fully access the landscape line. Imagining an ancient Native American “Stone Age Man,” she describes him “danc[ing] as the buck dances, and the pelican” (*The American Rhythm* 26). She writes, “With his bare foot he stroked out on the bare earth the assurance of identity... [and] discovered that, by making rhythmic movements and noises, power comes” (*The American Rhythm* 26). She describes the power as the culmination of “coordinate[ing] with his dance the rhythm of sun, wind, or falling water, making himself part of the inextricable pattern of the hour” (*The American Rhythm* 31). Austin perceives in Native American verse and dance a complex relationship between

land, body, and words, a relationship dependent on complementary rhythms. She illustrates this complex union with an account of the Corn Dance as performed by “the Rio Grande Pueblos” (*The American Rhythm* 46):<sup>67</sup>

The dancers will number among the hundreds, according to the population of the community. The natural rhythm of their timing feet will run from the pound of the men’s thick soles, through the softer shuffle of the women to the patter of the children tailing out the procession around the plaza, rising and falling and overlapping like a musical round, bound together but not necessarily synchronized by the beat of the tombs, steady and quick like the heart of the sun beating. In and out of these primary rhythms play the body accents, knee rattle and arm rattle of deer’s hoofs or tortoise case, and the lovely silver clash of the wreathes of conus shells about the glistening torsos of the men. From point to point, like the rush of summer rain, runs the roll of prisoned pebbles in hand-held gourds. All the dancers sing, moving deftly in their places from time to time as the orchestral pattern of the rhythm requires. Out and aside the elders sing, prayerfully, inviting the cooperation of the People of Middle Heaven in rhythms that are not necessarily temporally synchronous, though subjectively coordinated with the dancers. (*The American Rhythm* 46-7)

Austin mirrors the physical rhythm of the dancers in the rhythm and stress patterns of her prose. Here, as in much of her writing, the most common metrical foot is a triple foot, an anapest or dactyl. In *A Prosody Handbook* Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum write that

“anapests tend to produce lightness and speed” and dactyls, common to nursery rhymes, are “appropriate to such droll and frisky effects” (40, 43). So, for example, when Austin describes the movements of the dancers’ bodies she predominantly uses these triple feet, interspersed with other rhythms for emphasis: “frōm thě pōund ōf thě mén’s thīck sōles, thrōugh thě sōftēr shúfflē ōf thě wómēn tō thě páttēr ōf thě chíldrēn táilīng ōūt thě prōcēssiōn ārōund thě plázā, rísīng ānd fállīng ānd óvĕrláppīng líke ā músícāl rōund.”<sup>68</sup>

The sentence begins with two anapests, creating a sense of rhythmic movement. Then Austin inserts a spondee (“thick soles”), which slows the rhythm to match the sense of the phrase. From there she returns briefly to an anapest before breaking the pattern again, this time with a pyrrhic, a series of unstressed syllables. The pyrrhic, in contrast to the spondee, hastens the pace, just as the women’s shuffle is lighter and faster than the men’s pounding step. The use of the pyrrhic continues with the “pattering” of the children’s feet. The passage ends with a return to a more regular pattern, a combination of dactyls, trochees, and ending with an anapest: “rísīng ānd fállīng ānd óvĕrláppīng líke ā músícāl rōund.” The return to a more regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables recalls the even pattern of the heartbeat and the footstep. The rhythm of the prose, then, mirrors the sense of the passage as Austin imagines that the rhythms reflect the “heart of the sun beating” and rise from the feet of the dancers through their arms, legs, and torsos, into their rattles and finally are expressed in chanting and singing. Austin stresses that while words are important, the ceremony’s meaning extends beyond them; the rhythm and meaning of the words bubble up through a bodily expression of natural rhythms. To fully appreciate the power and intent of the Corn Dance, she suggests, one must look to the

multiplicity of rhythms it incorporates – linguistic, bodily, and those arising from the land itself.

Austin argues that even when one attempts to account for the meaning of Native American verse by looking to these coordinated rhythms of voice, body, and land, full understanding may continue to be elusive without an understanding of Native American language as “holophrastic” (“Non-English Writings II” 618). Holophrastic language, Austin explains, “is an effort to express the relationship of several ideas by combining them into one word” (618). She goes on to explain that within the brief phrase of the literal line is a more complex meaning. Further, when one takes into consideration rhythms of language and body as well as words themselves, the practice becomes even more complex, a process she call “glyphic” and compares to Imagism (“Non-English Writings II” 627). To illustrate her theory, Austin provides a literal and then a more complete translation of a line from an Anishinaabe Medicine Society song. Austin’s literal translation of the line is: “The sky/ we have lost it” (627). However, she argues that when one takes into consideration the “shape of the song determined by the drum” in addition to the repetition of the words, a more complete translation emerges: “Darkness devours our sky!/ Toward its obscuring clouds/ We extend our hands/ For the favour of clear weather, / By our power we attain it!” (627). She describes this method of translation as a kind of synecdoche: “to take the part for the whole, the leaf for the tree, the track of the bear’s foot for the bear, the reaching hand for the aspiring spirit of man” (628). James Ruppert writes that Austin’s glyph “is concerned with the importance of the unsaid. The glyph becomes a symbol of, or a key to, the inner song, to the meaning not

expressed” (“Discovering America” 254). The glyph represents the landscape line; in the joining of complex ideas through word and rhythm the land is revealed.

Because Austin viewed Native American verse and ceremony as closer to the land and more authentically American than Euro-American writing of her time, she attempted to use her understanding of these forms as a model for her own writing. In her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, Austin explains her process of learning to write as a process of coming into contact with the power and “Allness” she sees in Native American traditions, something she refers to as “the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man.” Narrating this experience in the second person, she writes:

There is this thing called the Friend-of-the-soul-of-Man, a reality, an influence which you can call up around you. You wrap yourself in it. You are effective through it. You make use of it through rhythm; the beating of the medicine drum; the pound of feet in the medicine dance. You give way to it through rhythmic utterance. You find it expressing itself in rhythmic movement, the running of quail, the creaking of the twenty-mule team, the sweep of motion in a life-history, in a dance, a chant. You perceive that these patterns made writing; you struggled for them; won, caught, and ensnared them. (*Earth Horizon* 289)

Writing, for Austin, is a way to “ensnare” and translate the rhythms of the natural world. She strives to match the rhythm of her writing voice to the rhythms of the land and the physical movement of animals and humans across that land. Dale Metcalfe connects Austin’s understanding of the rhythms of written language to her understanding of Native

American life and verse. Metcalfe argues that “[f]rom her first forays into the Paiute camps near Bishop and Lone Pine, California, in the late 1880’s, Austin’s creative work was profoundly influenced by Native Americans” (66). Metcalfe goes on to suggest that Austin was particularly influenced by what she saw as Native Americans’ “propensities to actively participate in, rather than simply observe, nature” (67).<sup>69</sup> Though it wasn’t until the 1920s and 30s that Austin fully developed her theories of holophrasic and glyphic writing, it is clear that these ideas were nascent in her earlier writings, particularly in *The Land of Little Rain* and *Lost Borders*. Marjorie Pryse recognizes Austin’s glyphic style in these texts and writes that, “the single line or visual image, an extension of its patterns throughout a sketch, and the development of pattern through a collection of sketches all allow Austin to find her way, both literally and literarily” (xx). While Austin scholars have long noted Austin’s use of rhythm and glyphs in these texts, they have overlooked the way that she draws these theories together in her most pervasive glyph – the glyph of walking.<sup>70</sup> In her early texts, the rhythm of walking across the land serves as a means to communicate complex theories of rhythm, movement, and thought development.

In her autobiography, *Earth Horizon*, Austin writes that before *The Land of Little Rain* could be completed, she needed to find the correct “key,” one she finally discovered “in the rhythm of the twenty-mule teams that creaked in and out of the borax works. The rhythm of the lonely lives blown across the trails” (296). *The Land of Little Rain* is a text in constant motion. David Wyatt argues that in this text, “[s]trong sentence rhythm serves Austin not only as a counterweight to narrative but as an approximation of the

underlying continuity of nature....We move here through an attempt to describe the form of a motion”(84). Similarly, James Work writes that in reading this text “[w]e have a sense of watching the author walking through the country, or riding through it, in constant motion” and as “a light trail to follow” the book “presents an almost organic regularity” (298-300). Wyatt and Work grapple with the relationship between physical movement and linguistic movement in Austin’s first major work. Yet their discussions of movement in the text favor a metaphoric reading of movement as artistic quest (Wyatt 94), feminine wanderlust (Wyatt 78), or as a “set of moral statements concerning the proper relationship of the human animal to the land in its natural state” (Work 297). In her introduction to *Western Trails: A Collection of Short Stories by Mary Austin*, Melody Graulich also reads Austin’s inclusion of trails and walking motifs as important primarily as metaphors that “always stress connections between places, people, cultures.... [and] represent her efforts to create a new American mythology” (4). While all three of these critics recognize the centrality of motion, trails, and walking in *The Land of Little Rain* and their analyses of some of the meanings embedded in these images are instructive, they all sidestep the literal, experiential component of Austin’s work. As Corey Lee Lewis contends, Austin “attempts to embody the rhythms and characteristics of the land in her prose, thereby resisting the mediated nature and distancing the effects of linguistic representation” (63). Yet her prose is more complex than Lewis’s description. She combines a careful attention to the land with an expertise in crafting English prose – she draws together literary artifice and natural rhythms. To fully appreciate Austin’s attempt to engage the landscape line in *The Land of Little Rain*, it is necessary to examine her

treatment of trails and walking as glyphs that express multiple ideas as well as physical experiences. By turning to the rhythms of walking, Austin works to present an interaction with the natural world that is both intellectual and visceral.

In *Earth Horizon* Austin writes that even as a child she “wanted to write books that you could walk around in” (73). In its peripatetic structure, *The Land of Little Rain* reflects this aspiration. As many critics have noted, the trails and paths that structure *The Land of Little Rain* invite readers into the land and the stories.<sup>71</sup> Beginning with the opening sketch, “The Land of Little Rain,” Austin walks the reader into the desert of the Owens Valley where, “[n]ot the law, but the land sets the limit” (9). She mentions her own “twice seven years’ wanderings” (17) and encourages her readers to look for “footprint tracings in the sand” (13). Subsequent sketches walk the reader through the “Water Trails of the Ceriso,” “The Mesa Trail,” “The Streets of the Mountains,” and along “Water Borders.” Elizabeth Ammons argues that these trails are not straightforward, but rather rhythmic and even “antilinear.” She asserts that *The Land of Little Rain* “constantly reiterates the simple construct of push/pull, ebb/flow, shrink/expand that Austin considered the pulse, the constant, cyclic, unaccented rhythm of the earth itself” (Ammons 92). Ammons contends that Austin borrowed this formal principle from the Native peoples she encountered, linking this structure to Austin’s description in *The American Rhythm* of the “dub-dub, dub-dub, dub-dub” rhythm “commonly heard ‘in the plazas of Zuni and Oraibi’” (Ammons 92). Indeed, while the text points out trails for us to follow they are not paths that lead us from one point

directly to another. Her literary trails emphasize living in and with the patterns of the natural world.

Austin suggests that these paths reflect the “proper” way of entering Nature’s rhythm. She writes, “The manner of the country makes the usage of life there, and the land will not be lived in except in its own fashion” (57).<sup>72</sup> In the case of the desert of *The Land of Little Rain*, the aridity of the land makes the quest for water vital and this quest for water creates a network of paths and trails. Mark Schlenz contends that Austin presents “a utopian integration of people and place, a harmonious community of humans and nature joined by paths of water” (191). While referring to the country of *The Land of Little Rain* as “utopian” seems to miss the desolation and death lurking in much of Austin’s depiction, Schlenz is right in suggesting that the “paths of water” act as a web that binds human and non-human. Austin presents trails that emerge naturally from the land, trails that are determined by the land. Writing about the land of the Carrizo Plains near San Joaquin Valley in southern California, which she calls “the Ceriso,” Austin asserts, “By the end of the dry season the water trails of the Ceriso are worn to a white ribbon in the leaning grass, spread out faint and fanwise toward the homes of gopher and ground rat and squirrel” (21). Austin suggests that the animals can only live in the patterns of the land and therefore their trails signal to humans how to adjust their rhythms to those of the desert. She tells her reader, “I have yet to find the land not scarred by the thin, far roadways of rabbits and what not of furry folks that run in them. Venture to look for some seldom-touched water-hole, and so long as the trails run with your general direction make sure you are right, but if they cross yours at never so slight an angle, to

converge toward a point left or right of your objective, no matter what the maps say, or your memory, trust them; they *know*” (22). In this passage, Austin mirrors the pattern of the land in both her description and in the rhythm of her prose. As with her description of the Puebloan corn dancers, her description of the trails etched by the feet of “furry folks” recreates physical movement with the movement of her prose. She begins the passage with anapests and iambs, mirroring the rhythm of human steps as she walks into the land. Then, when she encounters the trails of the rabbits she inserts a spondee: “thě thín fár róadwăys,” slowing down the pace of her prose as she encourages her readers to slow down and observe the land. She then moves to an irregular series of stressed and unstressed syllables, including a pyrrhic, mirroring the scurrying movement of the rabbits: “róadwăys ǒf rábbīts ānd whát nǒt ǒf fúrry~ fǒlks thăt rún ĩn thěm.” The quickness of the rhythm here is underscored by the sound, the alliteration. Shapiro and Beum suggest that alliteration, “tends to create a kind of discourse which focuses our attention minutely on the linguistic details of a sequence of words: it makes us *feel* the words” (my emphasis; 93). The repetition of “r” sounds in the above phrase further focuses the readers’ attention on the scurrying movement of the rabbits, emphasizing the meaning of the passage – that to understand how to be in the land correctly one must observe the manner of the animals. The passage ends with inverted feet, a trochee and an iamb that mirror one another: “trúst thěm, thěy *knów*,” further focusing the readers’ attention. In stressing “they *know*,” Austin offers readers a different kind of knowing. Austin encourages her readers to trust the wisdom of the animals and the land rather than trusting man-made maps or even their own pre-existing knowledge. Like Muir, Austin

understands these patterns to be beyond ordinary human modes of knowing; the true power of the land can only be accessed by “reading” nature’s wisdom in the network of water trails that act as a visible trace of the rhythm of walking the land.

Austin continues to emphasize the trails “written” with the feet of desert animals. She describes, “coyotes that are astir in the Ceriso of late afternoons, harrying the rabbits from their shallow forms, and the hawks that sweep and swing above them” waiting for “the small fry” to venture onto the water trails (24). Later she describes a horned toad as “a palm’s breadth of the trail [that] gathers itself together and scurries off” (89), and observes a badger with “sharp-clawed, splayey feet” as a “swift trailer” (87). She refers to the fox and the coyote as “split-feet” who are “light treaders” (87). The water trails reflect the rhythm of the desert; they are rubbed into the earth as a result of the walking of the animals in search of life-sustaining springs and they provide routes to those springs. The rhythms of the desert are the rhythms of the footfall; the pace of walking reflects the deeper rhythms of the land and makes these rhythms visible through foot-worn trails and paths. These trails and paths link the rhythms of the land to the manner in which the land must be lived upon.

To truly access the rhythm of the land Austin advocates shifting from a human stride to an animal gait. She suggests that to accurately “read” the patterns of the wilderness one must get “down to the eye level of rat and squirrel kind” (21). “[M]an-height,” she claims, “is the least fortunate of all heights from which to study trails” (21). In addition to getting down to the level of rats and squirrels, Austin recommends going to the top of a “tall hill” because the paths to water are “mapped out whitely from this level,

which is also the level of hawks” (21). Later she proposes that the proper rhythm of the mesa trails is not found in a human step, which “carries one too slowly past the units in a decorative scheme that is on a scale with the country round for bigness” (83). Rather, the mesa trails are “meant to be traveled on horseback, at the jiggling coyote trot that only western-bred horses have learned successfully” (83). Austin recommends that just as the “western-bred horses” have learned to adjust their gait to the jog of the coyote, humans in the desert are called upon to adjust their perspective and in so doing to adjust their physical movement. Moving with the flow of the land requires new ways of “tak[ing] to the trail,” new ways of taking a walk (24).

In *The Land of Little Rain* Austin traces the rhythmic forces at work upon the entirety of the natural world. In the preface to the text, Austin tells her readers that to truly “have such news of the land, of its trail and what is astir in them.... [o]ne must summer and winter with the land and wait its occasions. Pine woods that take two and three seasons to the ripening of cones, roots that lie by in the sand seven years awaiting a growing rain, firs that grow fifty years before flowering, – these do not scrape acquaintance ” (4). Austin argues that the rhythms of the desert require time and effort to be understood, they “do not scrape acquaintance” or give away their secrets easily. The trails and paths that crisscross *The Land of Little Rain* invite readers into a country that is already humming with patterns and rhythms. She writes of the “procession of the pines” (104), and of a seedling that “tip-toe[s] above the gully of a creek” (77). Even the moon “wander[s]” (24), stars “[w]heel in their stations in the sky” (17), storms have “appointed paths” (133), “young rivers swa[y] with the force of their running” (106), and “clouds

come walking on the floor of heaven” (134). Like Muir, Austin presents a world that is flowing and moving, her wheeling stars echoing Muir’s stars “streaming through space” (*First Summer* 236).<sup>73</sup> However, whereas Muir champions Nature apart from human interference, Austin contends that humans *can* live in harmony with these grand rhythms. To live properly in the Land of Little Rain is to strive to align the rhythms of the body and mind with the rhythms of the land.

Austin identifies the few human inhabitants in *The Land of Little Rain* who live in the flow of the land and have internalized the landscape line. The patterns of their bodies have been influenced by the rhythms of the land. They have altered their “rhythm of walking [that is] always a recognizable background for our thoughts...to the jog of the wide, unrutted earth” (*The American Rhythm* 14). For instance, Austin writes that the inhabitants of a fictionalized Euro-American mining town she calls Jimville, “understand the language of the hills....Somehow the rawness of the land favors the sense of personal relation to the supernatural” (71). Despite Jimville’s location in Squaw Gulch, “a very sharp, steep, ragged-walled ravine” (67), and “the killing and drunkenness, coveting of women, ....indifference, blankness, emptiness” (71) that characterizes life there, Austin contends that in Jimville there is also “charity, simplicity...[and] no bread-envy, no brother fervor” (71).<sup>74</sup> The inhabitants of Jimville reflect the loneliness and “rawness” of the land; they represent “the courage to sheer off what is not worth while” (71). In Jimville, she writes, “you have the repose of the perfectly accepted instinct which includes passion and death in its perquisites” (72). The flow of life in Jimville matches the flow of the desert, and the inhabitants’ relationship to law, land, life and death

correspond to a place where “[n]ot the law, but the land sets the limits” (9) and the land “may breed like qualities in her human offspring, not tritely to ‘try,’ but to do” (11).

