Refocusing the Frontier: Recalling the Photography of Robert Adams and Mark Klett

Christian W. Olsson

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Christian W. Olsson

Candidate

Department of Art & Art History

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Dr. Kirsten Pai Buick, Chairperson

Dr. Catherine Zuromskis

Dr. Susanne Anderson-Riedel
REFOCUSING THE FRONTIER:
RECALLING THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF ROBERT ADAMS AND MARK KLETT

by

CHRISTIAN W. OLSSON
B.A., MEDIA, AESTHETICS, AND NARRATION, UNIVERSITY OF SKÖVDE, 2011

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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for my parents
REFOCUSTING THE FRONTIER: 
RECALLING THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF ROBERT ADAMS 
AND MARK KLETT 

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Christian W. Olsson 

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ABSTRACT 

This thesis argues that the American West is a melting pot unprecedented by anything else in the North American continent. The natural beauty observed by the nineteenth-century photographers still prevails. The land is shaped not only by new peoples and cultures, and by those already inhabiting the land, but also by political ideas about how the land should be used. The works of Robert Adams and Mark Klett examine these agendas through their respective works. They illustrate ideas of how the land should be used—from national parks, to cities, to energy and environmental projects. Both photographers focus on different areas of the West. Adams concentrates on cities and the cityscape, and Klett emphasizes the open landscape and the environment, and in this way they complement each other. Together, Mark Klett and Robert Adams are dismantling the narratives and myths of the American West, and are actively working to establish it as a region where land use, migration and movement are in constant change. Adams and Klett are restructuring the foundationally flawed myth through their photography.
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INTRODUCTION

The history of the American West is constructed as a grand narrative of conquest, one of settlers moving west across the desolate prairie to cultivate the land while battling the forces of nature and hostile savages.\(^1\) It has been seen and understood as a single “West” that encompassed most of the land west of the Mississippi River. This narrative, influenced by nineteenth century legacies and constructed through oversimplification, has evolved over the centuries into an accepted popular interpretation, one that revolves around the political and moral justification of Manifest Destiny, a widely held belief that American settlers were destined to expand westwards. This thesis challenges this concept. Over the past few decades, historians and artists have begun to reconsider this narrative by re-presenting the history of the American West as it developed through the nineteenth-and twentieth century. Many factors influenced this reconsideration. For instance, the nineteenth century American West was overwhelmingly rural, while the West of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has advanced toward a predominantly urban landscape; basic changes occurred in the structure of the American economy; and demographic trends altered the cultural, social, and political fields.

This thesis examines and juxtaposes the works of two artists, Robert Adams and Mark Klett, who have photographed modern views of the American Western landscape, revealed the history underneath, and have created their own unique images to outline the West’s contemporary identity. They emphasize the constant change the view of the region has undergone from the early frontier days to today, participating in the development of its present character. This study places Adams and Klett in the
historiographical context of other historians, writers, and artists who together challenge the narrative of the old myth. These reinterpretations of the older and traditional constructions reveal the region as a place of meeting, both of cultures and history, rather than a narrow linear narrative of national expansion.

I use Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 lecture concerning the closing of the American Western frontier as a historiographical foundation. His argument, published in 1921 as *The Frontier in American History*, states: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at 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.”

He suggested that the American frontier was closed. His writings inspired generations of historians and artists to view the West as a stagnant, settled place, and enabled future writers to glamorize it for its exotic eccentricities, subsequently overlooking the suffering of various groups who moved across its landscape.

Viewing the historiography of the subject of American Western expansion a clear line is found between those who favor a more traditional view of American expansion and those who favor a newer, more nuanced approach. The traditional historians only viewed American expansion from east to west. New historians take a more critical approach and incorporate several aspects of migration patterns into their analysis. Historian Patricia Nelson-Limerick has written extensively about the history of the American West and was one of the first to incorporate this more nuanced view of Western expansion. Her essay in *Revealing Territory: Photographs of the Southwest* discusses the use of the word frontier. Limerick challenges Frederick Jackson Turner’s notion by questioning his interpretation of the word frontier itself. It is clear that Turner
took his assumption from the United States census data, and from the fact that there was no more territory to be conquered in 1890. However, Limerick writes that if the word ‘frontier’ meant the discovery of new natural resources and the rush of displacement of population to exploit and extract the same, then 1890 did not mark an end to the frontier as a concept. The word ‘frontier’ became a set of ideas replacing a shifting linear east to west border. Invasion, conquest, colonization, exploitation, development, and expansion of the world market became the new pivotal expressions. The New Western Historians’ redefinition of frontier meant a break in the understanding of American Western history, art, and particularly photography.

The *Trails Conference*, which was an academic conference with the purpose of redefining the meaning and terminologies associated with the American West, was held in Santa Fe, New Mexico in September 1989. The focal term discussed during this conference was how to define the word frontier. The main suspect during the conference was Turner’s thesis, in which he declared that the frontier closed in 1890 only three years after the fact. Limerick challenges Turner’s notion by challenging his interpretation of the word itself. That Turner took his assumption from the United States census data and that there simply was no more territory to be conquered is clear. Whether gold, or other resources such as oil or later on uranium in the center of attention, the land in the West has always been subject to ruthless exploitation by individuals and companies. In terms of population movement, Limerick states, the westward migration of people is more persistent and steady during the twentieth century than during the century before. More importantly, the cultural encounters and conflicts created by the notion of the frontier in the nineteenth century are more prominent today than back then. She claims, it would be
unwise to declare the frontier closed today as the conflicts, problems, and elements it all incorporated still are present today. As such, the frontier persists and is still active as an invisible boundary.

Mark Klett and Robert Adams, working in the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, reevaluate Turner’s notion of the ‘closed frontier’, and instead reveal through their photographic artwork (and corresponding essays) that the West is, in fact, open, alive, and culturally fluid. They focus their attention on the reality of objects and their representation, and give the West presence in American thought. Adams explores the results of imposed cultural influence of the American West and deals mostly with the urban Denver and Colorado area. His photographic objects reject the traditional concept and reveal how the American West has transformed from the pastoral to the industrial. Klett, on the other hand, treats nature’s role in culture as his central theme and bridges the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries with his comparative photographs of the impact of financial and cultural exploitation of the American West.

Scholarship relating to the work of Robert Adams is very limited as contemporary work mostly consists of catalogue entries and prefaces to photographic monographs. As his early work is very deeply interconnected with the 1975 New Topographics exhibition, it comes as no surprise that the scholarly information available concerning his work is also published in connection to the exhibition. Ten different artists viewed New Topographics, at the time, as a collection of arbitrary images. The audiences considered the photographs dull and boring. After a couple of decades of development, the reactions may merely be seen as the contemporary audiences’ failure to view the circumstances of their own reality.
In 2009, the New Topographics came into relevance again when the show travelled globally between 2009 and 2012. The time between the two showings saw the light of new theoretical approaches. Accompanying the second version of the show was a new catalogue, now featuring the entire collection of photographs as well as a number of essays on the subject. Britt Salvesen wrote one of the key chapters of the new book. Simply called *New Topographics*, the chapter outlined what the 1975 catalogue lacked, which was an essay bringing forward the basic premises of the show. Salvesen draws from the already established histories of photography of the American West by comparing the premise of the show to the historic perspective from which it developed. She outlines the thread from the nineteenth century survey photographers of the American West, to the sublime views created by Ansel Adams, to culminate in New Topographics, which re-visits the frontier after its conquest. Beaumont Newhall created this common thread, which John Szarkowski later continued to develop.¹¹

Alison Nordstrom continues the catalogue with a chapter called *After New: Thinking about New Topographics from 1975 to the Present*. In the text, she explains what the show accomplished, which was to pave way for a new understanding and theoretical attitude connected to landscape photography.¹² She declares that the show presented a break from the established landscape tradition by presenting a shift from the sublime landscape representations of Ansel Adams towards the familiar. The subject matter, the American West, would still be the same.

In 2010, a stepping-stone emerged from which to further research the New Topographics exhibition and the significance of the photographs therein. The anthology *Reframing the New Topographics*, edited by Greg Foster Rice and John Rohrbach,
includes a number of essays of different perspectives from which to view the exhibition. The book highlights the ambiguity of the exhibition by discussing perceptions of ecological citizenship, financial success through progress and development, postmodernity, and how landscapes traditionally are viewed and what they have come to represent. This anthology is central to studies of the New Topographics and Robert Adams as it dives into the ecological and environmental statements Adams brings forward in his photography.

Robert Adams role in the New Topographics exhibition has been considered crucial by academics. His photographs framed human objects as an inserted, however now integrated part of the American Western landscape. Catherine Zuromskis is one academic, building on the newly analyzed information. In her text Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography: New Topographics, Edward Burtynsky, and the Culture of Peak Oil, Zuromskis states that Jenkins’s 1975 New Topographics exhibition displays a version of the United States emerging from years of warfare to become a prosperous power. This is in turn reflected in the newly forthcoming and, at the time, distinctively imminent phenomenon of the suburb. The political ambiguity in the exhibition’s photographs form the core of her argument, meaning that the exhibition roams around in the realm of political optimism and pessimism. In order to fulfill the American dream for families across the country, the United States’ is faced with evident challenges, including social, ecological and environmental. Zuromskis’ work points towards this duality with a focus on the American postmodern society, which became more dependent on oil since the Second World War.
Zuromskis’ relevance to this study appears as she argues that the photographs in the New Topographics exhibition reflect a shift in how to photograph and reflect landscapes in art by “turning away from the wilderness as metaphor.”

Instead, landscapes are beginning to be reflected through man-made structures placed on the land, which is now “inseparable from the geography they inhabit.” In the exhibition, they give life to questions regarding various economical, ecological, and environmentalist issues. Robert Adams’ work is also important to Zuromskis’ argument, as his photographs are a direct reflection of a society deeply interconnected with oil, a subject she works with in her essay.

In the chapter on Robert Adams, I evaluate his view of nature and how nature has traditionally been viewed in American literary and visual culture. In literary tradition, landscape is prominently pastoral both in symbol and resource. People’s intermingling with pastoral nature has been viewed as a positive way to spread American culture. Authors Stephen Daniel and Denis Cosgrove, for instance, trace the tradition of including culturally significant iconographical elements into the American landscape. They explore the relationship between human societies and art as it leads to the divine, a relationship that does not pass by Klett and Adams unnoticed.

The interaction between technological man-made advances and pastoral nature is also of interest to Leo Marx. In his central work *The Machine in the Garden*, Marx identifies major themes in nineteenth- and twentieth century American literature and art. In his work of literary criticism, which also forms the foundation of my chapter, Marx distinguishes between the garden, or the uncultivated, and the machine, a product of human ingenuity used to develop the land. Since the mid-1970s, Robert Adams’ work
remains an integral part of this dichotomy and depiction of the American West. In this work, Marx investigates how the landscape as a cultural construct is developed through the idea of the wilderness.21

By juxtaposing different photographs of the American West, Robert Adams quickly unravels the myth that surrounds the region. The myth of the pastoral and the untouched is upheld by the many pictures and narratives produced by the United States government through the expeditions to the area, which were meant to highlight the American West as a place of wilderness and adventure.22 Robert Adams’ photographs simultaneously work to both dismantle and unveil the myth, showing that the very existence of the cities and population centers in the West contest the ideal of wilderness. The transformation from nature to industry and the challenge to the myth of nature are at the center of Robert Adams’ oeuvre.

During his career, Adams published many books and annotated collections of his photographs. Adams tends to follow a poetic approach in his books, focusing on brief descriptions of the landscape and how human interaction has affected the land. The most prominent and influential of Adams’ books, in that it created a foundation for his subsequent works, is The New West (1974). Published prior to the New Topographics exhibition this work contains many photographs that later also became part of the show. In it, he assembled photographs of the landscape surrounding metropolitan Denver, Colorado. It is a commentary on the land, how it is used, and what this interaction might bode for the future. Adams reflects upon the nineteenth-century pioneers in the American West and their appreciation of its grandeur.23 He also examines the exploitation of the landscape and the transformation of sublime nature into tract homes for Americans.
Adams recognizes the increasing conflict when people have to interact “against our own creation, the city, and the disgust and nihilism it breeds.” He continues to differentiate between what is now considered wilderness (the national parks), and the rest of the land, shaped by the results of human interaction—cities, towns, roads, and billboards. In *The New West*, considered his groundbreaking work, Adams explores human interaction and transformation of the landscape.

Robert Adams’s photography opened up a new genre of photography. Artists now started looking at human interaction with the landscape and the ecological and environmental impact of settling the American West. A photographer inspired by Robert Adams’s photographs, and his work *The New West* in particular, is Mark Klett. He is interested in linking the past with the present and emphasizes the impression left by human interaction. Klett also explores the histories behind the people making this imprint, describing the region as openly fluid and alive.

In the Mark Klett chapter, I study the social norms of migration narratives across the American West. Klett examines the stories of cultural migrations through the West. He reveals it is a place in constant change, and that cultures moving across the Western landscape have left their distinguishing marks. Because of his interest in the interaction of people and the Western landscape, Klett has attracted the attention of academics. Klett wrote numerous works that supported New Western history. The *Rephotographic Survey Project*, which gave Klett the most recognition, also speaks to the ideas of New Western History. The book, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project*, first and foremost communicates Klett’s methodology when creating the rephotographs. Through
rephotography, Klett illustrates the history of human interaction in the American West using images from nineteenth-century explorers against his own after-shots.

Mark Klett subsequently published sequential works on the subject, and presents the changes of a century of landscape development. These constitute Klett’s framework of artistic work, from which many of his other works radiate. The most important in developing Klett’s thesis of geology’s impact on the land versus human impact is *Third View, Seconds Sights: A Rephotographic Survey of the American West*. In this book, he places his work in a historical context, making it conform to the already established narrative of the development of American landscape photography, developed by Beaumont Newhall, which John Szarkowski later continued to develop.  

Nature’s role in culture, and in the American landscape, therefore becomes a central theme in this thesis as the second photographer examined in this work, Mark Klett, bridges the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries with his comparative photographs of the impact of financial and cultural exploitation of the American West. Through rephotography, Klett places his own work next to photographs taken by early photographic explorers of the area. These he later complements with photographic essays, in which he travels across the land, photographing views and places that offer new readings of which groups actually travelled across the land, and in which direction.

The popular narratives all offer stories of families and explorers moving from east to west. In many of his photographs, Klett deals with the misconceptions associated with oversimplification. He does this by showing signs, past and present, of how commercialism is the driving force of myth and grand narratives of the American West. In connection to this, he also examines the economic forces, as often as destructive to the
environment as culture, behind the rapid expansion in the area. These forces worked as an incentive and a catalyst for the movement of people, which also aided the popular narrative of east to west expansion.