Though Jimville is a fixed location in the California desert, the inhabitants themselves are not motionless; being settled in Jimville does not mean being stationary. The narrator herself learns the stories of Jimville on the seat of a stage coach. She writes, “First on the way to Jimville you cross a lonely open land, with a hint in the sky of things going on under the horizon, a palpitant, white, hot land where the wheels gird at the sand and the midday heaven shuts it in breathlessly like a tent” (67). In this description Austin suggests the movements of nomads, traveling with their tents across a land that vibrates with the heat of the sun. The language she employs reflects this rocking movement with its long sentence structure and commas that create frequent, rocking pauses reminiscent of the movement of the coach. The passage begins with dactyls and trochees, indicating the jolting, off-kilter movement of the coach: “Fírst òn thě wáy tǒ Jímville.” When she turns to her description of the land, however, her rhythm opens up into iambic tetrameter: “yǒu cróss ă lónely ǒpěň lánd.” Shapiro and Beum argue iambic feet create a rhythm that seems “formal and lofty,” an elegance that befits the grandeur of the desert (36). As the body is jolted by the coach’s off-kilter rhythm, the eye travels out and is stilled by the expanse of the land.

The inhabitants of Jimville also reflect this back and forth rocking. Though their houses are permanent, the people move away from the town into the surrounding hills and then return to the town. “Yearly,” Austin writes, “the spring fret floats the loose population of Jimville out into the desolate waste hot lands, guiding by peaks and a few

rarely touched water-holes, always, always with the golden hope” (71). As they move into the hills they are drawn there by a “golden hope” that they will find the rich lode. The miners are controlled by a desire to move into the hills that matches the seasonal flow of the land. In the several stories Austin relates of Jimville’s inhabitants, the action tends to take place in the hills around the town, but in the end the characters always return to town. In the paragraph long story of how Squaw Gulch was named, for example, Jim Calkins twice moved away from Jimville and then “walked back” and “came back” (68). The inhabitants of Jimville, like Austin’s prose, echo the pulsing rhythms of the land as they physically move away from and back to Jimville.

Even more than the inhabitants of Jimville, Austin’s Shoshone characters embody the rhythms of the land. Austin had encountered members of the Timbisha Tribe of the Western Shoshone in their ancestral homelands which include the San Joaquin Valley and the Owens Valley. At the time Austin encountered the Timbisha Shoshone, they had signed the Treaty of Ruby Valley, allowing the United States access to their land. However, the Timbisha did not cede their land to the U.S., and continued to move through their homeland following the seasons (*Timbisha Shoshone*). Describing their semi-nomadic lifestyle, Austin tells her readers, “The Shoshones live like their trees, with great spaces between...Their shelters are lightly built, for they travel much and far, following where deer feed and seeds ripen, but they are not more lonely than other creatures that inhabit there” (57). Austin suggests that like the miners in Jimville, the Shoshone mold their lives to the pulse of the natural world. They live “like their trees” and respond to the shifting seasons with physical movement. Austin imagines that as a

hunting and gathering people, they recognize the wisdom of the deer and the seeds and match their travel to their cues. This vision of the seasonal cycles of Shoshone life contrasts sharply with Muir's description in *My First Summer in the Sierra* of a group of Western Mono (descendents of the Northern Paiute and neighbors of the Shoshone): "dark-eyed, dark-haired, half-happy savages" who lead "a strangely dirty and irregular life in this clean wilderness, – starvation and abundance, deathlike calm, indolence, and admirable, indefatigable action succeeding each other in stormy rhythm like winter and summer" (206). Muir's description indicates that Paiute life is negatively related to these patterns, that because they are unable to break free they are caught in a destructive cycle of action and inaction. Austin, however, sees in the relationship between the Shoshone and the land a map for how to live with Nature's rhythms.

Austin draws connections between the Shoshone and the natural world by suggesting, as many did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that Native Americans possess a deep sense of kinship with the land. In *The American Rhythm* Austin writes about the formation of Native American cultures: "Streams of rhythmic sights and sounds flowed in upon the becoming race of Americans from every natural feature" (14). In *The Land of Little Rain* Austin expresses this relationship between people and place in her description of the ways in which Shoshone life responds to the rhythms of their world. "Young Shoshone," she contends, "are like young quail, knowing without teaching about feeling and hiding, and learning what civilized children never learn, to be still and to keep being still, at the first hint of danger or strangeness" (58). Similarly, she likens the Shoshone to plants, claiming that "The solitariness of the life breeds in the men, as in the

plants, a certain well-roundedness and sufficiency to it own ends” (57). Austin’s romanticizing descriptions of the Shoshone reflect the quality of the land they inhabit. She even goes so far as to imagine that the Shoshone are so connected to the land that they understand how to survive without being taught. The land, Austin reports, “goes very far by broken ranges, narrow valleys of pure desertness, and huge mesas uplifted to the sky-line, east and east, and no man knows the end of it....This is the sense of the desert hills, that there is room enough and time enough” (56). Austin imagines the desert as a place of brooding silence and mystery, where “no man” can entirely know the fullness of the land. In Austin’s romantic representation, the Shoshone reflect this quality in their nomadic movements. The rhythm of Shoshone life is not the out-and-back rocking of Jimville, but a quieter, more spacious seasonal rhythm, a rhythm that ranges more widely along the desert’s trails.

In *The Land of Little Rain* Austin presents Native Americans as instinctively able to recognize Nature’s trails as routes of knowledge. Modeled closely on a Paiute woman she met and became acquainted with while she lived near George’s Creek in the Owens Valley, her sketch of Seyavi emphasizes the relationship she sees between Native Americans and the desert trails. Seyavi lives at the end of the Mesa Trail, a place Austin contends is the “beginning of other things” (90). Austin begins Seyavi’s story by describing the land of Owens Valley, reminding her readers that “[t]o understand the fashion of any life, one must know the land it is lived in and the procession of the year” (93). Austin suggests that like the Shoshone, Seyavi molds her life to the rhythms of the land. Austin observes that “[t]wice a year, in the time of white butterflies and again when

young quail run neck in neck in the chaparral, Seyavi cut willows for basketry by the creek where it wound toward the river against the sun and sucking winds” (95-6).

Seyavi’s life and artistry is determined by the ebb and flow of the seasons, a rhythm that is not constrained by the calendar but is governed by when the rains come (96). Though her baskets are “wonders of technical precision” (95), what is truly engaging about them for Austin is their connection to Seyavi and the land. Her baskets, Austin writes, “have a touch beyond cleverness. The weaver and the warp lived next to the earth and were saturated with the same elements” (95). The baskets are more than utilitarian pieces and more even than works of art. They reflect the “golden time” when the willows are cut and “the soul of the weather went into the wood” (96). Austin claims that in owning one of Seyavi’s baskets, “you would understand all this without saying anything” (96). In Austin’s description, Seyavi’s baskets are glyphic, they embody a whole region and people in their patterns. Austin imagines that the baskets reflect the Paiutes’ semi-nomadic way of life. She writes that their home is not “the wattled hut...but the land, the winds, the hill front, the stream” (97). Graulich argues that Austin “felt the Paiutes showed her how to envision patterns in art, to realize rhythm” (*Western Trails* 8). Indeed, in her autobiography Austin records that in observing Paiute women she learned “that to get at the meaning of work you must make all its motions, both of body and mind” (*Earth Horizon* 247). As glyphs, Seyavi’s baskets are not simply symbols of the rhythms of the land; they *are* the land. In their materials and patterns, Seyavi has captured the rhythms and essence of the desert. In her position at the end of the Mesa

Trail, Seyavi exemplifies Austin's belief that if the land's rhythms are seen clearly, one will come to wisdom, an understanding of the land and, through the land, of the sacred.

Austin's next collection of stories of the California desert, *Lost Borders*, concludes with the story of the Walking Woman, a Euro-American wanderer whose desert wisdom, Austin contends, is "as reliable as an Indian's" ("Walking Woman" 257). The narrator begins her story of the Walking Woman by recounting her own tracking of the Walking Woman's story. The narrator encounters glimpses of the Walking Woman's trail from "shepherders at whose camps she slept" and "cowboys at rodeos [who] told me as much of her way of life as they could understand....That was very little" (255). The Walking Woman's identity is mysterious and elusive. She is called Mrs. Walker or the Walking Woman because she never tells her name. The narrator is convinced that "she lost her name" and "never told it because she did not know it herself" (257). Nameless and enigmatic, the Walking Woman is identified by her behavior: she walks. Wyatt argues that as a character the Walking Woman "fade[s] into the ground" (76). As she walks her individual identity recedes and what is left in its place is movement and rhythm. Like the desert in which she walks, the Walking Woman evades complete understanding and her story refuses to be confined and dissected. She walks in the desert's rhythms and, glyph-like, hints at knowledge that she never reveals.

Tara Hart describes "The Walking Woman" as a story characterized by the "tidal rhythms of surge and withdrawal" as the narrator continually restages her depiction of and meeting with the Walking Woman (93). The narrator begins the story by asserting "The first time of my hearing of her was at Temblor," referring to the Temblor Range

that borders the Carrizo Plains in southern California (255). She follows this assertion not with information about the Walking Woman, but only with the fact that she had passed by recently. The narrator continues in this manner, mentioning other times and places she hears of the Walking Woman. In this first paragraph the reader learns very little of the Walking Woman other than her elusiveness, her habit of always being just ahead of the narrator's progress. A few pages further on the narrator tells us she "had met her occasionally at ranch-houses and road-stations" and then later she "came upon her in the heart of a clear afternoon" (257). With each rumor and meeting the narrator reveals a bit more about the Walking Woman, but her full story always lies just out of reach. The sketch captures the rhythmic movement of the Walking Woman and the desert. Like the sketch of Jimville in *The Land of Little Rain*, the structure of "The Walking Woman" reflects a rocking, back and forth motion: with each entry into the story the narrator moves closer to the Woman and then slides back again. Each time she "begins" the story is like a step in the desert sand moving the reader closer to the story's meaning only to give way slightly and draw the reader back.

What the narrator does reveal about the Walking Woman is her deviation from expected female behavior, a deviation that is represented by and explicit in her walking. The Walking Woman "had walked off all sense of society-made values" (261). She moves with ease in the male world of the miners, sheepherders, ranchers, and *vaqueros* who allow her to "pass unarmed and unoffended," a fact that the men seem surprised at as "it was not, on the whole, what they expected of themselves" (256). The narrator suggests that Walking Woman is able to walk and work in this male world because "you

get no affront so long as your behavior in the estimate of the particular audience invites none” (256). The Walking Woman is able to walk away from “a frame of behavior called ladylike” and thrives (265). However, even though the male desert inhabitants seem to accept her behavior, they see her as somehow deformed. The narrator records that “she had a twist to her face, some said; a hitch to one shoulder; they averred she limped as she walked” (257). But these accounts seem to reflect her divergence from ladylike behavior, not her physical body, because “by the distance she covered she should have been straight and young” (257). Faith Jaycox argues that it is in the act of walking itself that the Walking Woman broke “the conventional laws of femininity” (9). The Walking Woman, she contends, “is the precise opposite of a confined woman; the endless mobility – not an escape journey, but simply endless mobility – is a powerful symbolic challenge to the enforced physical restriction of women” (9). Walking is both what the Walking Woman does and what she is. In opposition to cultural ideals of the restricted and restrained woman, her identity is bound up in action.

If walking is the Walking Woman’s rejection of societal disapproval of women’s movement, it is also what allows her to gain entry into the pulse of the desert. Hart argues that in this story “[a]ccess to the land...occurs only by traveling/reading across great stretches of space and time” (97). In the tradition of many male sojourners in the West, including Muir, the Walking Woman “beg[an] by walking off an illness...[that] drove her to the open, sobered and healed at last by the large soundness of nature” (257). In the beginning of her wandering she experienced a “period of worry and loss” before “she began to find herself” in the desert (258). The Walking Woman tells the narrator

that she came to a new understanding of herself in the midst of a sandstorm. During the storm she helps her lover, Filon, round up his sheep. She finds the storm, which made the “whole surface of the ground appea[r] to travel upon it slantwise” (258), not terrifying but exhilarating. She asserts that “[u]ntil that time I had not known how strong I was, nor how good it is to run when running is worth while” (259). Like Muir, the Walking Woman recognizes that her physical strength is a significant aspect in her experience of Nature; however, for her this strength takes her outside of her accepted gender role and redefines her sense of her own possibilities. When night comes, she and Filon take turns keeping watch, and she begins to recognize her body’s link to the rhythm of the desert: “I lay on the ground when my turn was and beat with the storm. I was not more tired than the earth was” (259). The experience that allows the Walking Woman to heal her “worry and loss” is the moment when self-reliance, physical exertion, and the pulse of the storm converge: the moment when the rhythms of nature and the motions of the body align and there is a “sense of the unfolding earth” (*Earth Horizon* 104). As a nomad, the Walking Woman presents readers with a way to gain entry into the rhythmic stream of the American desert.

While there does seem to be a “real” Walking Woman, the characterization of this figure bears striking resemblance to Austin herself.<sup>75</sup> Like the Walking Woman, Austin walked away from societal ideas about femininity, and Austin imagined herself as possessing the earth-wisdom that her character demonstrates. In her autobiography Austin writes that her sense of the essence of the land developed early, that even as a child she felt that “[t]here is something in Mary which comes out of the land; something

in its rhythms, its living compulsions, which dominates...governing her own progressions, coloring her most intimate expression”( *Earth Horizon* 15). Further, like the Walking Woman, Austin views this “something” as a “rejection of the male ritual of rationalization in favor of a more direct intuitional attack” (15). Austin strived to detach her writing from rigid and oppressive societal influences in favor of a land-based ethic that allowed her to access the deep rhythms of Nature.

By 1924, Austin had long left behind the deserts of California and was struggling with the politics and values of the New York publishing industry. That spring Austin frequently “had the feeling she was living in a nightmare” (Fink 223). Removed physically from her chosen land, she was struggling to finish her collection of stories set in the Southwestern desert, *The Land of Journeys’ Ending*, under severe pressure from her publishers and she was physically suffering from a bacterial infection. Yet, her biographer asserts, Austin was able to find moments of connection to the desert’s familiar rhythms and in those moments “her spirit soared” (Fink 223). In her textual exploration of the source of artistic creation, *Everyman’s Genius*, Austin explains that she sought to make these connections by turning to her own translation of a portion of the Navajo Night Chant, a nine-day healing ceremony, as she trudged along the congested thoroughfares of the city. In Navajo culture, the Night Chant is meant to break the path of an illness and set an individual and their larger community on a course toward spiritual harmony with the natural world (Bierhorst 286). Overwhelmed with the crush of the city, Austin chanted to herself:

As I walk ..as I walk..

The universe .. is walking with me ..

Beautifully .. it walks before me ....

Beautifully .. on every side ....

As I walk .. I walk with beauty. (*Everyman's* 223).

She records that she turns to this invocation as a “release from obsessing preoccupations” and as a “rhythmic formula” intended to allow access to one’s “deep-self” (222-23). It could be argued that Austin’s use of the Night Chant is an act of gross cultural appropriation, on a par with her claiming in *The American Rhythm* that she had at times “succeeded in being an Indian”(41). Austin wrested the Night Chant from its proper cultural context and in so doing removed the healing power of the verse.<sup>76</sup> However, Austin saw herself turning to a verse that sprang from the southwestern land where it originated, and by reciting it in the unlikely landscape of New York she believed she could access the far-off deserts and the rhythms that reflected her own “deep-self.” Through rhythmic Navajo verse and her own physical walking Austin sought access to the landscape line that she felt contributed to her own genius, an instinct she saw as “aris[ing] in the natural, aboriginal concern for the conscious unity of all phenomena” (*Earth Horizon* 367). O’Grady suggests that when Austin writes of herself in *Earth Horizon* that ““there is something in Mary which comes out of the land’ we might be inclined to take this as a figure of speech” (129). However, Austin’s perception of the rhythmic presence of the land is evident even in her earliest writings. In a letter to a botanist friend, Austin writes, ““I like to dive into the rhythmic stream like a fish into the gulf current and go where it takes me....Then I like to repeat some of these experiences

by writing books or poems about them” (Stineman 127). The “rhythmic stream” is necessary to and generative of her “genius,” her writing. Even though her prose reflects a polished and sophisticated understanding of English prosody, like the *Walking Woman* and *Seyavi*, Austin saw herself as entering nature’s rhythms and writing from and through them. Walking away from her roles of wife and mother, Austin looked to the natural world for a new pattern for living, a pattern that married body, mind, language, and land into a polyrhythmic synchronization that allowed for a deeper understanding of self, land, and the sacred.

If Austin’s *Walking Woman* is a “woman to match John Muir: walker, watcher, and storyteller,” the same certainly holds true for Mary Austin herself (O’Grady 143). There are many parallels between Muir and Austin’s experience of the land. As walkers, both writers experienced a bodily connection with the rhythms of Nature, and both writers identified that connection as a window into the sacred. In *Earth Horizon* Mary Austin describes meeting John Muir in Carmel, California in 1904:

There was no town at Carmel then; nothing but a farm or two, one or two graceless buildings, and the wild beach and the sunny dunes. In the meantime, “The Land of Little Rain” was published and had a great success. Mary was at the Hittells’ for that and got to know the elect....Of all these I recall John Muir the most distinctly, a tall lean man with the habit of talking much, the habit of soliloquizing. He told stories of his life in the world, and of angels; angels that saved him; that lifted and carried him; that showed him where to put his feet; he believed them. I told him

one of mine: except I didn't see mine. I had been lifted and carried; I had been carried out of the way of danger; and he believed me. I remember them still. (298)<sup>77</sup>

Elsewhere in her autobiography Austin reflects on this conversation in her discussion of "Naturists": "All the public expects the experience of practicing Naturists in the appearance, the habits, the incidents of the wild; when the Naturist reports upon himself it is mistaken for poeticizing. I know something that went on in Muir...for him, quite simply, the spirits of the wild were angels, who bore him on their wings through perilous places" (188). Muir's angels are too piously Christian for Austin, but she recognizes their force in what she calls "the Spirit of the Arroyos" (189). This difference, though subtle, reflects the central difference of their approach to the natural world. Muir walked into nature's rhythms with a backpack containing the bible, *Paradise Lost*, and romantic poetry. Austin walked into those rhythms with a spirituality she linked to Native American traditions. And while both were swept up into Nature's rhythms and "carried" by angels, they interpreted Nature's patterns and "presence" in very different ways that reflect the differences in their genders and their relationships to cultural and literary traditions.