As Klett proves through revisiting and reexamining places where these migrations took place, he reveals a more diverse, more living narrative of the West. In a subsequent book called *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate*, Klett portrays plantations on the Californian coast settled by Portuguese settlers who did not arrive from the West, but found their way to California through the eastern Asian route. He also portrays remnants of extensive immigration through the West coast, which periodically mirrored one of the more popular stories of East coast immigration. In connection to this, he also explores the forces behind connecting the two worlds, the one of the East and the one of the West, and what impact it had on the environment and peoples already occupying the space in the middle of what is now known as the American West. He uses the works of early photographers of the American West, such as Timothy H. O’Sullivan, who extensively documented the drive to connect the East with the West with his many photographs of natural formations, many of which today form major highways connecting the two coasts. This means that the nineteenth-century photographs chosen by Klett were all used as a part of the scheme of transforming the landscape to make it usable for various enterprises to exploit the landscape of the American West. These exploitations could take the shape of transportation projects, as well as mining for resources, or cultural migrations.

The changes illustrated in Klett’s rephotographic work document the environmental factor that human interaction has on the landscape and delineates how
people have moved across the territory. The nineteenth-century survey photographs illustrate human interaction of the land by displaying roads, mines, towns, and railways, and in many cases show untouched wilderness. Klett’s second photographs reveal the results of the intended use. For instance, sometimes a dam has been constructed, which demonstrates the loss of millions of trees. The third view demonstrates the continuous environmental alteration of the dam’s construction, like a low water line and a diminishing tree line. However, what is most interesting to the New Western historian is the sudden appearance and disappearance of mining towns. The towns, photographed in the nineteenth-century illustrating the desperate search for natural resources, are completely gone in Klett’s first set of rephotographs. In the third view, taken twenty years later, nature has further reclaimed the territory. The sites’ appearance and disappearance illustrates the movement of people, why they settled the land, and how the land was used and also sometimes abandoned.

Klett’s use of rephotography has brought two centuries together, and in so doing, has offered opportunities to reflect on how and why the area has developed in a particular way. His work also offers a bridge between styles, purposes, and above all, politics between two eras where a sense of unification of the nation was a primary goal. The movements of people, the sudden emergence and disappearance of mining towns, and the use of the land, are held together in an underlying theme: Manifest Destiny. This early nineteenth-century ideology states that it was God’s divine will that the country should expand westward across the North American continent. This ideology, which justified American expansion to both Europeans and to Americans, is a cornerstone around which this thesis structures the works of both Robert Adams and Mark Klett.
The occupational land use is central in both artists’ careers. Manifest Destiny is the connecting belief that frames the photographic history of the American Western landscape. Use of the land did not start with people moving to the West, but started with Native Americans already inhabiting the land. Manifest Destiny forms a large part of this thesis in explaining why the depiction of the American West through the two photographers has developed in the way it has, with the development of big sprawling cities and diminishing wilderness even through the frontier myth would like to uphold the opposite.

Roland Barthes wrote about myth as a concept in his essay *Myth Today*. In it, he explains that myths can be present in verbal narratives, text, and most importantly, in images. The myth is a simplification of a larger concept, a simple explanation that shrouds deeper meaning and presents itself in a pleasing package that prevents critical questioning. Myth also thrives in stereotypical manifestations. In American narratives the native peoples are a classic example, as Barthes points out, when they are displayed in edited or staged settings.

This thesis argues that the American West is a melting pot unprecedented by anything else in the North American continent. The natural beauty observed by the nineteenth-century photographers still prevails. The land is shaped not only by new peoples and cultures, and by those already inhabiting the land, but also by political ideas about how the land should be used. The works of Robert Adams and Mark Klett examine these agendas through their respective works. They illustrate ideas of how the land should be used—from national parks, to cities, to energy and environmental projects. Both photographers focus on different areas of the West. Adams concentrates on cities and the
cityscape, and Klett emphasizes the open landscape and the environment, and in this way they complement each other. Together, Mark Klett and Robert Adams are dismantling the narratives and myths of the American West, and are actively working to establish it as a region where land use, migration and movement are in constant change. Adams and Klett are restructuring the foundationally flawed myth through their photography.
CHAPTER 1

ROBERT ADAMS

New Jersey photographer Robert Adams is an artist who has devoted his work to cultural transformation and change in the American Western landscape. His photography marks a shift from grand views of the pristine and untouched wilderness. Instead, he focuses on the cultural alteration from human impact, exploitation, and ruthless development. Robert Adams’ artistic images provide a break from the landscape tradition put forth by photographers such as Ansel Adams, whose work focuses on nature’s grandeur and splendor; on national parks; and on untouched designated wildlife spots in the region. Robert Adams’ emphasizes the vernacular. Vernacular photography emphases on the ordinary, the mundane, and the common. Robert Adams helped transform the image of the American West from an untouched wilderness to an image of trailer parks and suburban developments, which resulted from an overpopulation growth during the twentieth-century in the West.

Robert Adams’ work is also put into historical perspective by contrasting it with the romanticized styles of artists like Thomas Cole. Cole’s many idealistic landscape paintings influenced photographers such as Ansel Adams. The ideas surrounding pastoralism and natural beauty are prominently put forth in Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, where Marx identifies major themes in American literature and art in the nineteenth-century. The subjects are traceable in the history of landscape painting and photography as it relates to Westward expansion. Robert Adams’ photography therefore not only provides further development
in how the American West is portrayed, but also provides a break from what came before.

Angela Miller’s work *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* will provide the framework for contextualizing the tradition of the ideological use of landscape and the depiction of landscape through nineteenth-century painting. Robert Adams rejects this romantic view and instead concentrates on the depiction of arroyos, tract homes, and cheap suburbs. By putting Adams’ work into this perspective, this study reveals the radicalness of his work by shifting focus from untouched nature and pastoral landscape to human interaction and conquest. Miller’s analysis of the politics of landscape painting traditions is easily transposed onto Robert Adams’ work, thus rendering his work politically ambiguous as it both speaks for an established political landscape tradition, and at the same time criticizes it for accomplishing what it was set out to achieve. This means that Adams’ celebration and development of the Western landscape tradition also becomes a criticizing statement of the political environmental and ecological impact in which the tradition has resulted.

Robert Adams was born in Orange, New Jersey on May 8, 1937. His journey westward started when the family moved to Madison, Wisconsin in 1947. When he contracted polio in 1949, the family moved to Wheat Ridge, a suburb of Denver, Colorado. As early as 1955, he began taking classes at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and in 1956 he moved to California where he earned a B.A. in English at the University of Redlands. At the University of Southern California he started taking postgraduate classes in English. Eventually, he was appointed a teaching position at
Colorado College. He later said in an interview that the return to Colorado was hard because,

“I went to school in California and came back to Colorado to discover that it had become like California. The shock was bad. The places where I had worked, hunted, climbed, and run rivers were all being destroyed, and for me the desperate question was, how do I survive this?”

It was then in 1963 that he started taking black-and-white photographs of the nature and architecture surrounding him in the outskirts of Denver. In 1965, he completed his doctorate in English from the University of Southern California and returned to teaching. However, his photographic endeavors took up more and more of his time.

Adams was always mindful of different landscapes, culturally as well as geographically. In 1968, for instance, he traveled to Germany and Sweden to visit his wife Kerstin Mornestam’s home area in Västergötland in western Sweden. There he noticed a contrast in the use of architecture and landscape. He noted: “Göteborg, June 12: No highway billboards, no television ads, few suburbs…” By contrast, while photographing the new suburbs of Denver, Colorado he stated: “…if beauty was to be discovered in Denver, it had to be on the basis of a radical faith in inclusion. Shopping centers, junky arroyos, and commercial streets not only had to be more fully acknowledged, but acknowledged amidst the dull, hard gray of pollution.”

The contrasting photographs he took of Sweden were all about the pristine cultural landscape: small, family-oriented, and intimate. His photograph *Cherry Trees, Öglunda, Sweden,* 1968 (Figure 1) exemplifies this by showing a grass hill surrounded by trees and pasture. In the photographs, the open landscape is taking a central spot. The sky
occupies around three quarters of the image and focuses on what is occupying, or rather what is not occupying, the skyline. The land is uneven, which signifies that the land has not yet been intended for use, as that would most likely involve flattening the landscape. The vegetation shown in the composition is not of the same species, which further signifies that the land looks the way nature intended. The color tones Adams picked for the composition are warm and inviting. The lack of sharp lines further enhanced by the lack of buildings and other man-made objects creates a comfortable atmosphere and emphasizes the lighter color tones. The clouds also create a sense of calmness, making the landscape more inviting and make it feel more alive. The clouds make the ground reflect itself in the sky, creating a sense of a living, active, and inviting environment.

Another image, *Kerstin’s grandfather, the family farm, Öglunda, Sweden* (Figure 2) depicts him through the door at the family farm. Even the use of the words “family” and “farm” are titles meant to be a celebration of the agrarian. Outside the door, we see the actual person surrounded, again by trees and pasture. The tree visible in the upper left corner of the door opening shows that even though humans have processed the landscape, the pasture and vegetation constructed by nature shows that mankind and nature can live side by side. The photograph is taken within and as a domestic scene. It is an intimate shot, both since it is taken inside the house, which is in by itself a domestic environment, and because the person in the photograph is walking towards the photographer and is a central part of the composition. Had Adams not denoted it was Kerstin’s grandfather portrayed in the photograph it could easily be assumed the door stood open because company was expected, denoting a safe, inviting environment.
The portrayal of the idyllic Swedish landscape differs greatly from photographs Adams takes in the United States. Gone are the pastures, nature, and the intimate, replaced with the desolate, arid, and strange. Since Adams is a master of few words when describing his own thought process, it is difficult to assess his reasoning for taking the pictures he does. His interest in the landscape and the use of the land is deeply visible in his photographs, and quite vibrant when considering the fleeting annotations he adds to his photographs. The photographs differ, for one reason, because of the perspective from which they were taken. As a tourist in a foreign land, Adams acquires a romanticized view of that country. Adams was dropped into this domestic environment as an outsider, making it easy for him to see the well-rooted ideas in the domestic scenes and the open landscape. In his photographs of the American West taken five years later, Adams would adopt an entirely different point of view entirely opposite from the domestic views he took while in Sweden.

As scholarship relating to Robert Adams is very limited, much of the information available is in relation to the *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* exhibition of 1975 at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. However, much of Adams’ material featured in this exhibition was previously published in *The New West* in 1974. This work, published with nothing more than a short preface monologue, has become a great example of how a subject needs to be reflected upon in order to conceptually mature into something palatable. As with our contemporary era, audiences fail to view the circumstances of their own reality. Meaning is always under interpretation, and the New Topographics exhibition has become a vehicle for political ambiguity that was not as visible when the exhibition was put together in 1975. Today,
spectators have taken a step back from the time of the exhibition and have been able to reflect on the message. The beginnings of the problems facing the American West have, perhaps by being more extreme today, been highlighted in the New Topographics exhibition.

The late 1960s saw a period of great suburban development in the Western United States. Following World War II, many veterans returning to work earned disposable income, which created the suburban construction boom. This caught Adams’ artistic interest and he started photographing these new settlements, which popped up like mushrooms in an otherwise untouched landscape. Suburban development meant that living conditions rapidly changed. The city transformed from a relatively compact unit with its high-rises intended to display status, to a peripheral sprawl. The notion of the suburb meant that more people had the chance to buy a freestanding house to call home. The photographs Adams produced ended up in *The New West*. In the introduction, Adams discusses the appreciation the nineteenth-century showed for the American West’s grandeur. There was something available for most financial situations. Regardless of whether the family was poor or rich, now in post-WWII, everybody could afford a freestanding house with a yard.

The photographs Adams’ produced ended up in a project he called *The New West*. In the introduction to his work, Adams talks about how the nineteenth-century pioneers in the American West appreciated its grandeur. He also speaks of the goal of exploiting the landscape and transforming the sublimity of nature into a home for all Americans. However, that creates a problem when we have “to live with ourselves, against our own creation, the city, and the disgust and nihilism it breeds.” The most important issue
Adams brings forward is the importance of photographing billboards and tract homes when there is so much beauty surrounding these places. People do not live in parks, he answers poignantly. Instead, Adams wants to emphasize the human condition in what was once a part of the Western wilderness. He wants to explore how humans have come to change the landscape and how man-made freeways, malls, tract homes, and businesses affected American self-image.

Whenever an author or artist considers something to be new, and also titles his work with the same word, the artist wants to make a stance towards the previous condition. What Adams considers “new” in his *The New West* is the view of the Western landscape in the American mind. Here, the American West is undergoing a change, from being the perfect example of the pastoral landscape and grandeur, towards becoming an exploited area filled with tract homes, freeways, motels, malls, gas stations, etc. In contrast to his photographs from Sweden, Adams rarely includes humans in his photographs of the American West, only the products of human presence.

An example of this style is visible in Adams’s *Colorado Springs, Colorado* (Figure 3), 1968, where we see a freestanding building overlooking a sub-development. Adams focuses on sharp lines in his photographs of the Colorado suburbs. This is shown through the sharp shadows created as a result of Adams’ choice of taking the photograph mid-day. Furthermore, there are no clouds in the sky, which furthermore emphasizes the sharp lines in the image as the line between sky and the mountain range in the background becomes very noticeable. His choice of subject matter, the white tract homes, furthermore contributes to the hostility of the image as the color, or the lack of it, makes
the homes blend more in with the rest of the landscape. The lack of humans present in Adams’ photographs signifies that the human-transformed landscape is, in reality, hostile.

In *Colorado Springs, Colorado*, the landscape is now no longer suitable for walking, but favors machines, like cars, to transport residents from point to point. Mankind’s transformation of the landscape has therefore separated the inhabitants of the landscape from nature. Where the nineteenth-century explorers once saw an open landscape dominated by the mountain in the far distance, modern day travelers see tract homes in the fore- and middle grounds. In contrast to the photographs he took in Sweden, the landscape becomes uncanny. The same elements are in the photograph, a house, an open landscape, and domestic scenes. However, whereas we expect the scene to be inviting, the sharp lines and inherent hostility in the landscape makes this residential house alien to the extent that the viewer intrudes on what otherwise would be a domestic environment.

Britt Salvesen sees Robert Adams’ photographs of the upcoming urban sprawl in the American West as a natural development in the genre of American landscape photography. The style visible in Adams’ work, she argues, comes as a natural reaction towards the sublime views taken earlier by the explorers of the American West, and later by Ansel Adams, who created sublime photographs of the land, denoting majesticity and grandeur. This reaction is also noticeable in other theoretical fields.