At the time of their meeting, Austin was at the beginning of her career and John Muir, in his mid-sixties, was, as Ann Zwinger writes, "already a legend, the model for the hero of a current popular novel, known for conservation work that included founding the Sierra Club and championing national park status for Yosemite, and had more writing and speaking projects than an ordinary man could handle" (viii). Further, Zwinger

contends, “Austin was a writer first and a naturalist second,” while “Muir was a naturalist first and a writer second” (xx-xxi). I argue that both are walkers first. Though their interpretations and goals may have been different, as walkers seeking nature’s rhythms, they talked of angels.

**CHAPTER IV:**  
**WALKING TO AZTLÁN: PILGRIMAGE AND BORDER CROSSINGS IN**  
**CHICANA/CHICANO LITERATURES**

On March 17, 1966, nearly eighty years after Mary Austin first entered her “Land of Little Rain,” César Chávez led a group of striking grape workers on a 300-mile protest march from Delano, California to the state capital in Sacramento. The march began just fifty miles north of Austin’s first home in the San Joaquin Valley and followed the western edge of John Muir’s treasured Sierra Madre. Yet the farm workers’ walking could not be further removed from the nature ramblings of Austin and Muir. The marchers trudged past vast agricultural fields day after day, harassed by farm owners and detractors. They were not seeking a personal communion with Nature; rather, their goal was communal in its quest to rectify the injustices faced daily by Mexican American farm workers.

Workers have labored in American agricultural fields since the development of commercial farming in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the 1920s, the largest segment of California farm workers was Mexican or Mexican American. Driven north by the Mexican Revolution and the promise of work, these Mexican farm workers were soon joined by others employed by the Bracero Program during the 1940s and 1950s. When opponents of the Bracero Program successfully lobbied for its demise in 1964, they opened a door for further reform and organizing. Through this door walked César Chávez and the United Farm Workers of America.

The struggle to unionize and force growers to pay a living wage and provide safe working and living environments for workers became widely known as the Farm Workers Movement or *La Causa*. Though farm workers had attempted to unionize before the 1960s, *La Causa* and the United Farm Workers of America were the first to create a cohesive, large scale, and effective vehicle for change. What began as a focused movement grew and became associated with other concurrent movements for change in the Chicano community, including a push for restoration of land grant rights and a forceful student agitation for change in the education system.<sup>78</sup> Together the fight for these issues became known as the Chicano Movement.

While these diverse issues were galvanizing Chicanos across the country, Chávez focused his vision on the conditions faced by the farm workers in California. Drawing on his own experiences as a child working in the fields alongside his parents and siblings, Chávez “dedicated his life to the arduous task of convincing politicians, business leaders, stockholders, growers, officials of the justice system, and the public at large that farm workers are important and valuable human beings.... [whose importance] does not lie in productivity, cost effectiveness, or profitability” (Dalton 9). In other words, Chávez sought to redefine farm workers from commodities to human beings and therefore located the importance of good working conditions not in the promise of increased profitability but in the premise that all human beings deserve work, food, shelter, and human dignity. In 1962, Chávez, along with his cousin Manuel Chávez and Dolores Huerta, founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) at a meeting in Fresno attended by more than two hundred workers (Dalton 15).<sup>79</sup> The plan was to build a coalition of farm

workers slowly and quietly by focusing on issues of health care, welfare, education, and immigration. But in 1965 the Filipino farm workers affiliated with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee walked out of the vineyards of Delano, California and Chávez and the NFWA voted to join them on the picket lines. Thus began a nearly five-year grape strike and boycott of California grapes that ended with the signing of union contracts between the grape growers and the striking workers.<sup>80</sup>

Along with a widespread grape boycott and the farm workers' strike, one of the most visible methods adopted by the NFWA was the protest march. Chávez envisioned the march to Sacramento as part of the larger tradition of *peregrinación*, or pilgrimage. He wrote in March of 1966: "In the 'March from Delano to Sacramento' there is a meeting of cultures and traditions; the centuries-old religious tradition of Spanish culture conjoins with the very contemporary cultural syndromes of 'demonstration' springing from the spontaneity of the poor, the downtrodden, the rejected, the discriminated-against baring visibly their need and demand for equality and freedom" (Chávez "Sacramento" 15). He further contends that the religious dimension of the march is connected to the living tradition of pilgrimage in Mexican culture that is manifest in visits to major Mexican shrines. Chávez writes that these trips are "made with sacrifice and hardship as an expression of penance and of commitment....[by pilgrims who] may have long since walked-out the pieces of rubber tire that once served them as soles, and many of whom will walk on their knees the last mile or so of the pilgrimage" (Chávez "Sacramento" 15). In addition, Chávez contends that the march to Sacramento also draws on the Lenten penitential processions with are found throughout "the Spanish speaking world" (Chávez

“Sacramento” 15). The penitents “march through the streets, often in sack cloth and ashes, some even carrying crosses as a sign of penance for their sins, and as a plea for the mercy of God” (Chávez “Sacramento” 15). These three threads – pilgrimage, penance, and revolution – came together to form the spirit of the march to Sacramento. The marcher, Chávez contends, walks with the “belief that Delano is his ‘cause,’ his great demand for justice, freedom, and respect from the predominantly foreign cultural community in a land where he was first” (Chávez “Sacramento” 15).<sup>81</sup> Chávez’s interpretation was reflected in the theme of the march: “*Peregrinación, Penetencia, y Revolución*” (Pilgrimage, Penitence, and Revolution). Written and released in conjunction with the pilgrimage to Sacramento, Chávez’s “The Plan of Delano” further elucidates this theme:

We are conscious of the historical significance of our Pilgrimage. It is clearly evident that our path travels through a valley well known to all Mexican farm workers. We know all of these towns of Delano, Madera, Fresno, Modesto, Stockton and Sacramento, because along this very same road, in this very same valley, the Mexican race has sacrificed itself for the last hundred years. Our sweat and our blood have fallen on this land to make other men rich. This pilgrimage is a witness to the suffering we have seen for generations.

The Penance we accept symbolizes the suffering we shall have in order to bring justice to these same towns, to this same valley. The Pilgrimage we make symbolizes the long historical road we have traveled

in this valley alone, and the long road we have yet to travel, with much penance, in order to bring about the Revolution we need. (Chávez “Plan” 16)

Chávez and the other marchers organized the walk to Delano as a religious pilgrimage, a penitential procession, and a protest march. They marched behind a collection of flags highlighting the political and cultural aspects of the march. A flag emblazoned with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe led the way followed by the flags of the United States, Mexico, and the Philippines and at least a dozen union flags. The end of the march was indicated by a man carrying a large wooden cross (Dalton 87). All of these symbols helped to create the power and meaning of the march for the marchers. Chávez later wrote:

There is something about a march that is very powerful. It’s a powerful weapon, a powerful organizing tool, and it has a powerful influence on those who participate.

There is this anticipation. You have a definite starting place and a definite goal. You’re moving, making progress every step. That’s very comforting to people. It gives a great sense of calm, because it’s peaceable work. You can think much better, and you get a lot of courage. Then there’s the sense of personal sacrifice....

The march picks up its own cadence, its own spirit, its own history. Every day is accumulated into the following day, so all that happened yesterday is a part of today, and what happened today will be a part of

tomorrow. The twenty-five days became lumped one and together. (qtd. in Levy 210)

Chávez's description of the march echoes Victor and Edith Turner's description of pilgrimage. Turner and Turner argue that through the experience of pilgrimage the pilgrim enters a liminal space where they are "ambiguous, for they pass through a cultural realm that has few attributes of the past or coming state" (249). As such, the pilgrims are in "no-place and no-time that resists classification, the major classifications and categories of culture emerge within the integuments of myth, symbol, and ritual" (250). The "no-place and no-time" of the pilgrimage creates a sense of continuity between current and past pilgrimages so that with each step the marcher/pilgrim is tied to the holiness of this particular walk as well as the holiness of the longer history of pilgrimage. The sense of "no-time" paradoxically connects the pilgrim to past pilgrimages, to history. In an article about pilgrimage in the American Southwest, Stephen Fox writes that "pilgrims take comfort in the past. 'For most,' says Martin Robinson, 'the sense of treading ground made holy by past events is crucial... [T]he pilgrims become one with those who have gone before'" (Fox 250).

Where Chávez turned to traditions of Christian pilgrimage and contemporary protest to define the place of the walk to Sacramento in Mexican American culture, Gloria Anzaldúa argues that the tradition of "long walks" in Chicano culture precedes Christian influence. She connects this tradition to ideas about Aztlán by drawing on the theory that "[d]uring the original peopling of the Americas, the first inhabitants migrated across the Bering Straits and walked south across the continent" (4). She contends that

“[i]n the Southwest United States archeologists have found 20,000-year-old campsites of the Indians who migrated through, or permanently occupied, the Southwest. Aztlán – land of the herons, land of whiteness, the Edenic place of origin of the Azteca” (4). Anzaldúa links this origin story to the Chicano “tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks” (11). At the time of the march to Sacramento, Aztlán had not yet become one of the primary symbols of the Chicano Movement – that would happen three years later with the drafting of “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” at the First Chicano National Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado in 1969. However, as the farm walkers moved across the land they walked with a clear sense of their own cultural and familial history and a strong sense of place.

The cultural and familial history the farm workers brought to the march was not only one of pilgrimage and penance, but also the nomadic experience of working in the fields. Theresa McKenna argues that “the primary metaphor for the experience [of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States] is the migrant, who is at once the paradigmatic figure of displacement and oppression and the leading figure of persistence in the vicissitudes of change” (9). The migrant embodies the complexities of walking in Chicano and Mexican history. The migrant follows the harvest, yet his choice is constrained by economic, political, and social realities that make farm work a necessity. As a “primary metaphor,” the figure of the migrant suggests a long history of living and laboring in the margins and of physically moving from place to place, a history of lacking a place, both in the sense of “home” and in the sense of membership in U.S. society. The image of the migrant is a figure in motion.

Pilgrimage, penance, protest, Aztlán, and migrant work are all defined by physical movement across land. These traditions link contemporary Chicano and Chicana experience to origin narratives, the sacred, historical economic and cultural struggle, and the American land. Though these traditions permeate many facets of Chicano/Chicana experience and written works, this chapter will focus on how they influence personal narratives from the living tradition of pilgrimage to the sacred site of the Santuario de Chimayó in Northern New Mexico and border crossings along the *Camino del Diablo*, or Devil's Highway, in the Sonoran desert. In these contemporary narratives, the walkers tie their experiences – both implicitly and explicitly – to the Mexican and Chicano traditions of pilgrimage, protest, and migration routes.

The section analyzing narratives from the pilgrimage to the Santuario de Chimayó will focus on the collection of testimonials and photographs, *Pilgrimage to Chimayó: Contemporary Portrait of a Living Tradition*. The walkers in this collection offer multiple perspectives on the large pilgrimage to Chimayó that occurs each year during Holy Week, the week that culminates with Easter Sunday. The walkers discuss the physical, mental, and spiritual experiences they have while trudging along the highways and rural roads of Northern New Mexico. The next section will examine Luis Urrea's 2004 text, *The Devil's Highway*, which traces the experience of border crossing migrants along the *Camino del Diablo*. This text traces the deadly journey of twenty-six men who walked into the desert in 2001, hoping to find jobs and a better economic future for their families. While these texts do not cover all of the ways in which the tradition of walking lives on in contemporary Chicano and Chicana experience and literature, they do provide

an illustration of how narratives about movement and walking reveal the interplay of complex Chicano and Mexican histories of pilgrimage, Aztlán, and labor.

### **Walking to Chimayó**

We leave our daily lives behind to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord.

This is the road of life which leads to our sanctuary. For us, walking to Chimayó is truly coming home.

-Pilgrim's Story (Howarth and Lamadrid 9)

Chimayó, New Mexico lies twenty-four miles northeast of Santa Fe, between the Rio Grande and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Home to the Santuario de Chimayó, the little town of Chimayó sees thousands of pilgrims each year who walk a few yards or a hundred miles to be blessed by the sacred earth of the Santuario. Also called El Santuario de Nuestro Señor de Esquípuilas (The Sanctuary of Our Lord of Esquípuilas), the Santuario is one of the spiritual centers of the Southwest and is the destination of the largest religious pilgrimage in the United States, which culminates each year during Holy Week, the week preceding Easter Sunday (Lamadrid 9).

The roads to Chimayó have been traveled by pilgrims for hundreds of years. Indigenous ruins in the area predate the arrival of the Spanish by several hundred years and the area figures prominently in Tewa culture. The Tewa people of the Ohkay Owingeh (or San Juan) Pueblo believe that Chimayó is the site where the Twin War Gods slew a giant who was threatening the people. The giant's blood formed a sacred hot pool from which the Tewa took mud and earth in order to cure illness (Kay 14). According to

the Tewa, the pool dried up long ago, but the soil where the pool had been remains sacred. Enrique Lamadrid asserts that long before the Spanish arrived, “the Tewa ancestors began visiting the sandy spring at Chimayó for the healing properties of the earth to be found there,” initiating the long history of pilgrimage to the spot (15).

Like many sites deemed sacred by indigenous peoples of the Americas, the valley of Chimayó was claimed and settled by Spanish colonists. Around the turn of the eighteenth century several groups of Spanish colonists settled in Chimayó valley. Elizabeth Kay contends that “those [Spaniards] who settled Chimayó were true *paisanos* [peasants] who lived off the land and close to it” (Kay 20). Kay cites a song of the region that reflects this relationship between people and place:

*De la tierra fui formado,  
La tierra me a de comer;  
La tierra me a sustentado,  
Y al fin yo tierra ha de ser.*

From the earth I was made,  
And the earth shall eat me,  
The earth has sustained me,  
And at last earth I shall be also. (Kay 20)

In his 1974 history of the Spanish settling of New Mexico, Fray Angélico Chávez writes that the Spanish settlers were “wanderers” who felt at home in the deserts of what is now considered the Southwestern United States because of its affinity to the deserts of the

“high central plateau of the Iberian peninsula” (18). As a result, echoing Emerson’s *Nature*, Chávez maintains that the Spaniard saw the deserts of New Mexico as “part and parcel of his own being...[as a] double heritage of flesh and soil” (5). The colonists saw themselves in a land closely related to their “homeland” in Spain. They reimagined the land they took from the Pueblo people as their own, connected to them through their spiritual memory.

The Spanish colonists in northern New Mexico were isolated by hundreds of miles from the larger settlements such as El Paso, Chihuahua, and Tucson. Kay suggests that “[l]acking outside contacts and goods the settlers used natural resources and native remedies for their needs” (23). Further, as devout Catholics far from the church centers in Mexico, they were forced to rely on one another for their religious life. Since there were never enough ordained priests to cover the villages in northern New Mexico, *La Fraternidad Piadosa de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno* (The Pious Fraternity of Our Father Jesus Nazarene), commonly known as *Los Hermanos Penitentes* (The Penitent Brotherhood), arose to provide lay religious and welfare services. Kay writes that Los Hermanos primarily “[f]illed the community’s need for spiritual guidance in times of death, or, most importantly, during Lenten and Holy Week rituals” (27). Los Hermanos founded small private chapels, or *capillas*, throughout the region to compensate for the lack of churches (Usner 184). Each brotherhood had a similar organizational structure including a leader or *hermano mayor* (older brother), the Hermanos de luz (Brothers of Light) who undertook administrative functions, and the Hermanos de Sangre (Brothers of Blood) who performed penitential rights during collective rituals. In addition to the

public space of the *capilla*, the Hermanos built private *moradas*, windowless buildings in which they held meetings and private devotions (Matovina and Poyo 82).

In the early years of the nineteenth century one of the regional leaders of Los Hermanos, Don Bernardo Abeyta, had an experience that inspired the construction of one such *capilla*, the Santuario. As one of the most common versions of the story goes, Abeyta, though very ill, was out watering his fields one day when he found a crucifix with Nuestro Señor de Esquímulas (a manifestation of Christ associated with the Guatemalan city of Esquímulas) buried in the earth.<sup>82</sup> He knelt on the spot where the crucifix was buried and was healed of his illness. He took the crucifix to his house, but a few days later it disappeared and he found it buried in the fields again. He brought it home a second time, but again it returned to the fields. Abeyta petitioned the Catholic leadership for permission to build a *capilla* at this site – which was also the site named in the Tewa story of the holy pool. In 1816 the Santuario was completed. The Santuario remained in the possession of Abeyta’s descendents until 1929. By that time it had fallen into disrepair and the Spanish Colonial Arts Society in Santa Fe, at the urging of co-founder Mary Austin, purchased the Santuario and placed it in the care of the Catholic Church. Don Usner asserts that, though the site had been visited by local New Mexicans for over one hundred years, the preservation of the Santuario by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society and the prominence it received in the process helped “set the stage for the emergence of the Santuario as a famous shrine” (186).

Esquímulas’s centrality at the Santuario was contested almost immediately upon completion of the building. Accounts of miraculous healings sprang up and were

attributed not to the crucifix but to the sacred earth itself. Further complicating Esquípuilas's position as the principal attraction was an unusual competition between devotions. In 1857, a year after Abeyta died, the name *Atocha* made its appearance in Chimayó baptismal records and became popular for both girls and boys. Santo Niño de Atocha, a manifestation of the infant Christ, is the patron saint of miners, children, captives, and pilgrims. During the late 1850s Severiano Medina built and dedicated a small chapel to the Santo Niño only steps away from the Santuario. Enrique Lamadrid writes that “[l]ike the faithful who flock to Chimayó, Santo Niño is also a little traveler dressed in eighteenth-century pilgrim’s garb” (22). The people of Chimayó noticed that the little saint seemed to wear out his shoes on his miraculous errands and gave him new baby shoes regularly.

Soon after the Santo Niño chapel was built, the little saint began to eclipse Esquípuilas in fame. The faithful began to credit healing miracles to Santo Niño. In response, the Santuario soon acquired its own Santo Niño figure and regained the flow of pilgrims seeking cures (Usner 89). Many people began to claim that an image of Santo Niño was found in the *pozito*, or small well of holy earth, in the Santuario (Lamadrid 21-22). Lamadrid offers this contemporary pilgrim’s prayer that addresses God, Santo Niño, and Esquípuilas, as well as drawing on local Tewa beliefs about the sacredness of the cardinal directions:

*Our Father, Lord of Chimayó, Wind of the North; Our Father, Lord of Esquipulas, Wind of the South, we come with heart in hand, hear our*

*prayers. Holy Child of Atocha, watch over us on our journey, may our innocence be born anew! (22)*

The Santuario's ex-voto room (the room that holds the petitions and prayers of the pilgrims) also features both figures prominently along with "numerous other carved and plaster santos, paintings and prints of santos, photographs, newspaper articles, testimonial notes in English and Spanish, locks and braids of hair, military dog tags, hospital bracelets, eyeglasses, arm and leg braces, and row upon row of crutches" (Lamadrid 23). Pilgrims leave these notes and symbols as both petitions to the saints and as acknowledgment of petitions that have been answered. Lamadrid notes that because so many items are left, "the character of the overflowing space changes from month to month, reflecting the concerns of the people," and "[d]espite the changing times and changing devotions, the tradition of the healing earth of Chimayó continues to be the main attraction for pilgrims" (23).