In 1964, literary theorist and historian Leo Marx published *The Machine in the Garden: Pastoral Ideal in America*. The work is significant because it notes what Adams tries to show in imagery. Marx discusses technology’s impact on the American West, and how continuous westward expansion inevitably leads to the destruction of the pastoral
landscape. He says that the American pastoral is a myth and is a great source of contradiction.\textsuperscript{40} The myth, defined by Roland Barthes, is a simplification of a larger concept, a simple explanation that shrouds deeper meaning and presents itself in a pleasing package that prevents critical questioning.\textsuperscript{41} Myth also thrives in stereotypical manifestations. Marx writes that “nowhere is the ill-defined feeling for ‘nature’ more influential than in the realm of imaginative expression.”\textsuperscript{42} He claims that writers such as Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and Robert Frost all contributed to a skewed image of the direction America takes when it comes to the human relationship with nature.\textsuperscript{43} Marx argues that scholars, with Henry Nash Smith in the foreground with his \textit{Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth} published in 1950, are masking the “real problems of an industrial civilization.”\textsuperscript{44} In his foundational work, Smith also speaks of the American agrarian dream as being the garden of the world, the original Paradise.\textsuperscript{45}

In 1787, Thomas Jefferson published \textit{Notes on the State of Virginia}. Jefferson indicates that Americans should return to the countryside in order to expand the nation. He notes: “Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”\textsuperscript{46} Here, Jefferson speaks of how agrarianism can be used effectively in the growth of the United States. Americans, he argues, should return to the countryside in order to expand the nation. He admits that a fully agricultural economy might prove to be to a disadvantage for the country. However, he also argues that Americans living in an agricultural setting will prove to produce a happier nation that in turn will make up for the loss of national income caused from not mechanizing and industrializing the nation.\textsuperscript{47} However, as Marx also points out, an America less dependent on foreign trade would be
more independent from the former European masters and, as such, America would be free to proceed with creating its very own version of society. By this Marx states that America would take its own course in history and separate itself from the larger globalized perspective. In art, the difference between Marx’s primitive and Jefferson’s small family farm is a vividly visible concept.

In Thomas Cole’s 1836 painting, The Oxbow (Figure 4), the viewer sees two versions of a landscape. On the left side, the primitive, uncultivated, wild, and unused landscape, whereas on the right side, the viewer sees the agrarian, organized, and cultivated. The weather on the left side is rugged, rainy, and hostile, whereas on the right side the viewer notices a place of beauty with nice, sunny weather with organized small irrigation canals to feed the farm fields from the river.

The industrialist patrons of Cole’s work favored a traditional reading of the painting, meaning the transformation of the land into the ideal American agrarian society. Nature should be tamed and transformed to become a Garden of Eden for all Americans. Angela Miller notes that the painting could literally be read, noting the Hebrew letter for “The Almighty”: “shaddai,” is written on the hill in the center in the background. What differs The Oxbow from landscape paintings denoting the progress of civilization is the ambiguity in how the painting can be viewed. Miller argues that that landscape painters felt obligated to paint nationalistic narratives with cues announcing “a plot line leading toward a grand conclusion.” In The Oxbow, Cole adopts a simplification of The Course of Empire series by adopting a cyclical view of nature. As he did not share the patron’s view of the national grand narrative, the ambiguity present in The Oxbow is that the painting can be read in a reversed direction, meaning that nature takes back what man
creates. Cole believed that the arrogance of man thinking he can tame nature would end up in nature reclaiming what was taken.\textsuperscript{51}

Cole’s duality, that of tamed nature on one hand, and unoccupied wilderness on the other, is also visible in Robert Adams’ photographs. When comparing the domestic Swedish scenes (Figures 1, 2) and his photographs of the American West (Figure 3) the duality between the ideal version of society and the hostile environment created in the American West is visible. However, in the views of the suburban sprawl in Colorado Springs, the attempted domestication of the land has failed. The place is not welcoming and the buildings seemingly left behind after the domestication experiment become ruins, denoting the failure of taming the environment.

The figurative machine, as Alan Trachtenberg points out, will inevitably lead to the destruction of the pastoral.\textsuperscript{52} The mechanization process that follows with the introduction of one machine to the pastoral will lead to a system of “recurrent cycles of expansion” that together with inflation and deflation will ultimately dismantle the pastoral in favor of the machine.\textsuperscript{53} The mechanized farmer will produce more than the farmer with horses and non-mechanized equipment. With the introduction of the machine, Jefferson’s model of farming steadily and fatally diminished, and the corporate mega-farms will have transformed the pastoral to Marx’s view of the machine.

Robert Adams’ celebration of Jefferson’s agrarian model is also visible in his work. His photograph *Kerstin's grandfather, the family farm, Öglunda, Sweden* (Figure 2) emphasizes the familiar, friendly, and pasture with the notion of the family farm. Contrasted with his images from the Colorado suburbs, the difference in ideological patterns then becomes clear, as they do not provide the viewer with any connotations of
the family unit. Instead, they document the dismantling of the American pastoral myth as described, for instance, by Henry Nash Smith or Leo Marx.

Many of the photographs Adams produced for *The New West* were also submitted for the New Topographics, an exhibition displayed at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York in 1975.\(^{54}\) 168 works by ten artists were featured in the exhibition in addition to Adams, and were displayed together in ten different groups. These were Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joe Deal, Frank Gohlke, Nicholas Nixon, John Schott, Stephen Shore, and Henry Wessel, Jr. According to John Rohrbach, the exhibition, despite being displayed at both the Princeton University Art Museum and the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, California, received mediocre reviews and limited press coverage.\(^{55}\) Rohrbach argues that despite its limited press coverage, the show’s idea and style persisted, and gave birth to a whole new style of photography that broke away from its predecessors. He mentions Paul Strand with his 1915 photographs of New York City, Walker Evans with *American Photographs* from 1938, and Robert Frank’s 1959 *The Americans*, all of which portrayed negative images of America’s future.\(^{56}\)

The exhibition can be viewed as a survey of America here and now (i.e. 1970s), rather than about exploration and beauty. The goal of this “new” photographic mapping was to redefine the condition of the United States into something that Jenkins and the participating photographers declared more true to the times. Paul Strand, one of the United States’ foremost modernist photographers, described it as a direct expression of today (i.e. 1917), and as such declared pictorialism dead.\(^{57}\) Paul Strand’s *New York (Wall Street)* (Figure 5) appeared in the forty-eighth issue of *Camera Work*, an issue dedicated to the artist and his contribution to the field of photography, and highly praised by Alfred
Stieglitz. The photograph shows the high rising walls of Wall Street with people walking along its side. The photograph assumes an angle, which shows and emphasizes the straightness of the shapes featured in the building itself. For Stieglitz, the fast paced life in New York City with its continuing developing mechanized technologies enabling construction of the first Art deco skyscrapers, the human as ant in larger working machineries, together with fast expansion and growth, was an accurate image of America at the time. In Stieglitz’s eyes, this was the epitome of modernism and the ultimate reflection of American society.

Evans pointed towards the strength and power of the rural vernacular and, according to Rohrbach, “acknowledged the strength of the material past with all of its chips and wear.”\(^{58}\) However, Rohrbach’s analysis of the photographs produced by the FSA must, although they do depict the vast spreading of commercialism and the underlying capitalist ideas, must be taken with some grain of salt and approached with some skepticism. Walker Evans’ photograph *Coca-Cola shack in Alabama* (Figure 6) from 1935 it is suggested that Coca-Cola, a significant symbol of consumerism and financial, economical, and commercial expansion is sold, and thus contributed to the growth of capitalism. Capitalist forces saw expansion westward as a great economic opportunity and did not hesitate to produce signage and retail outlet for respective brands to continue on a Westward expansion. Although Evans’ photograph of the shack in Alabama is hardly taken in the American West, it denotes the financial sentiments behind the settlement of the more arid regions of the country. What the image is denoting is the failure of settlement. Although it denotes the presence of financial success visible by the Coca-Cola sign, the rest of the image is littered with signs of failed settlement. The shack,
although in salvageable condition, is closed and boarded up. The business is closed and the signs are left there as a monument over failed settlement. In the image’s background several chimneys are visible. The houses they once supplied with heat either are dismantled or were never built. The area is abandoned and the scene has become a symbol of failed prosperity.

Robert Adams’ *Colorado Springs, Colorado* (Figure 3) is in line with Evans’ photograph in the sense that it denotes a sense of abandonment and failed prosperity. The scenes, although domestic in nature, both promote consumerism and the results thereof indicated by the new construction. The absence of humans and signs of domesticity lends the viewer to believe the buildings in Colorado Springs are on their way to becoming monuments of the settlement’s demise.

The “new” in New Topographics defines a shift in the viewing of the United States, from an industrialized urban culture to a more service-oriented society where standardized tract housing defined the suburban landscape. According to Rohrbach, repetition, commerce, and isolation rather than community marked this new America portrayed in William Jenkins’ presentation.59 In the exhibition catalogue accompanying the exhibition the curator William Jenkins wrote, “It must be clear that the New Topographics is not an attempt to validate one category of pictures to the exclusion of others. As individuals the photographers take great pains to prevent the slightest trace of judgment or opinion from entering their work.”60 The term “topography” also denotes an objective neutrality, perhaps to further distinguish the exhibition from the subjective nature of modernism. The term implicates and assumes a notion of science and shrouds the presence of the subjective photographer. It implies that the images are more like maps
and neutral observations rather than subjective views of the artist. The term therefore hides the highly political ambiguity present in the show.

Jenkins choose to adopt this disconnected stance to carefully show that the photographs by modern photographers like Stieglitz and Ansel Adams were indeed expressive and their efforts should not be undermined. The New Topographics exhibition was not a presentation of a new form of documentary photographs, and both Evans and Szarkowski argue this notion from two different perspectives. In an interview from 1981, Evans said that the term documentary is a very misleading and sophisticated word that does not really have a clear definition.\(^61\) He primarily argued that whereas a document has use, a work of art is useless. Therefore the correct term that would describe the works in the New Topographics would be *documentary style* since it represents a document from only a personal perception. Szarkowski agrees that works of art must distinguish facts from “precise descriptions of very personal perceptions.”\(^62\)

This notion of semantics over the meaning of document, as Britt Salvesen points out, has its foundation in the 1970s where the document as a primary source versus a personal account came under questioning.\(^63\) A rethinking of the word documentary became a priority since it operated under the misconception that a photograph was associated with truth and, as such, could change a collective opinion of a national identity. Susan Sontag defines the word *style* as being equal to art as she writes, “…art is nothing more or less than various modes of stylized, dehumanized representation.”\(^64\) The exhibition’s claim of objectivity as assumed through the name also becomes a method for Jenkins to propel the intention of the show as the name came to service the style, intentions, and political ambiguity of the exhibition.
With a closer understanding of the art form, Jenkins wanted to establish that even though New Topographics should not be classified as documentary, but instead should be seen as art, and to keep the expressiveness of previous generation of photographers valid. The photographic objects were sculptures of mass-produced aesthetic quality with a natural place in the landscape. They were works of art treating the buildings the photographs depicted as sculptures with a mass-produced aesthetic quality with a natural place in the landscape as any other object found at the location. As such, the photographs in the exhibition were objects of art documenting objects of “no redeeming esthetic quality.” The New Topographics exhibition, however, I would argue, is a positivist medium in the way it has been used to portray the American landscape in the past.

Robert Adams’ contribution to the exhibition came in the form of fifteen photographs depicting various suburban developments in Colorado. In his photograph *Mobile Homes, Jefferson County, Colorado* from 1973 (Figure 7), displays mass-produced tract homes scattered in an otherwise empty landscape. The mountains in the distance seem to be the only limit for the scattering of these tract homes. The lines created by the tract homes arranged in rows present sharp angles. The organic curves of nature are gone, the sky is much darker, and overall displays a pessimistic view. The landscape has been transformed by the human presence; however, it does not put forth a very inviting atmosphere for humans to occupy. The photograph is typical for the New Topographics exhibition, as photographs often display row after row of swiftly erected cheap houses made to support the ever growing population in the West. They mark a shift from urban living towards a more suburban style where the previously tight communities
in the high-rise city centers dominated, to a more secluded, private, and detached way of life where the needs of the individual comes before the needs of the community. Here the needs of the individual come before the needs of the community. Rohrbach comments that the sterility and repetition shown in the variations of the tract homes indicate the impoverishment of the word home in contemporary America. German philosopher Theodor Adorno would call this an example of America’s new discontent and grief-stricken landscape, impoverished and deprived of the romantic notions it once had. The New Topographics exhibition was infused with disillusionment and turned into an illusion of choice in the mechanized landscape.

Such illusions were exemplified in precursors to the New Topographics exhibition. In 1966, Dan Graham, a conceptual artist living in New Jersey, produced a work called Homes for America (Figure 8) in which he assembled photographs and text onto collages creating a visual representation of what modern suburban living in the United States looked like. The means of which he created his work was by using cheap Kodak cameras whose photographs he printed on cheap newspaper-like paper creating the collages. As such, the subject matter of the work mirrored the means by which it was produced. The project mimicked contemporary suburban living by showing newly constructed duplexes, tract homes, and the construction of the same along with posting comments on the side of the photographs resembling newspaper articles or catalog descriptions. Text such as “there is a choice of eight exterior colors” appeared underneath the photographs, highlighting the means by which these objects were produced. By limiting choice down to a certain number of colors the viewer was supposed to be reminded of how the abundance of choice in real life was limited. The consumer could
choose between a red, green, or blue door from three different styles. By allowing the consumer to choose between alternatives Graham’s work highlights that the abundance of choice in reality is no choice at all since a door is a door and it comes from the same factory as any other door which is designed to be cheap, mass-produced, and lend itself to the mass-consumerism of modern America. As such, choice has become an illusion in modern America, offering abundance of choice but only within certain limitations lending towards the mass-produced.

The photographs presented in the New Topographics exhibition, particularly the ones by Robert Adams, are also seen as a reaction towards how the land and the landscape in the American West has been used and portrayed historically. In Robert Adams’s photographs, the image of the landscape transforms from the sublime towards the subtler. It further puts emphasis on how radical the exhibition was in terms of style and choice of how to portray land when looking back at how the previous generation of landscape photographers chooses to depict the land. As mentioned before, the New Topographics exhibition proved to show resistance against former photography movements. One that is particularly significant in this aspect is the Ansel Adams and the West Coast aesthetic he favored. Henry Nash Smith’s version of the pastoral myth had come under scrutiny as Leo Marx’s version of the machine introduced in the pastoral garden had taken its course.