Pilgrims to Chimayó seek direct contact with the earth. They rub the dirt into afflicted body parts, mix it with water and imbibe it, smear it on their hands as a symbol of Christ's stigmata, and carry baggies of the sacred dirt away with them. Yet their relationship to the sacred earth begins before they enter the Santuario; it begins when they take the first steps of their pilgrimage, whether it is a pilgrimage of several yards or hundreds of miles. Rooted in syncretism, Chimayó is "but one nexus in a continental network of shrines that consolidates and implants Christianity into the sacred geography" of the Americas (Lamadrid 14). Originally a site of Tewa sacred tradition, the place that is now Chimayó has been the destination of those seeking the healing power of the earth

since before the Spaniards first arrived in the last years of the seventeenth century. The descendents of these Spanish settlers reinscribed the sacred terrain of Chimayó with Christian saints and symbols. Thus, the modern inception of the pilgrimage to Chimayó rests on a long history of walking in search of connection to the sacred land.

The pilgrimage to Chimayó often begins with an individual making a promise or a vow to God or the saints that if the pilgrim walks to Chimayó he or she or someone they care about will be released from suffering. Kay notes that “[s]uffering and salvation are the key elements of the traditional [Christian] pilgrimage to Chimayó, for regardless of distance traversed the journey is made in the spirit of Christ’s Passion and underscores the Catholic credo that without suffering there can be no salvation” (67). While in some cases “[g]enuine suffering can be seen [as] [s]ome pilgrims are so old or ill they can barely creep over the ground [and] some are bent under crosses almost too heavy to bear,” for other pilgrims “the pilgrimage is much like outings with family or friends, taken in the joy of religious hope and faith” (Kay 68-69). Most pilgrims begin their walks in Santa Fe, twenty-four miles away, though it is not unusual for pilgrims to walk from Albuquerque, more than eighty miles away. Some walk part of the way barefoot or crawl the last few yards on their knees. Some carry heavy wooden crosses on their backs or walk under the flag of the Virgin of Guadalupe or other saints. Kay writes that in addition to the physical demands of the walk and the experience of walking with other pilgrims, the experience of the pilgrimage is impacted by the “arid, eroded New Mexican landscape of mesas, arroyos, and distant mountains” the pilgrims pass through (75). Starting about five miles from Chimayó the pilgrims begin to encounter solitary crosses

that “mar[k] the pilgrim’s way and indicat[e] that the central shrine is near” (Kay 75). If the pilgrims are walking during Holy Week, they are met with hundreds of people once they enter the town of Chimayó. Many are waiting to enter the Santuario; others are visiting and resting from their walk in the shade of buildings. Although the destination is the holy earth of the Santuario, the walk itself is an important part of the process of redemption and healing. The pilgrims understand their journey as intimately connected to the suffering of Christ, and for many the final steps in the pilgrimage occur when they walk the Stations of the Cross, just before they enter the sacristy with the sacred earth.

Sam Howarth and Enrique Lamadrid edited a collection of images and stories collected by four photographers and two oral historians – all native New Mexicans or long-term residents – during Holy Week of 1996. Their goal was to “capture the pilgrimage with objectivity and to create, collectively, a portrait of a living tradition” (7). Though the stories collected in the resultant text, *Pilgrimage to Chimayó: Contemporary Portrait of a Living Tradition*, are each only a few sentences long, they create a portrait of pilgrims who walk with suffering and faith and connect with the long history of pilgrimage across the New Mexican landscape to the sacred earth of Chimayó and to the longer Christian tradition of pilgrimage and penance. The effect of these brief testimonials is heightened by the accompanying photographic images of pilgrims along the rural roads and highways of New Mexico, walking alone or in groups to Chimayó. Together the images and stories present a portrait of Chicanos and Chicanas walking for self, family, and community, and to reconnect to the land and the sacred. The walk itself,

then, is the true text, traced into the earth by the feet of the pilgrims and captured in the stories and images of *Pilgrimage to Chimayó*.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, Victor and Edith Turner identify the three phases of pilgrimage as detachment, liminality, and return (2). The pilgrims, oral historians, and photographers who created *Pilgrimage to Chimayó* focus their attention on the second phase, the liminal phase where the pilgrim is literally and figuratively in transit between two points and apart from day to day life. In her ethnographic study of a pilgrimage to Chimayó in 1997, Paula Elizabeth Holmes-Rodman writes that virtues learned on the pilgrimage route, “perseverance, patience, discipline, compassion...have become radically embodied in walking” (36). In other words, the lessons of the pilgrimage are not centered in the shrine itself, a place where Holmes-Rodman finds the pilgrims in “a hurry to get back home to the structures and roles of daily life” (46). Rather, the meaning lies “en route... [the pilgrims’ memories] were of the *journey*: sacrifice, prayers, friendships, communities, weather, meals, blisters, and the pain of walking” (Holmes-Rodman 45).

Turner and Turner identify following the path of Jesus as a key theme in Christian pilgrimage. They contend that “[p]ilgrimage is one way, perhaps the most literal, of imitating a religious founder” (33). Christian pilgrims, they argue, “follow the paradigm of the *via crucis* [the Stations of the Cross], in which Jesus Christ voluntarily submitted his will to the will of God” (9-10). The pilgrimage to Chimayó is closely connected with this idea of walking Christ’s path and the *via crucis* plays a central role. Although pilgrims walk to Chimayó all year, the vast majority of pilgrims make their way to the

Santuario during Holy Week, the week devoted to contemplations of Christ's agony and crucifixion, and imagine their journey as reflecting and honoring Christ's suffering.

Once in the Santuario that act of imagination is heightened by the pilgrims' walking of the Stations of the Cross. Alberto López Pulido asserts that the "Via Crucis plays a prominent role in Semana Santa (Holy Week) observances" throughout the Catholic world and particularly in New Mexico (12). The Stations of Cross, believed to have been originated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by veterans of the Crusades, follow the story of the passion of Christ – the hours prior to and including the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Each Station of the *via crucis* corresponds to an event in the story of Christ's passion, beginning with Jesus being condemned to death and then following his journey through the streets carrying his own cross to Golgotha, the site of the crucifixion, and ending with Jesus being laid in his tomb.<sup>83</sup>

In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit asserts the Stations of the Cross provide worshippers the opportunity to "walk themselves into Jerusalem, into the central story of Christianity" (69). Echoing Solnit's contention, one pilgrim to Chimayó reports, "I have always felt that God has given me so much and I need to join in his suffering, especially on Holy Friday. He has given me so much in this world that I'm thankful for. This pilgrimage means a lot to me" (Howarth and Lamadrid 36). Similarly, another pilgrim suggests that in order to fully experience the pilgrimage, we must, "in our own imagination figure the crucified Christ on that cross. Each and every one of us can use our imagination to put his figure up on that cross, even though he's not there. But a lot of us see a wooden cross, the holy cross, and we never see the suffering he went

through” (Howarth and Lamadrid 58). These pilgrims see their pilgrimages as very literally tied to Christ’s suffering and journey toward crucifixion. The value of the pilgrimage is a concentrated act of imagination – a recreation of Christ’s suffering.

The emphasis on experiencing a degree of Christ’s suffering is tied to a long history of Christian pilgrimage.<sup>84</sup> Turner and Turner argue that for many Christian pilgrims, “the journey itself is something of a penance” (7). The pilgrim, they argue, “‘puts on Christ Jesus’ as a paradigmatic mask, or persona, and thus for a while *becomes* the redemptive tradition” (11). Thus, when the Chimayó pilgrim mentioned above seeks to “join in his suffering” by physically walking to Chimayó and moving through the Stations of the Cross, she seeks to transcend the temporal, spatial, and corporal divisions between herself and Christ and actively participate in Christ’s passion. In so doing, she sees herself acknowledging the gifts God has given her. Another pilgrim to Chimayó, Roy Rivera, told the ethnographers,

*No es que está muriendo ahora, no es que está sufriendo, pero es eterno. Lo que Dios hace, lo hace de una vez por todas. De moda es que lo introducimos y decimos a la gente, ‘Tenemos que ir a Jesús, tenemos que ir a su cruz’ y dejar allí todos nuestros pecados. Tenemos aquí el pecado de robar, el pecado de la avaricia, el pecado de la venganza, los resentimientos, el odio, la envidia, el orgullo, la glotoría, la lujuria, la pereza. Todo eso tenemos que, ya Jesús murió por esos pecados.*

[It is not that our faith is dying now, it is not that there is suffering, what’s important is that it is eternal. What God does, he does once and for all. It

is in this way we told the people, ‘we must go to Jesus, we must go to the cross’ and leave all of our sins there. We have all these sins: thievery, greed, vengeance, resentments, hatred, envy, pride, gluttony, lust, and laziness. We have all of these and it was for these and our sake that Jesus died.] (Howarth and Lamadrid 44)<sup>85</sup>

The pilgrimage to Chimayó is steeped in the Christian tradition of pilgrimage as penitential journey. Rivera tells the ethnographer that his pilgrimage is connected to a conception of faith that is eternal and transcends his individual sins and suffering. By experiencing the suffering of Christ, the pilgrim seeks to achieve “personal sanctification through self-sacrifice” (Turner and Turner 114). However, while Philip Edwards points out that “[o]bviously, penance has always been fundamental in Christian pilgrimage” the purposeful suffering of the pilgrims to Chimayó also has its roots in the very particular history of New Mexican Catholicism (151).

The rituals that were developed by Los Hermanos Penitentes to fill the need of the New Mexican Catholics when there was a dearth of officially sanctioned clergy in the isolated land, grew out of a history of penitential traditions in the Catholic church. In her seminal study of Los Hermanos, *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest*, Marta Weigle states that Penitente rites have involved “closely supervised expressions of the penitential spirit through self-flagellation, cross-bearing, and other forms of discipline. Sometimes...a Brother was tied to a large cross in a short simulation of the Crucifixion on Good Friday” (xi). She argues that these “spectacular” aspects of Penitente observances have attracted a disproportionate amount of attention, including

the negative portrayals of Los Hermanos in Josiah Gregg's *Commerce of the Prairies* (1844) and Charles Lummis's *Land of Poco Tiempo* (1893). These two texts, particularly the latter, have influenced thinking about Los Hermanos ever since they were published.<sup>86</sup> However, Weigle contends that these penitential rituals were "by no means aberrant" and had "clear precedents in the history of Spanish Catholicism and its mystical, penitential, and especially Franciscan traditions" (xviii).<sup>87</sup> The Brotherhood, she argues, "took root because it fulfilled vital needs for social integration and individual spiritual security" (xviii).

Weigle writes that though the days considered most holy varied from village to village, Lent and *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) were central to the practices of Los Hermanos in all of the villages in Northern New Mexico. The season of Lent begins forty-six days before Easter and culminates in Passion Week and Holy Week which closely follow the last days of Christ's life (Weigle 158). Los Hermanos observe Lent as a time of preparation for Holy Week and as such it is a time of moderation and sobriety. Again, traditions vary from village to village, but observances often include active penance including self-flagellation and dragging *maderos*, heavy wooden crosses. Weigle insists that "the most important aspect of these penitential exercises is their 'embeddedness.' They were not random or uncontrolled....[rather the] exercises were...a strict discipline within a total worship complex...These guarded and guided practices were considered appropriate devotional expressions beneficial for the individual and community"(161-162). One of the most common observances during Holy Week is the procession of *via crucis* which happens both on a small scale within churches and

*moradas* (Penitente meeting houses), and also on a larger scale with the stations set up outside, “generally from the morada to the large cross several yards distant designated the Calvario [the cross on which Jesus was crucified]” (Weigle 164). Though the pilgrimage to Chimayó is not simply an enactment of the *via crucis*, the penitential aspects of the pilgrimage and its culmination in the Stations of the Cross, as well as the legend which identifies the Santuario’s founder as a Hermano Penitente, all suggest a close connection between the practice of the pilgrimage and the history of Los Hermanos.

Several of the photographs included in *Pilgrimage to Chimayó* emphasize the penitential journey and the pilgrims’ identification with the *via crucis* and the penitential practices of Los Hermanos. The first photograph in the text (all of the photographs are in black and white) shows a Chicano man standing alone holding a large and ornately carved cross on his shoulder furthest from the camera (Howarth and Lamadrid 6). He wears a bandana tied around his forehead and sunglasses and his forward arm is tattooed. Behind him stretches a landscape covered only with occasional clumps of dry grass and even fewer small piñon trees. The horizon line crosses the top of the man’s head and above it the cross he holds is backed by a sky dotted with high clouds. He faces the camera head-on and yet his eyes are obscured behind his dark sunglasses. The image suggests a merging of the traditional and the modern: the man is dressed in a clearly contemporary manner and yet the cross he holds and the unpeopled landscape behind him suggests a connection to traditional New Mexican Catholicism and to the New Mexican land. The next photograph shows a similar image: The bottom half of the photograph is the curving line of the highway rising up in front of the viewer and the top half is a featureless sky.

At the line between sky and highway are two small figures. The one on the right wears a hooded sweatshirt and has one hand stuffed into a pants pocket. The other arm holds a large cross across his shoulders. The figure on the right wears baggy pants and a baggy shirt and walks with his hands at his sides. Though this picture omits the natural landscape in favor of the paved highway, both images convey a feeling of quiet and solitude. The pilgrims walk with their large crosses toward Chimayó.

While the overarching narrative of the pilgrimage to Chimayó may be an attempt to walk with Christ, the pilgrims also approach the walk for other reasons. In *Pilgrimage to Chimayó* the walkers interviewed give several reasons for their pilgrimage. Along with a desire to join Christ's suffering, most pilgrims say they are walking in the hopes of helping a sick friend or family member, of finding a deeper sense of land and community, or to find personal peace and healing.

Though Padre Casmiro Roca, the longtime priest assigned to the Santuario insists, "Dirt don't heal! *Faith* heals!" the pilgrims to Chimayó have long sought healing from the holy dirt (Fox 248). One of the strongest themes that run through the pilgrims' testimonials is the idea of dedicating one's walk to the healing of a friend or family member. One pilgrim carrying a large cross tells the ethnographer:

This is a promise walk because my sister has cancer and I made a promise to God that this is the least I can do if He helps her. The rest is out of my hands, but I was sitting there one day looking at the ground and I said to myself, I have to walk to the Santuario for her, and that is my motivation. She just went through surgery and hopefully they got it all this time. I

don't have any specific prayers, just a little bit of everything and mainly just concentrating. (Howarth and Lamadrid 40)

In this case, the pilgrim is walking for the healing of a particular family member. Her testimonial suggests making a deal with God (“I made a promise to God that this is the least I can do if He helps her”). However, the poignancy of her promise is that walking to Chimayó helps her feel less helpless about her sister’s illness. Walking and praying are her ways of finding a sense of agency and purpose; in the face of a devastating diagnosis, she turns to pilgrimage, which melds physical movement with symbolic action and mystical faith.

Other pilgrims share the urge to walk for others, yet rather than walking for a particular person, they imagine themselves walking to heal their communities. A man identified only as “Pat” asserts, “We decided we would walk for all men who just are really up to things bigger than themselves: people that are of service to other people....so that they’ll go through their walls and they’ll actually be able to get to that point where they can serve and love and love humanity” (Howarth and Lamadrid 37). Similarly, another pilgrim, described by Howarth and Lamadrid as a “Chicano biker,” dedicates his walk to “the young women today, especially the single mothers, because it’s so hard to bring your kids up. Those are things I ask God to help us with. Also I pray for people who are in prison, and I also work with gang members.... Those are the things I ask the Lord to help us with this year, to guide our kids, especially our young kids. I think we’re losing them” (50). Pat and the biker dedicate their walks not to individuals but to larger constituencies within their communities. They both seek to heal their communities by

supporting those who work for others and those who seem lost and in trouble. Their pilgrimages work to realign communities through prayer and physical movement.

Holmes-Rodman argues that stories of the pilgrimage to Chimayó “lead us to and from the collective journey. Narrative reveals that pilgrimage is not lived linearly nor alone” (47). Turner and Turner contend that though pilgrims may pursue individual goals, they are always “seeking an almost sacred, often symbolic mode of *communitas* [a strong sense of fellowship and community]” (20).<sup>88</sup> “The decision to go on pilgrimage,” they continue, “takes place within the individual but brings him into fellowship with like-minded souls, both on the way and at the shrine” (31). Raymond Jones points to the communal nature of the walk to Chimayó when he affirms that for him “the miracle is the whole idea of just being able to be together with people and having everybody just be together in the spirit of prayer. Especially in these times and days in the world” (Howarth and Lamadrid 30). On the road to Chimayó that sense of community arises from this shared goal, but also from the shared experience of walking over a particular landscape.

Lamadrid writes that “a remarkable sense of *communitas* is...evident on the road to Chimayó. Strangers help each other along the way. Some are silent and thoughtful on their journey. Others are more light-hearted and enjoy the opportunity to accompany friends and fellow travelers. All are united in the expansive geography of the spirit spreading out across the landscape of Northern New Mexico” (11). Lamadrid suggests that the sense of community evident in the pilgrimage to Chimayó is in part dependent on the land itself; that the walkers are united through their shared movement and experience

of this particular landscape. Sister Rosina Sandoval states that she undertakes her walk with the conscious intention of connecting to a particular landscape: “I walk in summer, spring, and fall, whenever I feel a need to center myself. I find especially when I walk alone and there isn’t a big crowd, I find that even the steps that I take are sort of touching Mother Earth and being healed on the way to the Santuario. It’s a real healing type of experience” (Howarth and Lamadrid 38). In an interview posted to the Santuario’s official website, pilgrim George Mendoza instructs pilgrims to leave behind their expectations of a particular outcome and to give themselves over to the experience of walking across the land: “The fact that the place is so breathtaking, nestled in the valley, and is a place of such energy, the flow of the river and the wind rushing through the trees.... You know, we're all pilgrims” (Lee). Though Sister Rosina indicates a sense of individual communion with God and place, Mendoza’s statement reveals that when such an individual communion is shared by thousands of pilgrims, it becomes a means of nurturing community. Holmes-Rodman is told by a New Mexican friend, “‘if you *really* want to know about our land and our people, *you should walk the land with us....*You should walk with us [to Chimayó]. *Then you’ll see*” (26). After she takes her friend up on her invitation and walks to Chimayó, Holmes-Rodman contends that the sense of community that arises on the road is ultimately a function of “the intense physicality of the venture – of the shared movement” across the New Mexican land (45). In other words, *communitas* grows out of the land and the physical movement of pilgrimage, even when the individual reasons for walking may differ. Beyond the small well of sacred

earth within the Santuario, the sacred land the pilgrims cross over plays a significant part in the depth of the pilgrimage experience.