The West Coast aesthetic preferred the sublime instead of, what the New Topographics is favoring, the subtle. The thought originated from an idea that the human-altered landscape foreclosed on the older, more traditional forms of aesthetics. This aesthetics came from that nature was pristine and virgin, and as such its beauty
would come to shine through the art. With the man-altered landscape this was no longer the case. Tony Smith, a New Jersey based sculptor and visual arts artist, said in an interview from 1966 that the “experience on the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized” and that “there is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it.” By saying so he means that he rejected the framed object and viewed art as something that had to be lived and experienced. This is also true in many of his sculptures, for example Die from 1966 (Figure 9), which plays on the notion of space in order for the viewer to fully understand the piece. As such, the New Topographics exhibition along with the bulk of Robert Adams’ oeuvre conforms to this new aesthetics of the non-aesthetic, which relies on the notion that a street or neighborhood cannot be depicted as an aesthetic, beautiful part of the landscape without it showing the fakeness in the way it is man-made.

Ansel Adams became a part of a past generation of photographers that conformed to the beliefs stipulated by critics favoring formalism and the aesthetics of the same. Clement Greenberg is one of those critics who firmly held on to the notion that art is supposed to be an object that is framed. It could be a painting on a canvas or a photograph on paper, but also a sculpture that is framed by the pedestal it is standing on. To exemplify the opposing arguments I will use Ansel Adams’ The Tetons and the Snake River, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming (Figure 10) from 1942. The idea here is that the framed grandeur of the mountains and the river in Wyoming would serve as a sort of artistic meditation and as such the viewer would be submerged in the pure beauty of the work as well as forming an expectation in the minds of the viewers that this was a pure documentary photograph of what the area really looked like at the time Ansel Adams
took his photograph. The photograph is framed in such a way that the river guides the viewer into the photograph. By emerging in the lower corner then snaking its way through the picture plane and finally lead up to the majestic mountains in the background the river serves as a guide to the national park. The mountains in turn are shrouded in both sunlight and clouds, which provides the natural formations with majesty. The result is that the landscape looks both inviting and wild at the same time. The landscape is meant to be tamed, and invites the viewer to participate in the process.

Compared to Cole’s *The Oxbow* (Figure 4), Ansel Adams’s photograph contains the same ambiguity in the terms of reading. As Cole’s painting is meant to adopt a cyclical view of nature, meaning that nature takes back what man claims, Adams’s photograph could represent both nature in the process of being claimed or reclaiming what has been taken. As such, Adams’s image represents either the first or last stage of Cole’s cycle. Ansel Adams’s and Robert Adams’s photographs adopts an exceptionally powerful combination if seen in the context of Cole’s cycle as the different stages of man’s claim on nature are represented in the progress of these photographs.

This in turn goes back to the notion Szarkowski and Evans wanted to make, which was that the term documentary is a very misleading and sophisticated word that does not really have a clear definition, and photographs taken claiming to be documents rather should be declared as taken in a *documentary style* rather than seen as documents. In Ansel’s photograph, this notion is visible when the viewers goes out in nature to experience the National Parks on their own and realize that the photographs taken using West Coast aesthetics are highly idealized versions of reality, and sometimes also skewed due to the type of lenses the photographer was using.
As a comparison, Ansel Adams’ *The Tetons and the Snake River, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming* (Figure 10) provides the viewer with an inviting view of the American West. As Dunaway puts it, “he made the scenes appear welcoming, as the landscape beckons the visitor to enter its sacred surround.” In contrast, Robert Adams’ *Mobile Homes, Jefferson County, Colorado* (Figure 7) from 1973 conveys a sense of hostility as the tract homes portrayed in the image are surrounded but nothing but desolate desert. Robert Adams’ habit of taking photographs in the middle of the day also helps strengthening the notion of hostility and idleness in the landscape depicted in his images, further contrasting it from Ansel’s views of inviting grandeur. When Ansel Adams seems to defend Jefferson’s pastoral garden, Robert Adams seems to dismantle it, emphasizing the results of the mechanization of the United States as described by Leo Marx and the dismantling of the pastoral myth as described by Henry Nash Smith.

Part of the skewed image of America’s national parks came from these images because of the notion of the familiar in the population’s mind. When Ansel Adams took his photographs of the National Parks, the parks were not as easily accessible to the common populations. As such, the public’s view of the parks was one of the sublime and grandeur as this was the view provided to them through Ansel Adams’s photographs. As Foster-Rice points out, they were perfect themes for idealized depictions due to the modern population’s unfamiliarity with the subject matter. When, thirty years later, Robert Adams took his photographs of the landscapes surrounding the Denver suburbs the issue was reversed. The modern population had much familiarity with the subject matter that it did not lend itself to a skewed idealized depiction the same way as the National Parks.
In Robert Adams’ photographs, the Western, post World-War-Two landscape had become a familiar scene for the suburban family. America had become transformed, from a society where the agrarian Jeffersonian notion of human expansion, meaning White settlers from Europe moving from the East into the West, into nature’s majesty was a necessity for America’s growth, and where such growth was governed by how well those settlers moved together as a machine, into a society where the individual focus of financial growth became more important. This is seen in Robert Adams’ images of suburbs through the absence of the individual itself, and the presence of such individual’s belongings instead takes center stage.

The American population’s newly transformed relationship with and between individuals and their belongings is vividly present in Robert Adams’ photographs. In his 1968 image *Newly Occupied Tract Houses, Colorado Springs, Colorado* (Figure 11) the viewer, yet again, is familiarized with the expansive Western landscape, which now has become indicative of his style. The desert, once again, is arid and empty of life, plants as well as humans. However, the presence of the latter is shown in the newly erected tract homes visible in the image. The car, seen here in the lower center part of the image, is telling the story of the American suburban post war culture’s relationship with themselves and their belongings. Suburban culture encourages large distances between different institutions such as grocery stores, libraries, and civic organizations such as police and other government functions. Therefore, the car is a necessity to travel these distances, limiting walking and excessive human interaction amongst individuals.

The distance between institutions is very visible in Adams’ photographs as the barren dry landscape with houses scattered around in a seemingly random pattern is
contrasted with the towering mountain in the background. In 1994, Robert Adams commented on the phenomenon by saying that “Our destiny ... is to suffer the imprisonment of places like Los Angeles, with its twelve lane ‘freeways.’” The most expansive cities in the world situated in the most expansive landscapes in the world had therefore become a prison for humans, as the individual always now came before the collective whole. Pedestrians in this New West had become marginalized and discouraged. As such, America has been transformed from the tightly knit communities they once were, to a personalized individualistic environment accentuated with the presence of the automobile.

Catherine Zuromskis makes the argument that photographs like Adams’s *Newly Occupied Tract Houses, Colorado Springs, Colorado* (Figure 11) are balancing the line between political optimism and pessimism. The car in the photograph symbolizes an attempt to fulfill the American dream. The clear lack of human activity, or even the presence of a human being living in or using the space created for them in this inherit domestic environment (a suburban cul-de-sac), as evident by the lack of any signs of domesticity, children, toys, lawn care equipment, flower beds, or patios, has turned this environment alien and hostile. The photograph is therefore politically ambiguous, on the one hand denoting the success of capitalism, but on the other hand showing the viewer a society lacking in human interaction and, in this case, faces multiple ecological and environmental challenges.

The federal government also recognized that humans interacted more with nature in the West than previously, which is why in 1964 they passed the Wilderness Act. The law defined what wilderness is and how it should be preserved as “an area where the
earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” As such, the act would ensure that the national parks of the United States would serve as a refuge for people seeking out brief experiences with nature in Ansel Adams’, albeit not to be confused with reality, photographed wilderness, to then return to the destructive, individualized, and impure landscape of Robert Adams’ suburban America.