The sense of community is emphasized in the photographs included in *Pilgrimage to Chimayó*. Though many of the images of pilgrims on the road are of individuals, many others picture pairs or small groups of people walking together. The roads that lead to Chimayó pass through large swaths of sparsely populated or unpopulated land. The photographs emphasize the pilgrims' isolation, their liminal state away from more populated areas. Some of the photographs that most keenly capture the sense of community-through-shared-experience are those taken at night. In one such night image, two pilgrims walk away from the camera along the edge of the highway (Howarth and Lamadrid 27). Around them the only other objects illuminated are a few shrubs along the road and the white reflecting line of the highway. The image feels hushed and one can imagine the inward thoughts of the nighttime pilgrims. The next two images are also at night, but in them the mood has shifted from contemplation to fellowship (28 & 29). They are images of bonfires and campgrounds, places of breaking the meditation of the day with food and companionship. These images give a clear sense of the community developed on the road.

The development and strengthening of community through pilgrimage is one of the goals and effects of pilgrimage; however, the intentions and explicit goals of the pilgrimage and the actual outcomes are not always the same. Turner and Turner argue that "liminality is not only *transition* but also *potentiality*, not only 'going to be' but also 'what may be'" (3). For the pilgrims to Chimayó whose stories and images are captured

in the text, these two possibilities are contained in their faith in the holy dirt. As one pilgrim states, “Well, it seems like every favor, every petition I place at his feet, he answers it for me. Maybe not in the same way, but maybe in a better way” (35). The outcome of the pilgrimage, the answer to the pilgrim’s petition, is considered both secure and mysterious; the pilgrim undertakes the pilgrimage with the faith that God or the saints will answer the petition even if the form of the answer is unknowable. Turner and Turner state that a Christian pilgrim “is not supposed to *expect* any corporeal remedy. If a miraculous healing does occur, it is attributed to the grace of God” (14). Laura Hidalgo says of her family’s tradition of walking to Chimayó:

*El peregrinar y el hacer nuestra ofrenda lo hemos hecho hace muchos años, unos veinte y cinco años antes que nacieran mis hijos....Pues yo pienso que las intenciones de cada uno de nosotros es precisamente para pedir la salud física, salud emocional, y salud mental y para mantenernos en la vida espiritual. Normalmente sabemos que esta es una forma de mantenernos vivos. Sí ofrecemos nuestro sacrificio a muchas cosas, pero en especial no buscamos nada de nosotros mismos....Hemos visto milagro, comadre, el milagro que estemos vivas. Esto es un milagro....*

[We have been doing the pilgrimage to make our offering for many years, some twenty-five years before my children were born... And I think that the intentions of each one of us is just to ask for physical and emotional well being, and for us to keep ourselves on a spiritual path. We know that for us this is a way of keeping our lives the way they should be. Yes, it’s

true we need to give up many things, and especially not seek anything for ourselves.... We have seen miracles here, *comadre*, it's a miracle that we can continue to be alive, in good health. This is truly a miracle....]

(Howarth and Lamadrid 72)<sup>89</sup>

Hidalgo identifies the miracles of the pilgrimage as lying beyond the smaller petitions of individuals. Thus rather than suggesting that the miracle is in one person's sudden recovery from illness, Hidalgo sees the miracle in the continued health and life of the larger community. In other words, the pilgrimage supports the continuance of the community more than the private desires of the individual. Holmes-Rodman relates a sermon given by the director of the pilgrimage she is undertaking. He combines samples of earth carried by pilgrims from five directions "in the shape of an encircled cross. As the shades of dirt mix together, he talks about how the unity of the New Mexican land and its diverse people is achieved through pilgrimage" (42). Like Hidalgo, the director of the pilgrimage Holmes-Rodman participates in, places the significance of pilgrimage in the depth of connection to land and community that is created and maintained through directed and intentional walking to Chimayó.

At their core, the narratives and photographs from the journey to Chimayó are significant because of the melding of physical and metaphorical pilgrimage. Philip Edwards suggests that the distinction between metaphorical pilgrimage and physical pilgrimage is much more complicated than it might seem at first glance. While it might seem that "'life-pilgrimage' (that is, life conceived as a pilgrimage towards a heavenly destination)" may be the metaphor and "'place-pilgrimage' (that is, actual journeys to

holy shrines)” may be the literal journey, in fact it may be argued that the opposite is true (Edwards 8). Citing Dee Dyas’s book, *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature*, Edwards contends that “the journey of the soul towards union with Christ is the reality, and the physical journey to a shrine may be seen as a metaphor – ‘a miniature version of that longer, more complex journey which every soul must choose to undertake’”(9). As the pilgrims to Chimayó imagine themselves “join[ing] in [Christ’s] suffering” (Howarth and Lamadrid 35) and “[m]ov[ing] through it in prayer and just stay[ing] close to Jesus” they are enacting both a metaphorical and a physical journey (Howarth and Lamadrid 26). Like the Penitential rituals that the pilgrimage to Chimayó echoes, the recreation and embodiment of Christ’s suffering exists on two planes: on the one hand, the pilgrimage is clearly a metaphor of Christ’s suffering, yet on the other hand the pilgrims make “spirituality...real through human agency” (Pulido 61). In his study of Los Hermanos, Pulido maintains that “[t]he underlying foundation and major assumption offered by [the perspective of the Penitentes] is the belief that sacred experiences and expressions emerge directly through the actions of the people” (62). The re-enactment of Christ’s suffering through pilgrimage and the *via crucis* is a method of experiencing a connection to the sacred on both the metaphorical and physical levels. Walking to Chimayó is more than a symbolic action, it is an embodied reality.

Steve Fox argues that “[b]eing a pilgrim has always had political, as well as personal, aspects. To walk publicly in quest of change brings the status quo into question” (242). Pilgrimage, he continues, has “affinities with the protest march [and] the political demonstration...What has made pilgrimage such an enduring activity is its

links to the deep past. As McDonaldization and secularization homogenize tradition and diversity, pilgrimage is the kind of reflective activity that reconnects people to questions and quests. Sacred sites connect us to the healing earth. Being open and attentive on an intentional journey connects us to ourselves and others” (243-244). For the pilgrims in *Pilgrimage to Chimayó*, personal and communal history, religious faith, and a sacred landscape are aligned and reaffirmed through physical movement, through walking.

### **Border Crossings in Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway***

They walked. They walked. There was no other story: they walked.

(Urrea 159)

In May, 2001, just a few weeks after the annual pilgrimage to Chimayó during Holy Week, twenty-six men walked across the Mexican border into the region of the southern Arizona desert known as *El Camino del Diablo*, or the Devil’s Highway. Less than a week later fourteen of the men had died from exposure and hyperthermia. In *The Devil’s Highway: A True Story*, Luis Alberto Urrea recreates the story of these men through newspaper accounts, courtroom testimony, and letters and interviews with the survivors. The resultant text combines aspect of reportage and literature, “factual” report and imagined story. While the pilgrimage to Chimayó has a long history of institutional support, the illegality of the border crossers does not allow for this. Yet despite this vital difference and though the twenty-six border crossers differ from the Chimayó pilgrims in national origin, motivation, and often economic status, Urrea’s descriptions of their walk draws upon similar traditions, histories, and cultural roots. The men’s walk aligns with

the long history of the border, the story of Aztlán, and the Mexican tradition of *peregrinación*.

The region of the Devil's Highway is comprised of the traditional lands of the Hía Ced O'odham (or Sand Papago) who, before and in the early years after contact with the Spanish, traced the area with desert paths leading from waterhole to waterhole. The area was also inscribed by the complex web of trade routes connecting Native peoples throughout North and South Americas. The trade routes allowed for the diffusion of goods such as knife blades, copper, shell, turquoise, salt, seeds, gold, and animal hides, as well as ideas, songs, and inventions, and innovations.<sup>90</sup> With the arrival of the Spanish, the trade routes and the trails of the Hía Ced O'odham began to be written over with a different history of colonization, migration, and death. Crossed in 1540 by conquistador Mechior Díaz, the Devil's Highway was traversed by a long succession of Spanish explorers and missionaries and later by hundreds of forty-niners making their way from Mexico to the goldfields of California. Still later, after the end of the Bracero Program in 1964 which brought Mexican migrant workers to the U.S. to work in American agricultural fields, undocumented workers from Mexico risked apprehension, deportation, and death along the Devil's Highway (Annerino 10).

The history of the Devil's Highway is part of the history of the U.S.-Mexico Border. Mary Pat Brady contends that "[n]ot surprisingly, the production of the border with Mexico has preoccupied the United States from its infancy" (63). She argues that the U.S. drive for more and more land was "fueled by continual calls to obtain, by force or treaty, the wealth and lands of Spain and [after 1821] newly independent Mexico"

(64). Even the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 at the end of the Mexican-American War, which ceded nearly half of Mexico's territory to the United States, did not fulfill the American hunger for land. Calls to expand U.S. territory continued into the 1870s and 1880s and

even as the physical boundary between Mexico and the United States was being established, it was being contested....Indeed until late in the nineteenth century when the solidity of the U.S.-Mexico border helped produce enormous profits for U.S. capitalists, the government did nothing to discourage filibustering, because such campaigns continued to reinforce U.S. efforts to maintain its identity as a nation that defined itself in part through its ability to choose its own territorial borders. (Brady 64-65)

Further supporting the U.S. desire to control the terms of the border, customs stations were established almost immediately after the boundary line was drawn. The history of the border in the nineteenth century reveals a drive for territorial and economic gain and for a clear division between nations.

Establishing a fixed boundary line between the United States and Mexico imposed a separation between nations, communities, and families that disrupted a long history of freedom of movement. John Chávez argues in "The Chicano Homeland" that "[b]ecause of Mexico's prior possession of the Southwest, Chicanos consider themselves indigenous to the region. Their claims are supported by the fact that their [Spanish] ancestors not only explored and settled parts of the Southwest as early as the sixteenth century, but thousands of years earlier [their indigenous ancestors] permanently occupied

the region or migrated through it on their way south” (11). Chávez further asserts that “[b]efore [the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo] the Mexican view of the region, as far back as the sixteenth century Aztec chronicles, has been focused on the feature of the homeland....After the Anglo-American invasion, however, the Mexican image of the region incorporated the feature of the lost land” (14-15). Chávez identifies the American Southwest as the mythical Aztlán, the homeland from which the Aztecs migrated. As such, the borderland is more than a dividing line between nations; it is the representation of a homeland, “a paradisiacal region where injustice, evil, sickness, old age, poverty, and misery do not exist,” as well as a symbol of the “spiritual union of the Chicanos, something that is carried in the heart, no matter where they may live or where they may find themselves” (Leal 8).

Daniel Cooper Alarcón asserts that conceiving of Aztlán as synonymous with the American Southwest limits access to “the political leverage to help Chicanos living elsewhere” (33). He argues that “as long as Chicanos inhabit the Southwest in the mental geography of the dominant culture, it is there that Chicano needs will be addressed, and not in those Chicano communities that exist outside Aztlán, spiritual universality notwithstanding” (33-4). Cooper Alarcón goes on to suggest that Aztlán’s key value lies in its “multidimensionality,” the way in which the idea of Aztlán has become a palimpsest, continuously written over to reflect political and historical concerns (34). “Conceiving of Aztlán as a palimpsest acknowledges both its exclusionary power and its provisional quality” (Cooper Alarcón 35). The concern of Cooper Alarcón and other critics about the too strict identification of Aztlán with a particular geographic region is

an important consideration in theorizing and understanding the development of Chicano stereotypes and the limiting effect of attempting to claim a monolithic “Chicano identity.” However, Patricia Price argues for the need for critical engagement with “the significance of Aztlán as an explicitly *spatialized* tool of resistance” (63). She asserts that “Aztlán as a mythic idea was consciously projected onto the desert terrain of the U.S. Southwest as a way to legitimate, root, and define the presence of Mexican-descended peoples residing in that region” (64). While it is important to realize that identifying the story of Aztlán solely with the U.S.-Mexican borderlands excludes the concerns of Chicanos who do not live in the American Southwest, it remains a useful concept for understanding narratives of border crossings and the ways in which Chicano writers draw connections between the experience of walking across the border, pilgrimage, and Aztlán.

Referencing stories of Aztlán, Teresa McKenna writes that the legal definition of the border between Mexico and the United States “made little difference to the ever-present migration of Mexican peoples from the interior of Mexico to what had been, prior to the [1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo], the outlying provinces of the Mexican nation” (10). She argues that the “movement of Mexican peoples to this locale [the American Southwest] has taken place over centuries from pre-Columbian times and persists to the present” (10). Gloria Anzaldúa writes that the Chicano and Mexican “tradition of migration, a tradition of long walks” is part of the current “*la migración de los pueblos mexicanos*, the return odyssey to the historical/mythological Aztlán. This time, the traffic is from south to north” (11). Both writers join their voices with other

critics who place contemporary border crossings within the larger history of Chicano and Mexican migration and the legend of the Aztec's migration from Aztlán to Tenochtitlan.

Though the argument that migration preceded the establishing of the U.S.-Mexican border by many centuries is important in understanding narratives of border crossings, the militarization of the border that has happened over the past fifty years has fundamentally altered the experience of border crossing. While recent migrants may trace their movement to ideas of Aztlán and the long history of indigenous and Mexican movement in the borderlands, the militarization of the border has made that movement much more dangerous and deadly. Price argues that as border checkpoints and the areas around them become increasingly "brightened [and] muscle-bound...a growing number of would-be migrants prefer to risk the long trek through the desert and arid mountains of south central California through to rural Arizona, or cross the Rio Grande and hike for miles through the desolate South Texan brush land" (115). Thus while walking across the border into the U.S. Southwest can be linked to a long cultural history of migration, Price suggests that contemporary border crossers turn to the ancient footpaths etched into the earth by generations of migrants as a result of the current militarization of the border. In other words, though writers and migrants may turn to the history of Aztlán to frame their walking, in a large part their walking is determined by the very constructed and patrolled boundary line that Aztlán challenges.

In his text, *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*, Luis Alberto Urrea traces the experiences of twenty-six men walking across the border in May of 2001. Urrea explores the policies of the U.S.-Mexican border and questions prevailing beliefs about the border

in dominant U.S. ideology. Urrea tells the story of the gruesome deaths by dehydration and exposure of fourteen of the men and ties these to their physical experience of walking across the border. In telling the story of these twenty-six migrants Urrea joins other Chicano/Chicana authors who have written about crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. Most notable among these are Ernesto Galarza's *Barrio Boy: The Story of a Boy's Acculturation* (1971) and Miguel Méndez's novel written first in Spanish and then translated into English: *Peregrinos de Aztlán/Pilgrims in Aztlán* (1974).<sup>91</sup> Like Galarza and Méndez, Urrea draws upon the imagery and language of the journey, in particular walking, and in so doing ties the physical movement of the men to the history of the border, the myth of Aztlán, and the tradition of pilgrimage.

The twenty-six men who walked into the desert on May 19, 2001, were comprised of twenty-three border crossers and three guides, or Coyotes. Urrea follows the group as they take a chartered bus to a spot in the middle of the Sonoran desert from which they plan to walk to Ajo, Arizona. However, late the first night the group takes a wrong turn in Bluebird Pass in the Growler Mountains, southwest of Ajo. From this point on the men repeatedly attempt to cross the Growlers before getting completely turned around and heading west past the Granite Mountains and deep into the desert. By the second night, the men are out of water. By the fourth day, they start to die. Border agents from Wellton, Arizona encounter a small group of men on the fifth day and over the next twenty hours or so the rest of the men, both the survivors and the dead, are tracked down by the agents. Urrea provides the testimony of one of the twelve survivors, Nahum Landa Ortiz, as "modern poetry":

By Monday we were all dead.  
I was hiding under that tree.  
Out there, I saw people in despair.  
I saw them without water.  
I don't know why I survived.  
Maybe it's a miracle.  
Some of them just died of desperation.  
Some of them went insane.  
Some of them lost their minds.  
You could hear them screaming.  
Some fell all alone.  
....  
I was going to die this morning. (168)

Ortiz's statement is spare and the language clipped and direct. Each sentence, each line, adds another image, and the bluntness of the expression underscores the horror of Ortiz's memories. By arranging the sentences as poetic lines, Urrea draws attention to the raw emotion of the memory. For example, by breaking off the simple line "Some fell all alone" from a series of more explicit images of the men raving in the desert, Urrea encourages his readers to see the devastation faced by these twenty-six men, alone and dying. While Urrea's text addresses the deeply flawed policies and debates around the border from a political and ethical perspective, the text's central concern is encouraging readers to grasp the experience of these twenty-six border crossers.

In telling the story of the men's journey Urrea arranges his text into chapters that often draw attention to physical movement. In chapters with titles such as "Jesús Walks Among Us," "Bad Step at Bluebird," "El Guía" [The Guide], and "The Long Walk," Urrea emphasizes the physical and metaphoric dimensions of walking that permeate the text. Through his titles Urrea prepares his readers to understand walking in religious terms ("Jesús Walks Among Us"), historical terms ("The Long Walk"), and on both physical and metaphorical levels ("Bad Step at Bluebird" – which marks both the turning point in the journey across the border as well as a literal missed step or wrong turn). By including references to walking in the structure of the text, Urrea alerts his readers to the importance of different kinds of movement in the story of the men. Walking, in other words, is not incidental to the experience of the border crossers; rather, it operates on multiple levels and provides a trope through which to read border crossing.

In addition to the references to walking in many of the chapter titles, Urrea repeatedly identifies the twenty-six men as "the walkers." Urrea notes other terms utilized to describe border crossers: "illegals, or smugglers, or narco mules," "wets," and "'tonks' . . . a name based on the stark sound of a flashlight breaking over a human head" (15-16). In the slang of the border, Coyotes call their charges "pollos" or chickens. Though, as Urrea observes, "the word for 'chicken' is *gallina*. '*Pollo*' is usually reserved for something else. A *pollo*, as in *arroz con pollo*, has been cooked" (60). These terms serve to dehumanize the migrants. In the process the act of crossing the border is minimized to the activity of criminals or otherwise less than desirable individuals. A "pollo" or a "tonk" is not an individual with complicated reasons for wanting or needing

to cross the border, it is not a person. After identifying these negative terms, Urrea selects “walkers” as his label for border crossers in general, and the twenty-six men walking across the border in May of 2001 in particular. Urrea’s term also reduces identity to one activity. Yet “walkers” retain agency, “walkers” remain active and engaged. Further, by identifying border crossers as “walkers” Urrea chooses a term that can be connected to many different experiences. A “walker” moves his/her body across space for a variety of reasons. Thus while the term reduces identity to a single activity, at the same time the term expands the possible ways in which that identity is understood.

The experience of the walkers is excruciatingly physical. Unlike the pilgrims to Chimayó, the walkers experience pain beyond the discomfort of blisters and muscle strain. The physical pain of the walkers threatens to arrest their progress, to stop them from finding help and salvation. Urrea writes that the “[s]urvivors report that about fifteen of the men had thorns in their feet. They had trouble walking, and they were having trouble dealing with the pain of their injuries” (163). Yet they have to keep going forward, “[t]hey walked” (164). Francisco Morales, one of the twelve survivors, remembers, “[w]e were walking like robots” (165). Paradoxically, in walking lay both the hope of salvation and death. The further they walked, the more their bodies broke down and yet if they stopped walking they were sure to die in the desert.

Beyond the pain of walking, the walkers had to contend with the horrors of the burning desert. In the desert, “heat sizzled at the edges of things, then slammed into them, instant and profound” (Urrea 117). Urrea details the stages of hyperthermia: “Heat

Stress, Heat Fatigue, Heat Syncope, Heat Cramps, Heat Exhaustion, and Heat Stroke”

(120). The first stage, entered early on when the walkers still had some water with them and still believed that they were within hours of Ajo, involves feeling “tired, or even

dizzy, from walking in the heat....the funny stumbling” (121). As the men moved

through the stages, however, their suffering became more pronounced. By the time the

walkers reached the fourth stage, Heat Cramps, walking became more and more difficult

as “[m]uscle cramps kick in. Your legs suddenly ache. You get clumsy. You tumble”

(123). Urrea describes the fifth stage, Heat Exhaustion, through both real and

metaphorical images of walking. The walkers continue to literally “fall on the burning

ground” while they are metaphorically on the verge of another border crossing, an

“abyss” where with “[o]ne more step...you cannot return” (125). By the time the walkers

reach the final stage, Heat Stroke, dehydration has reduced the walkers’ “inner streams to

sluggish mudholes” and they are experiencing “a core meltdown” (128). Urrea’s

description of Heat Stroke is unflinching:

Some walkers at this point strip nude....the walkers couldn’t stand their

nerve-endings being chafed by their clothes....Once they’re naked, they’re

surely hallucinating. They dig burrows in the soil, apparently thinking

they’ll escape the sun. Once underground, of course, they bake like a pig

at a luau. Some dive into sand, thinking it’s water, and they swim in it

until they pass out. They choke to death, their throats filled with rocks and

dirt.... [Their] muscles, lacking water, feed on themselves. They break

down and start to rot...The system closes down in a series. Your kidneys,

your bladder, your heart. They jam shut. Stop. Your brain sparks. Out.  
You're gone. (128-29)

By the fifth day of their journey, many of the walkers were already closing in on Heat Stroke. Urrea writes that “as they walked, they started to lose themselves. Their accounts...fade into a strange twilight of pain” (108). Their narratives tell confused stories: “Men stumbled away toward illusions in the brutal light. Men thought they were home, walking into their front doors, hugging their wives, making love. Still, they walked. Men were swimming. Men were killing Mendez [their guide who had abandoned them]. Men were on the beach, collecting shells and watching their children splash....And they walked” (159). The survivors tell the story of Edgar Martinez, who did not survive: Martinez “stumbled...righted himself and put out a hand and fell into a bush. He got to his knees, grimaced as if smiling. Perhaps he was ashamed to be falling. He was sixteen years old....He fell again. He closed his eyes. He didn't rise. He lay there for the length of the next day, lost in a delirium no one can even imagine, burning and burning” (164-65). Though the walkers are experiencing physical exhaustion and pain that is much more painful and deadly than the discomfort experienced by the pilgrims to Chimayó, these passages describe their delirium in terms of liminality. Turner and Turner write that as a “threshold” and “ambiguous” state, liminality “has frequently been likened to death; to being in the womb; to invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, and the wilderness” (249). The pilgrims to Chimayó attempt to walk into an experience of liminality; their goal is to attain an altered state, a sense of communion with God. The walkers crossing the border experience a similar state, but for them their

nearness to death is literal, and many of them actually cross over that threshold and cannot return home at the end of their journey into liminality.

The idea of pilgrimage comes up again and again in Urrea's text. Their guide or Coyote is often referred to as "Mendez," an alias he provided the walkers. Urrea discloses that his true name is Jesús Lopez Ramos. Urrea switches between referring to the guide as both Mendez and Jesús, sometimes dropping the accent. When he calls him "Jesús" or Jesus, he often includes religious imagery, underscoring the irony of the walkers following Jesus into the wilderness. For example, referring to Jesús and his boss, Don Moises, Urrea comments, "Jesus led the walkers gathered by Moses into the desert called Desolation. Jesus has the inevitable birthday of December 25" (68). Jesús, Urrea writes, "even had a patron saint of illegals watching over his endeavor" (78). This saint, Toribio Romo, was "originally a priest from Jalisco...[and] his folk power is ascendant" (78). Tales of Saint Toribio's powers of intercession include: "migrants finding water, migrants escaping certain death, migrants outwitting the Migra [U.S. migration authorities or Border Patrol], lost migrants being delivered unto the pickup point. Selah" (78). Through framing the walkers' journey by allusions to Jesus's sojourn in the desert and the Catholic saint of migrants, Urrea suggests that their undertaking has religious tinges. The inclusion of the Hebrew word "Selah," which indicates the end of a religious verse, reinforces the story of the migrants as a story that has religious import; it places the experiences of migrants alongside the experience of biblical figures, in particular the Hebrews who wandered in the deserts of Sinai. Like the Hebrews and, later, Jesus, the

migrants go into the desert seeking answers and salvation, in their case, salvation from economic hardship.

As the walkers begin to enter Heat Exhaustion and then Heat Stroke, they begin to pray. They declare the Apostle's Creed, part of the Catholic Catechism: "I believe in God the father, creator of heaven and earth" (159).<sup>92</sup> And they recite part of the Hail Mary, a traditional prayer that forms the basis of the Rosary: "Blessed Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death, amen" (160).<sup>93</sup> In their desperation, the walkers turn to their faith through familiar prayers. Like pilgrims they recite these prayers as they walk, seeking strength to continue walking. If one of the goals of pilgrimage is to cultivate a sense of *communitas*, another central goal is individual "salvation or release from the sins and evil of the structural world in preparation for participation in an afterlife of pure bliss" (Turner and Turner 8). Pilgrimage, Turner and Turner argue, involves "the inward movement of the heart" (8). In her narrative about a pilgrimage to Chimayó with a group of Chicana Catholics, Paula Elizabeth Holmes-Rodman writes about the pilgrims carrying rosaries and reciting prayers as they walk. When she is having a particularly difficult time walking, one of her fellow pilgrims asks her, "Would you like to carry my rosary for a while? It has been in my family for generations. There's a lot of beautiful prayers and stories on it" (40). The ritualized and familiar prayer of the rosary provides the pilgrims with a sense of the sacred and a sense of connection across time to other pilgrims. In a similar fashion, the walkers in Urrea's text turn toward familiar prayer at moments of severe physical hardship.

Urrea also includes images of Catholic traditions when he describes Jesús's entry into the final phases of Heat Stroke. At this point in the narrative, Jesús can no longer walk, can no longer pray: "He started to crawl. He was on all fours, and sometimes he went on his knees like a religious penitent. The world of sin and race spin in flaming disks around his head. He fell. He rose. He lay. He crawled. He tried to rise. He sat down" (170). Urrea explicitly draws a connection between Jesús and religious pilgrims. Like the pilgrims to Chimayó, Jesús acts out Christ's passion. The Stations of the Cross include Christ falling three times, just as Jesús falls three times in the moments before he lapses into a coma. The reason behind Jesús's need for penance lies behind him in the form of the bodies of the walkers he led into the desert. Unlike those walkers, Jesús does not die in the desert. Rather, he is rescued by the Border Patrol, resurrected from his death-like coma.

The walkers reach for their faith as a familiar path out of their present dire circumstances. However, Urrea writes that Tohono O'odham poet, Ofelia Zepeda, "has pointed out that rosaries and Hail Marys don't work out here. 'You need a new kind of prayers,' she says, 'to negotiate this land'" (5-6). Ritualized Christian prayers, Zepeda suggests, are not equipped to handle the trails of the Sonoran desert, trails that are traveled by "[d]esert spirits of a dark and mysterious nature" (Urrea 5). As with pilgrims, the walkers in Urrea's text are treading in the footsteps of many walkers who have gone before. They walk across a landscape etched with "ghost roads," paths made in recent decades by border crossers as well as paths that are "old beyond dating... [and that] no one knows where they lead" (7). The land retains the history of the area: "Footprints of

long dead cowboys....And beneath these, the prints of the phantom Hohokam themselves” (7). Along the way some of these paths are marked with “old rock piles in the shapes of arrows” that point “at a *tinaja* (water hole) among the crags” (7). The land is haunted by this long history, alive with threatening specters: “Mexico’s oldest hoodoo, La Llorona” (Urrea 11), “the dreaded Chupacabras (the Goat Sucker)” (Urrea 6), and the Cabeza Prieta (a shining black skull with burning white eyes that emerges from the earth) have all been spotted in the region of the Devil’s Highway (Urrea 14).

Mary S. Vásquez calls ghosts, “those other border walkers, border crossers. They populate numerous texts of the Borderlands....Ghosts of those who perished in the crossing. Ghosts of memory, caught in the barbed wire on the line. Ghosts of desire unmet, of aspirations left somewhere along the way. La Llorona, after all, still walks the *arroyos* of the Borderlands. She is a border walker, the ultimate migrant, for whom there can be no home at all” (190). La Llorona, the wailing woman of Chicano and Mexican folklore, wanders arroyos and rivers at night, searching for her children that she murdered in a jealous rage. Gloria Anzaldúa describes La Llorona’s wailing as her “only means of protest” (21), and writes that as the “Daughter of Night” La Llorona is forever “traveling the dark terrains of the unknown searching for the lost parts of herself” (38). Her wailing, Anzaldúa continues, is for her lost children, all of “*los Chicanos/mexicanos*” (38). La Llorona and the other ghosts of the border perform paradoxical roles: On the one hand they serve as a warning to the walkers, suggesting that the desert is deadly and can be home to no one. The desert, they tell the walkers, does not want them there. Yet on the other hand, the presence of these same ghosts reveals that the border has seen

generations of walkers pass through. In walking through the borderlands the walkers follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. The ghosts are symbols, then, of the border's dual position as a landscape that is both wholly alien and intimately familiar.

Urrea includes the lyrics of "Stolen at Gunpoint," by Tijuana No!, a Mexican ska and punk band he says the walkers had listened to before walking across the Devil's

Highway:

*California*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*Arizona*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*Texas*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*Nuevo México*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*El Alamo*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*Aztlán*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*Puerto Rico*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*América*

*Stolen at gunpoint!*

*We gonna get it back...(76-7)*

The song reveals the power of Aztlán for the walkers. Aztlán is their rightful home and taking it back elevates the role of the Coyotes and *pollos* to braving the “wicked Sonoran heat to b[e] outlaw[s]” (Urrea 77). They are retracing the footsteps of the Aztecs who “walked south, out of the deserts on their way to what would become Mexico City. They apparently walked across the Devil’s Highway on their way home” (Urrea 77). Mary Pat Brady calls the turn to Aztlán an “alternative cartographic practice” that “challenge[s] dominant representations of space” (139). Rafael Pérez-Torres argues Aztlán is “an empty signifier” that “names not that which is or has been, but that which is ever absent: nation, unity, liberation” (37). However, while Aztlán may not represent a “real” past, the myth of Aztlán has the real effect of providing an alternative history and an alternative way for understanding the borderlands.

Aztlán, ghosts, the history and violence of the border – all of these have left their imprints on the land. Brady contends that “[n]o place exists apart from the social interactions that construct it or the discursive systems that elaborate it” (122). These systems and interactions are stories that are written into the land. Certain landmarks represent stories of those who have walked before. Urrea writes that both the walkers and the border patrol who hunt them “read the land like a text. They search the manuscript of the ground for irregularities in its narration. They know the plots and the images by heart. They can see where the punctuation goes. They are landscape grammarians, got the Ph.D. in reading dirt” (29). Like Mary Austin, they look beyond human made trails and look for “bug-sign” left when “small creatures begin to scurry

about just before dawn” (30). The footprints of animals and humans, “wrote the story” (31). The footprints of the twenty-six border crossers and the footprints of walkers throughout the history of the area recorded narratives. Urrea asserts that the desert is “a naturalist’s dreamscape,” but “a litany of doom” for border crossers. Even the names given to the land told stories of previous walkers:

The poems on the map read like a dirge. A haunted cowboy ballad:

Chico Shunie Wash,

Tepee Butte,

Locomotive Rock,

Gunsight Wash,

Pozo Redondo,

Copper Canyon,

Black Mountain,

Pinnacle Peak,

Camelback. (85-6)

Being able to read the land is a necessary skill, a skill that can make the difference between life and death. If the border crossers can read the land, they can find their way across it and they can find the life-giving water hidden in the hills. If the border patrol can read the land, they can find the walkers before they walk into anonymity in the U.S. or die in the desert. But reading the land also aligns the walkers with a long history of desert walks, a long history of migration.

In telling the story of the twenty-six walkers who attempted to cross the Devil's Highway in May, 2001, Urrea returns again and again to images of walking. He writes, "They walked. They walked. There was no other story: they walked" (Urrea 159). Yet their walking itself told other stories. The movement of the men's bodies was not an isolated experience. Rather, through walking the men connected their border crossing with the rich and complicated histories of *peregrinación*, Aztlán, and economic migration. Luis D. León claims "[t]he theme of exile and return permeates the Mexican and Chicano imagination, for ethnic Mexicans live in many diasporas: from the mother country in Mexico and from the economic, political, and cultural mainstream" (199). Like the pilgrims to Chimayó, the border walkers merge the individual with the communal in the movement of their bodies. Walking ties them to the land they traverse and complex cultural histories of movement. Yet for fourteen of the border walkers, walking did not lead them out of the desert. They walked themselves to their own deaths.

"Crossing the border" suggests a rich myriad of metaphorical meanings in contemporary Chicano/Chicana literary theory. Critics variously discuss the borders of sexual identity, gender roles, complicated ethnic and cultural sources, and religious traditions. The metaphorical border separates peoples, disciplines, nations, languages, and ideas. There is no line in the sand where the Devil's Highway intersects the U.S. Mexican border. When the twenty-six walkers crossed that invisible line, they were doing more than entering a vast complex of metaphors: they were risking – and in some

cases, losing – their lives. The question of the significance of bodily experience ceases to be ambiguous.

Léon contends that, “[m]emory is tied to place and to the body: it is enacted through the body – a physical imprint or sensation – when it is triggered by a place” (20). The complex history of Chicanos and Mexicanos draws together cultural memory, place, and the body. Walking – whether it is ritual pilgrimage, protest marching, or border crossing – provides a physical way for accessing this web of identity. The land is literally marked by the walking of Chicanos and Mexicanos; their feet have etched “subtle trails....constructed...out of slow repetition” (Childs 30). And each protest march, pilgrimage, or border crossing reinforces the trails etched through Chicano and Mexican cultural histories, histories of long walks, both those independently chosen and those forced through economic and political necessity.

## EPILOGUE: WALKING THE STORY, WRITING THE PATH

In 2006, the U.S. Congress and the Department of Homeland Security approved construction of a “virtual” fence along the U.S.-Mexican border. A combination of actual fencing, vehicle barriers, radar, satellite phones, underground sensors, unmanned aerial planes, and ninety-eight foot-tall towers topped with high-powered and infrared cameras with a ten-mile range, the virtual fence will cost billions of dollars when it is completed. Originally envisioning the virtual fence stretching the full 2,000 miles of the U.S.-Mexican border, plans have recently been scaled back. Boeing, the company charged with the project, is now working on perfecting just a 28-mile prototype. Yet many politicians and American citizens still anticipate a virtual barrier running the entire border (Preston). The invisible fence is meant to impede the invisible paths walked by border crossers who remain largely invisible to dominant American ideology, beyond their symbolic value to various political agendas. The border crossers themselves, as Luis Alberto Urrea’s *The Devil’s Highway* illustrates, follow trails navigated by the invisible ghosts of past walkers.

In his 1987 text, *The Songlines*, which investigates the travel of indigenous Australian peoples, Bruce Chatwin writes of the “labyrinth of invisible pathways which meander over Australia and are known to Europeans as ‘Dreaming-tracks’ or ‘Songlines’; and to the Aboriginals as the ‘Footprints of the Ancestors’ or the “Way of the Law”” (2). “*I have a vision,*” he declares, “*of the Songlines stretching across the continents and ages; that wherever men have trodden they have left a trail of song (of which we may,*

*now and again, catch an echo*)” (280). Chatwin’s vision of trails of story and song could describe the paths – both visible and invisible – that have been etched into the earth by American walkers. These paths reflect the millions of literal footsteps that have been taken, but also the narratives and stories that have arisen as storytellers and writers from different historical moments and different cultural contexts have grappled with the relationship between self and land.

It is not a new idea to suggest that the trails and paths rubbed into the American soil by the feet of walkers are central to understanding American histories. In 1890, Frederick Jackson Turner wrote that “The buffalo trail became the Indian trail, and this became the trader’s ‘trace;’ the trails widened to roads, and the roads into turnpikes, and these in turn were transformed into railroads” (14). He goes on to argue that as the paths were transformed, so were the people, becoming less “European” and more “American.” For Turner, walking creates American identity. However, Turner ties this movement to the idea that there is a single story of American history, and that story is of Euro-Americans moving from east to west and writing over indigenous histories by obscuring ancient pathways. What I have demonstrated in this dissertation is that the footpaths and trails that crisscross the American land tell the stories of many different peoples; just as Chicano and Chicana, Native American, and Euro-American writers engage the rich trope of walking to communicate a variety of ideas, so, too, do the traces of their peregrinations reveal a complex story about the relationship among self, culture, and land. The writers and walkers I have discussed complicate the idea that motion in America travels in a smooth line from east to west. Rather, the paths that are carved into

the American land travel in all directions – from east to west and west to east, from north to south and south to north, and in cyclical patterns of departure and return.

The literal paths the walkers follow become a trope in literary articulations of travel. In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit writes, “[t]he history of walking is an unwritten, secret history whose fragments can be found in a thousand unemphatic passages in books, as well as in songs, streets, and almost everyone’s adventures” (3). While walking may not have an obvious or forceful presence in American literatures, images of walking and the stories of walkers are, in fact, central images in American literatures from many different cultural contexts. Writing about walking is a way writers can tap into many cultural stories and beliefs about bodily movement. Walking can indicate the passage of life and time, bodily and mental suffering, and change from one place to another or from one mentality to another. The image of walking plays a crucial role in Euro-American and Native American religious and secular stories, and references to walking can prompt readers to access those more complex cultural inheritances. Thus, when Mary White Rowlandson writes about wandering in the wilderness, her Puritan audience will immediately recall biblical stories of the Hebrews. Or when Diane Glancy imagines the corn “walking” the Trail of Tears with the Cherokee, readers are alerted to the story of Selu, the Corn Mother. Or when Urrea mentions Aztlán, his readers connect walking across the border with the legendary migration of the Aztecs. As a neglected literary trope, walking provides a rich site for investigating American literature from a cross-cultural context.

Yet these texts also suggest that there is something else to be gleaned, something beyond literary and cultural allusions. Returning to the subtitle of my dissertation, “Walking the Story, Writing the Path,” I want to argue that that “something else” is the act of walking itself. Yes, American authors tap into the vast array of allusions and ideas contained in walking. However, walking in these texts is not *only* a literary device. These texts tell the tales of people who literally walked, people who moved their bodies by placing one foot in front of the other. Their blisters may serve as a metaphor for mental suffering, but they are also a real result of walking for long distances. This intrusion of the “real” into the metaphorical is perhaps most poignant in Urrea’s retelling of the journey of the twenty-six border crossers. Though their deaths may serve as symbols for the inhumanity of U.S. border policies, they are not only symbols. Those men – some of whom remain unnamed and unclaimed – actually lost their lives

Solnit suggests, “[i]f the body is the register of the real, then reading with one’s feet is real in a way that reading with one’s eyes is not” (70). Walking serves as a nexus – a point where complex metaphor meets the real, where the stories that are told about American histories and identities come up against the traces of the people whose lives and experiences are often obscured by those very stories. As Mary Austin’s writing suggests, to truly understand American identity we must attend to the intersection of language, land, and body – an intersection we can locate in walking.

An extension of this project might look to other American literatures where walking plays a central role. An obvious course would be to examine exploration narratives from the first Europeans to walk on the American land or narratives from

pioneers and homesteaders on the American frontier. Another rich area of inquiry would be slave narratives, which often include images of forced walking over long distances to go to market, attend church, or escape from the bonds of slavery. More recently, long distance walks, like the walk of George Hormell and Scott King I discuss in the Introduction, have proliferated as people tie the experience of difficult walking to causes such as funding research of diseases like cancer and AIDS, or to personal health and athletic achievement. Still another possible path for further investigations might analyze novels and poems that celebrate urban walking in America. The possibilities for extending this project spread out like the myriad paths that American walkers have followed. Choosing among the trails to follow brings Robert Frost's famous poem to mind: "*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both / And be one traveler, long I stood / And looked down one as far as I could*" (1). Frost's image of a crossroads and of the different perspectives offered by the trail one chooses reflects the multiple paths and multiple stories traced onto the American landscape. There remain many paths to follow.

In a recent interview, Cormac McCarthy discussed his most recent novel, *The Road* (2006), which imagines a post-apocalyptic world in which walking is once again the only available mode of transportation. Throughout the spare text "they went on" serves as a kind of mantra. The novel follows a father and son as they negotiate a nightmarish landscape peopled by cannibals. The pair is on their way south where survival might still be possible. McCarthy reverses border crossings and calls into question old and enduring stereotypes about South America and border crossing by

situating “cannibals” in North America and survival in South America.<sup>94</sup> In addition, the father and son largely walk along abandoned highways, inverting Jackson’s vision of walking paths as preceding roads and railroads. McCarthy asserts that he was inspired to write the novel during a visit to El Paso, Texas. While there, he looked out of his hotel room one night and imagined what the city might look like in one hundred years (Conlon). McCarthy’s novel reimagines the place of walking in dominant conceptions of both America’s settlement and the U.S.-Mexican border. As the father and son walk along highways and cross the invisible, and now clearly meaningless, line marking the land of the United States as distinct from the land of Mexico, they are not walking alone. Their footsteps follow, intersect, and reverse the visible and invisible paths left by the ghosts of prior walkers, just as McCarthy’s novel echoes the wealth of prior instances of walking in American literatures.

History and narrative shape one another. The idea of walking is deeply ingrained in American historical and literary identity and still echoes today. Just as Hormell and King’s walk to celebrate Euro-American history acts as a means of defining the walk and the walkers as uniquely American, the “virtual” border fence defines the walking of the border crossers as *not* American by impeding their way. Yet the restriction of walking as a means of exclusion is ultimately unsuccessful because walking does not remain rooted in a single American culture and there are always other paths to follow. Walking transcends physical and cultural boundaries and suggests ways in which physical bodies, cultural identity, and landscape can be reintegrated. This dissertation illustrates the rich possibilities of tracing walking through American literature and history. My goal is to

move the trope of walking from the periphery of American literary study to the center – to demonstrate that walking is a rich trope that cuts across time and place and suggests a vital relationship among American bodies, literatures and land.

## ENDNOTES

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### **Introduction:**

<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Amato's *On Foot: A History of Walking*; Jeffrey Robinson's *The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image*; Celeste Langan's *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom*; Robin Jarvis's *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*; Anne Wallace's *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: The Origins and Uses of the Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century*; William H. Swatos, Jr. and Luigi Tomasi, eds. *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*; Jonathan Sumption's *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion*; Colin Morris and Peter Roberts, eds. *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*; and Philip Edwards's *Pilgrimage and Literary Tradition*.

<sup>2</sup> Notable among recent books that do cross-cultural work are Krista Comer's *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women's Writing* (1999), Noreen Groover Lape's *West of the Border: The Multicultural Literature of Western American Frontiers* (2000), Jeff Karem's *The Romance of Authenticity: The Cultural Politics of Regional and Ethnic Literatures* (2004), and Magali Cornier Michael's *New Visions of Community in Contemporary American Fiction: Tan, Kingsolver, Castillo, Morrison* (2006).

### **Chapter 1:**

<sup>3</sup> Wesley xi.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Janis P. Stout's *The Journey Narrative in American Literature*, R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam*, Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land*, and Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*.

<sup>5</sup> Statton was engaged by Olive Oatman's brother Lorenzo, to interview Olive and write a history of the family and an account of the captivity of Olive and her sister. I include this example as Olive's voice, even though I recognize the highly problematic and mediated nature of the narrative.

<sup>6</sup> In his introduction to *Journeys in New Worlds*, William L. Andrews notes this important moment in Rowlandson's narrative as the "first of many decisions and choices that Rowlandson recounts in her story, all of which testify to her unrelenting grip on life and the depth of her desire for self-preservation" (6).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*, p. 37-42.

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<sup>8</sup> See Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James A. Levernier's *The Indian Captivity Narrative* (52); David Jacobson's *Place and Belonging in America* (56); and Mitchell Robert Breitwieser's *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning* (132).

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Slotkin, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, Ebersole, Lang, Downing, Logan, Henwood, and Burnham. Several contemporary critics, however, consider the contradictions in Rowlandson's narrative – the places where she seems to be in tension with dominant Puritan views. For examples of this approach see Wesley and Breitwieser.

<sup>10</sup> It is fitting that the first advertisement for Rowlandson's narrative appeared in the first American edition of Bunyon's *Pilgrim's Progress* (Strong 86; Ebersole 18).

<sup>11</sup> Derounian-Stodola and Levernier (98).

<sup>12</sup> See for example Slotkin, Kolodny, Andrews, Lang, Derounian-Stodola and Levernier, Ebersole, Logan, Burnham, Breitwieser, Wesley, and Dietrich.

<sup>13</sup> See Slotkin (109); Kolodny *Land Before Her* (18); Lang (21); Wesley (23).

<sup>14</sup> See for example Downing, Henwood, and Dietrich.

<sup>15</sup> Henwood's persuasive larger argument about the Psalms is that they empower Rowlandson to "speak passionately of her own grief, confusion, and anger. They provide a vital means of self-expression under conditions that threaten to obliterate the captive's identity and even her sanity" (171). The Bay Psalm Book, she contends, "served as one of the first means of giving early American women a voice to be heard" (173).

<sup>16</sup> In "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Frederick Jackson Turner writes that in 1890 the Superintendent of the Census declared, "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at the present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line" (1).

<sup>17</sup> Slotkin (21-22).

<sup>18</sup> Mary Jemison was captured by a raiding party of French and Indians in Pennsylvania in 1758, while in her mid-teens. She was then ritually adopted by two sisters of the Seneca tribe. She married two Native American husbands (the first a Delaware and the second a Seneca) and had several children with them. In 1823, white school teacher James Seaver visited an 80 year old Jemison to record her story. At the time, Jemison was living on her own farm situated between an Indian village and a white town. By 1831, Jemison found her farm surrounded by white

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civilization and abandoned the “middle ground” to spend the remainder of her life on the reservation. (Scheckel 93-109; Kolodny 71-81; Namias 145-203).

In writing *The Life of Mary Jemison*, Seaver utilized many of the racial and gendered assumptions of the early nineteenth century to create a romantic story of a white woman exploited in and by the wilderness. However, throughout the text, Jemison’s remarkable story resists such conventions. As Annette Kolodny asserts the text “evad[es] the narrative conventions of captivity and sentimental romance alike and becom[es], instead, the story of a woman who, in the forested wilderness of upstate New York, knew how to ‘take my children and look out for myself’” (Kolodny *Land Before Her* 73).

<sup>19</sup> The name “Sioux” is a French rendering of the Ojibwe word “nadewisou” meaning “enemy.” In the Santee dialect, “Dakota” translates as “an alliance of friends” and is the term generally used among the Dakota people (Bergervoet). In this text I will use the term “Dakota,” following Santee tradition.

<sup>20</sup> Castiglia, Schultz, Anderson and Woolworth.

<sup>21</sup> At the last minute, President Lincoln’s committee reduced the number of Dakota to be hanged to thirty-eight (Kestler 352).

<sup>22</sup> In her retelling of the first night she spent at the Upper Sioux agency, Wakefield draws attention to the misconceptions that many immigrants brought with them to the frontier:

The first night passed there was one of horror to all, as we were ignorant of Indian customs any further than what we had learned of them from those who were camped around our town, and this night they were having councils and were talking, shouting, and screaming, all night, and we, poor, ignorant mortals, thought they were singing our death-song, preparatory to destroying us. Towards morning the noise lulled away, and we dropped to sleep, but not to sleep for long, for soon came the tramp and noise of a hundred horsemen close to the house. The men all arose, prepared their arms, waited and watched, but no attack was made. What could be the trouble? why did they not make some manifestation? why were they silent – only that terrible tramping? At last one man, braver than the rest, went down, and, behold – it was our own horses which had been turned out. They had come up on the platform to get away from the mosquitoes. This gives, in the beginning, an ideas of many Indian scares. (4-5)

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<sup>23</sup> Mary Louise Pratt writes that, for nineteenth-century travel writers, presenting landscape as a painting was one of three conventional ways for creating “qualitative and quantitative value for the explorer’s achievement. [...] [T]he landscape is *estheticized*” (204). Further the viewer-painting relation implies that the writer “has the power if not to possess, at least to evaluate this scene” (205). Wakefield’s adoption of this trope of travel writing further underscores her role as a traveler interested in describing and domesticating the new scenes she encounters.

<sup>24</sup> Mona Domosh and Joni Seager argue that mobility, the ability “to move through space” is not only shaped by physical capacity, but is also “deeply intertwined with social status” (110).

Mobility, they contend

...is greatest at the extreme ends of the socioeconomic spectrum. The mobility of the destitute is a hardship-induced rootlessness: the homeless, refugees, people of the margins of job markets, and people pushed into migration out of need or crisis are all clustered at this end of the mobility curve. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the highflyers (literally and metaphorically). In contemporary societies, increasing wealth is attended by increasing mobility, and reciprocally, increasing mobility increases privilege. (110)

Through the course of their lives, Rowlandson and Wakefield experience both kinds of mobility – the mobility that comes with their higher social status, and, later, the movement of the destitute that they experience when they are physically aligned with the Native peoples who are forced to wander by conflicts with encroaching Euro-American settlers.

<sup>25</sup> Little Crow led one of the nine bands, which together formed the Mdewakanton, one of the four tribes of the eastern Sioux or Dakota. The Mdewakantons occupied the Mississippi River valley between present-day Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin and the Falls of St. Anthony in Minneapolis (Anderson and Woolworth 8). Little Crow was a negotiator and signer of the Treaty of Mendota in 1851 and the Treaty of 1858. He also went to Washington, D.C. in 1854 to campaign for well-defined boundary lines for the Dakota reservations. Though Little Crow was initially reluctant to join the war, as his decision to lead the warriors placed him directly in the thick of the hostilities. When the Dakota were defeated by the American army, Little Crow and fewer than three hundred people headed for Canada. He held out hope that he would be able to forge an alliance with the Yankton, Yankonais, and Tetons to march south and clear his homeland of Euro-Americans. However, his small band eventually broke apart under the stress of exile, and

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on July 3, 1863 he was shot and killed by Nathan Lamson while he was picking raspberries (Schultz 272).

<sup>26</sup> In several places throughout her narrative, Wakefield furthers her identification with the helpless female captive by describing herself as “naturally timid, and afraid of death under any circumstances” (30) and that “Surely God gave me strength, or I would have died through fear, for I am by nature a very cowardly woman” (17).

<sup>27</sup> One of the common tropes of Indian captivity narratives that Wakefield uses is the juxtaposition of “good” and “bad” Indians. Following dominant ideas about Native Americans, Wakefield imagines “good” Indians, like her captor Chaska, as more “civilized.” That is, “good” Indians are Christian and adhere to Euro-American gender ideologies. Whereas “bad” Indians, such as Chaska’s brother-in-law Hapa, are essentially “savage” – they are violent and unpredictable and corrupted by alcohol. However, Wakefield stresses the point that if the “bad” Indians are bad, they were encouraged to be so by Euro-American presence, in particular the dishonest traders. “All the evil habits that the Indian has acquired,” Wakefield writes, “may be laid to the Traders. They first carried the minue-wakan among them. The Traders took their squaws for wives, and would raise several children by them, and then after living with them a number of years would turn them off. It was the Traders who first taught them to swear, for in the Indian language there are no oaths against our God or theirs” (7).

<sup>28</sup> The incident that precipitates this flight was a drunken Dakota “in the next tepee” who threatened to “shoot all the white women in our camp” (Wakefield 25).

<sup>29</sup> Castiglia notes that Wakefield distances herself from societal expectations by mocking other white women whose “greatest trouble seemed to be the loss of [their] feather beds” (Wakefield 15). Wakefield also notes that many of the captive women lied about their experience in captivity, a “class of females that were endeavoring to excite the sympathies of the soldiers” (60).

<sup>30</sup> If Wakefield, and writers of other captivity narratives, occasionally presented Native women in the positive light of family and community, it is important to note that such a representation still meant that Euro-American women were “assert[ing] their right to assimilate their captors” into communities that “the captors themselves do not define and from which they apparently benefit not at all” (Castiglia 6). In other words, representations that seem almost radical for their time in their appreciation of Native cultures are still caught up in a larger cultural ideology of expansion and racial identity.

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<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere Wakefield insists, “The Indians were as respectful towards me as any white man would be towards a lady” (29), and even states that Chaska “left me as he found me. My father could not have done differently, or acted more respectfully or honorable. [...] Very few Indians, or *even white men*, would have treated me in the manner he did” (28).

## **Chapter 2:**

<sup>32</sup> Banner argues that the Removal Act did not increase the President’s powers or “divest the Senate of its constitutional role in ratifying Indian treaties”; rather, the “real motivation for the Removal Act was monetary.... [The act’s last section] appropriated \$500,000 for the specific purpose of removal” (217).

<sup>33</sup> William Bright offers a partial list of Native American Trickster figures: “In the Pacific Northwest there is Raven and, sometimes, Bluejay. In the Northern Plains the trickster is sometimes called Spider; in the Southeast, he is Hare; and in most of the central and eastern continent, he has a name of his own, not identifiable with that of any animal....[I]n the western United States...Coyote is the trickster par excellence for the largest number of American Indian cultures” (4).

<sup>34</sup> Bailey goes on to allege that this shift in consciousness suggests that “the tribe had been reborn and all earlier happenings were of little consequence” (1). This statement dismisses Navajo traditions and the Navajo’s own understanding of their past; however, I include the earlier part of Bailey’s claim because I agree that the Navajo Long Walk remains a significant and tragic historical epoch that continues to reverberate.

<sup>35</sup> Wyman writes that for the Navajo pollen is a “symbol of fertility, happiness, and life itself” (*Blessingway* 31).

<sup>36</sup> In “Words and Place: A Reading of *House Made of Dawn*,” Evers notes that in this song “a journey metaphor is prominent....One of its central messages is that ceremonial words are bound efficaciously to place” (225)

<sup>37</sup> In her essay “Come into the Shade,” Luci Tapahonso relates the story of a contemporary puberty ceremony:

In the Kinaaldá the girl who is having the puberty ceremony has to run about two miles every morning to the east, dressed in her whole outfit: long skirt, velvet blouse, concho belt and earrings, and a lot of other jewelry. She has to run to the

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east and run back, and people can run after her. As she is running she has to yell out loud to strengthen her lungs, to give her a good singing voice, so she can be physically strong. People can run after her, but they can't pass her. If they pass her, they will age before she does. And they can run after her and yell, too, because as she is running, she lets off – when people run or move quickly, they let off a breeze – that breeze is a blessing, it's a blessing for them. So that is why people run after her. (83)

<sup>38</sup> Though historians have generally described the Navajo as relative latecomers to the Southwest, Peter Iverson argues that “Much of the most recent archeological research is pushing back the supposed “time of arrival for the [Navajo and Apache]...Archeologist Alan Downer, for example, has revised his estimate to the 1100s” (16).

<sup>39</sup> Iverson writes, “The non-Indian and even some of the non-Navajo Indian residents of the Southwest used the Diné as scapegoats for anything that went wrong and identified as Diné any stranger or group of strangers who committed any violent act” (54).

<sup>40</sup> In an ironic turn, Sherman, who had been responsible to brutal “scorched earth” policies during the Civil War, was the one who negotiated a treaty to return the Navajo to the lands they had been driven from by Carson's “scorched earth” policy, which was likely influenced by Sherman's efforts in the Civil War.

<sup>41</sup> In his text, *Diné: A History of the Navajos*, Peter Iverson provides the full text of the 1868 treaty. Its articles include provisions for a drastically reduced reservation, the establishment of a permanent agent to the Navajo, the option for “heads of family” to select 160 acres to tend to themselves as opposed to being held in common, the education of all Navajo children between 6 and 16 by Euro-American schools, and railroad right of way through the reservation (Iverson 325-334).

<sup>42</sup> Bailey's history of the Long Walk rather shockingly suggests that the pregnant, elderly, or otherwise slower moving Navajo who fell behind were shot “perhaps mercifully” (164) by their army escorts.

<sup>43</sup> *Bighorse the Warrior* is comprised of the stories of Tiana's father, Gus Bighorse. Tiana states that when she was small she eavesdropped on her father's stories. They were “men's stories” and were not intended for women or girls. When she was discovered she was at first reprimanded, but later her father realized that she was the only one who was truly listening. He allowed her to

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listen so that she could keep the stories going. Gus Bighorse's stories are further mediated by the role Noël Bennett plays in the transcription. Tiana Bighorse recited the stories to Bennett who recorded and edited them. Although Bennett states that "editing was precarious" and she endeavors to "protect the integrity of the Navajo voice" (xxii-xxiii), her role as transcriber and editor impacts the story readers receive.

<sup>44</sup> In line 56 Tapahonso refers to "Dinetah," the area "east of the center of the land between the [sacred Navajo] mountains" (Arthur, Bingham, and Bingham 4). Iverson calls Dinetah the "cradle of Navajo civilization, the place of Changing Woman's birth...Although few Diné live in the area today, Dinetah remains a mecca to Navajos interested in their history and heritage" (20).

<sup>45</sup> Historians believe that the Cherokee first encountered Euro-Americans in 1540 when Hernando De Soto's expedition went through the southeast, although there is no specific description of Cherokees or any Cherokee town in the chronicles (Conley 17-18). Conley observes that "the observations of Gabriel Arthur in 1673 are the earliest descriptions of any substance of Cherokees that we have" (25). And in 1721 "thirty-seven Cherokee chiefs went to Charlestown, South Carolina, to meet with Governor Nicholson...In an attempt to settle a fixed boundary between the Cherokee country and the colony, Cherokees for the first time gave up land to English colonists" (Conley 27).

<sup>46</sup> In *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*, William Anderson writes that "no detailed information is available as to exactly how many Cherokee died during the ordeal; only speculations exist" (83). He goes on to state that "the figure of 4,000 deaths has generally been accepted by more recent scholars" (84), though he suggests that this number is simply an estimate handed down from one scholar to another. Anderson goes on to work through known population numbers and to propose a new number based on his own projections (which appear to be solid). He ultimately argues that "[a] total mortality figure of 8,000 for the Trail of Tears period, twice the supposed 4,000, may not be at all unreasonable" (93).

<sup>47</sup> In her memoir, *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People* (1993), Wilma Mankiller offers a different view of the traditional relationship between the Cherokee and travel. She argues that though the Cherokee were closely connected to their homeland and lived in permanent settlements, "there was never a time in the experience of the tribe when our warriors and hunters were not accustomed to venturing beyond the [Mississippi]" (57).

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<sup>48</sup> Daniel Heath Justice discusses yet another account found in *Cherokee Vision of Elohi*.

Originally recorded in the *Vinita Indian Chieftain* by Nighthawk Keetoowah Sakiya Sanders in 1896, the story was reprinted as *Cherokee Vision of Elohi* in 1997. In many respects this version mirrors the version recorded by Alexander Longe. However, it is much more detailed, refers to an early form of writing, predating Sequoyah's syllabary, and includes conflicts with other communities once the Cherokee have reached their new land (Justice 50-52). James Mooney writing in the late nineteenth century, references another "lost" version of the origin story:

The Cherokee formerly had a long migration legend, which was already [by 1823] lost, but which, within the memory of the mother of one informant – say about 1750 – was still recited by chosen orators on the occasion of the annual green-corn dance....The tradition recited that they had originated in a land toward the rising sun, where they had been placed by the command of "the four councils sent from above."...After this genesis period there began a slow migration. (20)

<sup>49</sup> Terrapin Head is further linked to Trickster through his name that connects him to the Cherokee story of Terrapin and Rabbit. In that Trickster story, Terrapin wins a footrace with Rabbit by placing his look-alike relatives along the route so that Rabbit continually mistakes Terrapin's relatives for Terrapin. Quaty Lewis tells Luthy's sons a version of the Trickster tale of Terrapin and Rabbit (*Pushing the Bear* 194-195).

<sup>50</sup> The Cherokee story of Selu connects to the Navajo story of Changing Woman. Selu rubs her armpits and stomach to create corn and Changing woman rubs her armpits and under her breasts to create the first four Navajo clans.

<sup>51</sup> Glancy's story of Box Turtle and Deer is a version of the traditional story of Terrapin and Rabbit collected by James Moody.

<sup>52</sup> For the Cherokee, as for many Native American peoples, seven is one of the most sacred numbers. It represents the directions North, South, East, West, above, below, and center, the place of the Cherokee (Mooney 431). The number seven suggests a sense of place and rootedness. Mooney contends that seven is also the "number of tribal clans, the formulistic number of upper worlds or heavens, and the ceremonial number of paragraphs or repetitions in the principle formulas" (431). It is worth noting that the race in the story of Box Turtle and Deer is to the seventh mountain peak, Selu instructs her sons to drag her body seven times over the

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earth, and Glancy's novel is divided into seven sections representing the seven states and territories the Cherokee walk across.

### Chapter 3:

<sup>53</sup> In *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, Muir notes his visit to "Camp Butler [in North Carolina] where General Scott had his headquarters when he removed the Cherokee Indians to a new home in the West" (43).

<sup>54</sup> See Amato, Turner, Williams, Buell, Bryson, Sowards, Hall and Mark, and Lewis for analyses of Muir's environmental and scientific writing. See Branch "Telling Nature's Story", Buell, Turner, O'Grady, Bryson, and Cohen for discussions of Romantic and Transcendental aspects of Muir's work. See Turner, Williams, and Marx for discussions of how Muir's writing addresses concerns of American westward expansion. And see Williams, O'Grady, Bryson, and Turner for instructive analyses of Muir's religious expressions.

<sup>55</sup> In his book *Milton's Wisdom: Nature and Scripture in Paradise Lost*, John Reichert argues that Milton expressed ambivalence about humankind's ability to recognize and read God's wisdom in the Book of Nature. He writes, "On the one hand, Milton had his own grave doubts about our ability to ground our interpretations of Scripture on sure foundations, and on the other, he invokes the law of nature in his prose with considerable frequency" (3).

<sup>56</sup> It is also possible that Muir's recent brush with blindness may have influenced his selection of the blind Milton's text.

<sup>57</sup> See Pratt for further information on Humboldt's traveling and writing life.

<sup>58</sup> In 1871 Emerson visited Muir in Yosemite. Emerson brought with him a group of eastern friends who "thought that Muir was an amusing figure, perhaps slightly laughable" (Cohen 132). Michael Cohen writes that if Muir had "hoped that Yosemite would be enough to transform this sophisticated group, he was shocked to discover how little Nature affected them. 'I felt lonely, so sure had I been that Emerson of all men would be the quickest to see the mountains and sing them,' he said later" (132).

<sup>59</sup> Cohen notes that it is doubtful that the handwritten notebook Badè used was in fact the original journal, "since Muir recopied most of his original journals and since the introduction is clearly written in the language he learned in Yosemite" (4). This is a significant assertion as it changes Muir's notebook from a diary filled with immediate responses to his experience to a text crafted

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to be read by others. As such, we can approach the imagery in the text as largely consciously created.

<sup>60</sup> In *My First Summer in the Sierra* Muir laments the presence of Native Americans in his “pristine” Sierra Madre. In the ideology of his time, Muir celebrates the idea of “Indians [who] walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels” and inhabit “brush and bark huts [that] last hardly longer than those of wood rats” (*Summer* 54-55). Yet when he meets living Native Americans he records feeling much the same as he did stumbling upon the family of former slaves in Florida. He chronicles “sauntering enchanted” among the trees, flowers, and birds one morning, until he “was startled by a lot of queer, hairy, muffled creatures coming shuffling, shambling, wallowing toward me....When I came up to them, I found that they were only a band of Indians from Mono” (*Summer* 218-219).

<sup>61</sup> For discussions of Austin’s writing in relation to the Transcendentalists see Buell, Blackbird, Paes de Barros, McKusick, and O’Grady.

<sup>62</sup> Austin claims that she can do this when listening to Native American songs: “I discovered that I could listen to aboriginal verses on the phonograph in unidentified Amerindian languages and securely refer them by their dominant rhythms to the plains, the deserts and woodlands that produced them” (*The American Rhythm* 19).

<sup>63</sup> In *The American Rhythm* Austin singles out Walt Whitman, also a walker, as an exception. Whitman, she contends, “had been so shaped to the wilderness track that his every public utterance, his homely anecdotes, even, were haunted by its rhythms” (15). However, while she acknowledges Whitman’s sensitivity to the American land and concedes that his “was the first clear and self-recognizing song of the road,” she also comments that he regulated his verse to the “rutted pioneer track” and “his rhythms, more often than not, are mere unpatterned noises of the street” (17).

<sup>64</sup> See Metcalfe (74) and Lewis (170-171).

<sup>65</sup> Dale Metcalfe argues that “literary critics embraced what came to be called modernism and were only mildly interested in Austin’s theories about the process by which Native American chants worked” (66).

<sup>66</sup> In *West of the Border* Noreen Groover Lape argues that while Austin may occasionally “[all] prey to this evolutionary, hierarchizing tendency” to imagine Native Americans as less “advanced” on the evolutionary ladder (161), she eventually “arrives at a theory of cultural

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relativism that enables her to avoid the hierarchizing tendencies of the unilinear paradigm” (162). However, in her advocating for Euro-American writers to appropriate Native American literary traditions, Austin seems to come very close to suggesting that Euro-American writers will eventually replace the Native American as the authentic voice for the American land.

<sup>67</sup> While Austin conflates the cultures of all of the pueblo peoples around the Rio Grande, it is important to note that while their traditions have some similarities, they are distinct groups with distinct cultural beliefs and ceremonies.

<sup>68</sup> Thank you to Susan Hardy Aiken for her help with prosody here and in subsequent passages.

<sup>69</sup> Though Austin discusses specific Native groups in her writing, she tends to conflate Native American groups, spirituality, and verse into one encompassing worldview.

<sup>70</sup> For various references to rhythm in Austin’s writings see Metcalfe, O’Grady, Drinnon, Ruppert, Zolla, Ammons, Wyatt, Corey Lee Lewis, and Paes de Barros.

<sup>71</sup> See for example, Graulich, Hoyer, Buell, and Work.

<sup>72</sup> Eighteen years later Austin echoes this assertion in *The American Rhythm*, stressing the importance of “familiarity with the condition under which a land permits itself to be lived” (38).

<sup>73</sup> Austin’s description also echoes Milton’s description of stars following a “wand’ring course” (Fish 138). Like Muir, Austin had read *Paradise Lost* as a young teenager. She writes in *Earth Horizon* that she was “mazed by the magic of the verse – like watching a thunderstorm at sunset,” and that even as an adult she was still able to “quote the more popular passages” (105).

<sup>74</sup> Austin’s “Squaw Gulch” seems to be a disguised or imaginary location; however, there are Squaw Gulches throughout the American West. For example, until very recently there were Squaw Gulches in Northern California, Oregon, Colorado, Arizona, and Montana. In the last fifteen years or so most of these places have been renamed in recognition of the term’s offensive history.

<sup>75</sup> Augusta Fink references Austin’s “encounter with the Walking Woman” during the time she spent on the Tejon Ranch (Fink 48).

<sup>76</sup> Austin’s appropriation of the Night Chant could be seen as not simply disrespectful, but actually dangerous. John Bierhorst writes that “according to the fundamental principle of incantatory medicine, the chant can maim as well as cure. An improper attitude or simply spiritual weakness on the part of the recipient may cause the remedy to backfire” (288).

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<sup>77</sup> The Hittells were California historian Theodore Hittell and his daughter, Kitty. Austin was “drawn to [Theodore Hittell’s] encyclopedic knowledge of California and San Francisco” (Stineman 83). The Hittells were also friendly with many painters and writers in San Francisco and Austin enjoyed the intellectual atmosphere of the Hittell house.

#### **Chapter 4:**

<sup>78</sup> Students in Denver and Los Angeles staged massive walkouts in response to the high dropout rate of Mexican American students, lack of representation of Mexican and Mexican American history and culture in the curriculum, crumbling schools, and a lack of Mexican American teachers. Students organized into groups to fight for change in the education system such as the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), which was formed at a meeting at the University of California – Santa Barbara in 1969.

<sup>79</sup> The NFWA later merged with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee in 1965 to become the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) which then was chartered by the AFL-CIO in 1972 and became the United Farm Workers of America (Dalton 16-17).

<sup>80</sup> For further information about current problems faced by Mexican and Chicano farmworkers, see Garza, Reyes and Trueba; Gonzalez; and Jourdane.

<sup>81</sup> Chicana feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherri Moraga have been vocal in the critique of the often sexist language and ethos permeating the Chicano Movement, such as in Chávez’s statement: “We...decided to take the men [on the march to Sacramento] and leave the women on the picket lines. Dolores had to stay back. Of course, none of the women liked it, but they stayed” (qtd in Levy 207).

<sup>82</sup> The manifestation of Christ in Esquípuas is also referred to as El Cristo Negro, the Black Christ. One possible explanation of the dark wood of the image is that the Black Christ was made to reflect the skin of the native Guatemalan population. The appearance of the Black Christ in Chimayó, a place with a long Native American history, points to a similar kind of syncretism. And though there is no written record indicating how Abeyta may have known about this particular manifestation of the Black Christ, the fact that pilgrims have traditionally journeyed to both sites to use the dirt for healing purposes suggests a common origin of the two isolated shrines (Usner 88).

<sup>83</sup> There are several versions of the Via Crucis. The most common includes fourteen Stations: 1) Jesus is condemned to death, 2) Jesus takes up the cross, 3) Jesus falls the first time, 4) Jesus

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meets Mary, his mother, 5) Simon of Cyrene carries the cross for Jesus, 6) Veronica wipes Jesus's face with her veil, 7) Jesus falls a second time, 8) Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem, 9) Jesus falls the third time, 10) Jesus is stripped of his clothes, 11) Jesus is nailed to the cross, 12) Jesus dies on the cross, 13) Jesus's body is removed from the cross and given to His mother, 14) Jesus is laid in the tomb ("The Way of the Cross at the Colosseum"). Sometimes there is a fifteenth Station – Jesus's resurrection.

<sup>84</sup> Beginning over a thousand years ago, one of the most important Christian pilgrimages is to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Because the New Mexicans who began the Christian pilgrimage to Chimayó traced their cultural ancestry to Spain, it is likely that the pilgrimage to Chimayó was influenced by aspects of the famous pilgrimage to Compostela. For more information about the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, see Davies and Dunn and Davidson.

<sup>85</sup> Thanks to Lucy Ranney for help with the English translation of this and a subsequent passage.

<sup>86</sup> In *The Land of Poco Tiempo*, Charles Lummis portrays Los Hermanos Penitentes as a "deformed" order that grew among the "isolated and ingrown people of that lonely land" until it became "the monstrosity of the present fanaticism" (81). Lummis warns that the Penitentes' rites are secret: "Woe to him if in seeing he shall be seen! A sharp-edged knife or flint shall be over-curious of his back, and across its bloody autograph a hundred fearful lashes shall lift their purpling whales – in barbarous hint to him henceforth to keep a curb between the teeth of inquisitiveness" (85). Lummis's portrayal of the Penitentes as dark, mysterious, and violent fanatics reveals his own deeply ignorant and ethnocentric perspective. The idea that New Mexican Catholicism was tinged by bloody extremism has infused the writing of other Euro-American literary texts set in the area, including Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). Mary Austin was outraged by Cather's depiction of Mexican American Catholics in northern New Mexico, an ironic outcome since Cather inscribed Austin's gift copy of the novel: "For Mary Austin, in whose lovely study I wrote the last chapters of this book. She will be my sternest critic – and she has a right to be. I will always take a calling down from my betters" (qtd in Stineman 127-8).

<sup>87</sup> For a more complete history of Los Hermanos Penitentes see Weigle and Pulido.

<sup>88</sup> See Turner and Turner, Appendix A (250-255) for a more comprehensive definition of "communitas."

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<sup>89</sup> “Comadre” literally means “shared mother,” and is often translated as “Godmother.” However its true meaning is much more complex. The term indicates a close friendship and bond between individuals and families.

<sup>90</sup> Kokopelli, the ubiquitous flute-player common to kitschy versions of “Southwest” décor, is an important figure for many Native American peoples in the American Southwest and is thought by some scholars to have originally depicted Mesoamerican long-distance traders known as “pochteca” who traveled north from Mesoamerica (Wesson 114).

<sup>91</sup> Galarza’s *Barrio Boy* is an autobiographical account of his family’s journey from a mountain village in Mexico to a *barrio* in Sacramento, California. Uprooted by the events of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), the Galarza’s move in stages from their village, to another small Mexican town, to Mazatlán, to Tucson, and finally to Sacramento. Ramón Saldívar notes that Galarza organizes the text into five parts that are “stages of a peregrination...[A]s in journalistic accounts of travel or in the picaresque novel, the chronotype of the road functions in Galarza’s autobiography precisely as the trope by which the multiply dispersed circumstances of a life may be appropriated to create the possibility of the condition of subjective identity” (30).

Another important border crossing text, Miguel Méndez’s *Pilgrims in Aztlán* is set in the borderlands. In his descriptions of border crossings, Méndez, like Urrea, draws together pilgrimage and Aztlán with walking. Recalling walking across the border in the desert, one of the many narrators in Méndez’s novel states:

*Scourged by the tenebrous winds that roast with the cruelty of pyres, the voices of the deceitful would flee, bearing with them tribunes of hypocrites who betray the trust of both their children and their forebears. I was overtaken by imagination, and I saw in my pilgrimage many Indian peoples reduced by the torture of hunger and the humiliation of plunder, traveling backwards along the ancient roads in search of their remote origin....I was hurt by the despair of feeling that utopia is ever a burning coal in consciousness tortured by the denial of sublime aspirations, and I fell to my knees begging for mercy. (83)*

<sup>92</sup> The version of the Apostle’s Creed archived on the Vatican’s website reads:

I believe in God the Father almighty,  
 Creator of heaven and earth.  
 And in Jesus Christ, His only Son,

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our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell; the third day  
He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven, and sits at  
the right hand of God the Father  
almighty, from thence He shall come  
to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body  
and life everlasting.

Amen. (“Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church”)

<sup>93</sup> The Rosary is a certain form of prayer that involves saying more than fifty “Hail Mary” prayers interspersed with a handful of other ritualized prayers. In order to keep count, the one praying holds a string of bead with each bead representing one or more specific prayers (Thurston and Shipman). The full text of the Hail Mary provided on the Vatican’s website reads:

Hail, Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death.

Amen. (“Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church”)

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**Epilogue:**

<sup>94</sup> Early Spanish explorers routinely expected to find cannibals and monsters. In his version of Christopher Columbus's "Journal of the First Voyage to America, 1492-1493," Bartolomé de Las Casas records that the Spanish explorers received frequent reports of "men with one eye only, and others with faces like dogs, who were man-eaters, and accustomed upon taking a prisoner, to cut his throat, drink his blood, and dismember him" (112).

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