As Dunaway points out, the pedestrian experience in Robert Adams’s photographs provides the ultimate contrast when comparing them to him to Ansel Adams’s images of the grandeur of the West. While Ansel Adams encouraged people to go out settling and exploring the Western United States, Robert Adams provided a critique of the overexploitation of the same and the discouragement of the pedestrian experience. Ansel Adams’s photograph showed examples of the untamed wilderness. However, it was also a wilderness full of adventures and potential. The area would function as an advertising campaign to further the cultural expansion of the American nation. Here, in the American West people would be given the opportunity to prosper as the natural beauty seemed endless. The prospect of financial opportunities was also there for everyone to enjoy. The landscape as a result has been forced to give way to the concrete and steel structures forming roads, houses, cars, and civic institutions, which, as the settlement process of the American West was an ongoing phenomenon, is the precise establishment Ansel Adams omits in his depictions of the West.

A vivid contrast between Robert Adams’s and Ansel Adams’s photographs is the one of marked conquest. Robert Adams, with his photographs of clearly constructed but uninhabited landscapes, and Ansel Adams, with his photographs of wilderness both
depict civilization and territorial ownership in different ways. Depicting a landscape is a way of claiming a landscape. However, what is included in the depicted landscape denotes different ideas regarding that landscape’s ownership. The lack of human presence in Ansel Adams’ *The Tetons and the Snake River, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming* (Figure 10) denotes wilderness and unsettlement. Nature and the wilderness still are in control of the land, not humans. However, in Robert Adams’ *Mobile Homes, Jefferson County, Colorado* from 1973 (Figure 7), like many others of Robert Adams’ photographs, the buildings are in place but they are abandoned. This brings the thoughts towards ruins, which is what Philip Fisher denotes as an important aspect of the use of Manifest Destiny. Fisher notes that a ruin is seen as a reverse monument. A monument signifies success and triumph whereas a ruin signifies human failure. An empty cabin, a foundation, or other remnants left behind carries witness of a lost history and a lack of continuation. A ruin is a material thing that is left behind. The absence of people in Robert Adams’ photographs, again, denotes abandonment. The contrast between nature and human interaction that is visible through Robert Adams’ photographs, in terms of the use of Manifest Destiny, becomes symbols of failure. In essence, the lack of human presence in Robert Adams’ photographs can be read as his way of expressing that the settlers failed to conquer the West, that it is not a sustainable area to live in, and that nature will reclaim what once was taken.

Contrasted to Robert Adams’ older photographs from when he visited his wife’s family in Sweden (Figure 1, 2), these photographs (Figure 7, 10) are very different in expression. Whereas the photographs from Sweden contain people, nature and humans living, however constructed and artificial it might be, side by side. Nature and mankind
blends in and becomes a natural part of the landscape. Whereas *Kerstin's grandfather, the family farm, Öglunda, Sweden* (Figure 2) shows a progression between the creations of man, nature, and man itself immersed in the pasture landscape, *Newly Occupied Tract Houses, Colorado Springs, Colorado* (Figure 11) shows only the creations of man in a completely desolate, transformed landscape far from the wilderness, pasture, sublime grandeur present in Ansel Adams’ photographs only some decades earlier. Robert Adams’ photographs in the New Topographics exhibition and the ones shown in his work *The New West* shows the image, both public and imagined, of a nation transformed, from sublime imagination to a more honest view of the new American identity.

Robert Adams’ work *The New West* and the photographs submitted for the New Topographics then is an embodiment and visualization of the moods described by Jefferson, Nash Smith, Marx, and visualized by Cole, Strand, and Ansel Adams. Robert Adams visualizes Leo Marx’s mechanization of the Western landscape through the rejection of the grandeur and the dismantling of the pastoral myth. Financial expansion in the American West was dependent on the introduction of the machine. Cole’s cyclical view of nature’s role in reclaiming the landscape from man is present in Robert Adams’s images of the Colorado landscape. This line becomes clearer when putting Robert Adams’s photographs in context with Ansel Adams’s photographs of the national parks. A line can therefore be drawn between Cole’s pastoral depictions of the landscape and Robert Adams’ preferring of the pastoral tradition. Nearly two centuries after its introduction the effects of the suburbanization and economic growth can be noticed in the construction of tract homes, streets, and the alienation of the pedestrian. That Robert Adams favors the pastoral, as shown when contrasting his images of Colorado with the
images from 1960’s Sweden, is clear. Whereas humans and the pasture rarely are visible
in Adams’ photographs of the Denver suburbs, they are common subjects in his Swedish
series. His images evokes a sentimental reminder of what Jefferson’s America could have
looked like, however, it would mean that financial growth would have been forced to step
aside to make room for the pastoral myth.
CHAPTER 2
MARK KLETT

Mark Klett is one of the most influential landscape photographers in the second half of the twentieth-century. He has made extensive strides in re-structuring our vision of the American West for nearly four decades. Klett has constructed his oeuvre around catalyzing time, change, and place in relation to cultural encounters within the landscape of the American West. He has achieved that by documenting the interrelation between the lives of the people occupying the land and the history of those places. In his many photographic works and publications, Klett revisits national parks, long stretches of highways, canyons and valleys, coastlines, cities, and desert towns, some lingering on only as ghostly reminders of our industrial past, while reminiscing on modern industry. He exposes those which continue to use the land, and the failure of others to survive the ‘test of time’, thus rendering his work politically ambiguous, while at the same time investigating the environmental factors of exploiting the land in the American West.

Klett follows in the footsteps of nineteenth-century explorers and surveyors such as Clarence King and William Henry Jackson, among others. For Klett, the original photography from these surveys conducted during the mid-1860s forms the cornerstone, the jumping-off point, of a new interpretation of the history of the American West. This simultaneously initiates the role of landscape photography as a part of a major tradition in American art, by applying “conventions of landscape painting, composing a view with an eye for the balance of forms and the dramatic effects of light.” Klett’s photographs of the American West conform to an already established tradition of American landscape
photography. However, by revisiting the places already photographed by nineteenth-century explorers his photographs offer a new chapter of how to approach the genre.

Klett photographs sites in the Southwestern states of California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado, making his work regional within the framework of the social construction of the American West. Klett documents very specific places along very specific routes, in essence following the route of the original United States Geological Surveys authorized under the Department of War in 1867, which in turn “follows the route of an old Indian Trail.” As such, Klett’ photographs often do not offer new views of the American West, but instead investigates what has happened to the places that were once investigated for development by the old survey photographers. By doing so, he is making a statement of how land that has been designated for exploitation has been used and developed during the 125 years between the original photographs and his new exposures.

This chapter also investigates the historical theoretical framework in which Klett works. Throughout his oeuvre Klett deals with his own cultural background and how it interacts with and contributes to this historiographical framework in the context of the West. Klett’s work follows a traditional recipe in which artists from the Eastern part of the United States travel in the West, recording what they see either through writing, painting, or photography. The difference between Klett’s work and the artists preceding him, I argue, is the voice he gives to the cultural groups already present in the territories. The territories are not just present as a result of economical exploitation from investors on the east coast, but the result of centuries of cultural interaction from the people already inhabiting the areas. His distinctive style can be placed both within the already
established American landscape tradition, and also as a break away from the same tradition. This arises as he revisits the places that have already been photographed (treated) by other photographers preceding him. In this chapter, I contextualize Klett’s work within the context of this tradition.

Klett is but one of many who work in the transition of how artists and historians treat the heritage of the Western landscape, yet he is the center of this transition of ideas and artistic values. What begins as a meditation on American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny carefully transitions into a nuanced view of the landscape as a cultural crossroads, containing what Trachtenberg would call a “symbolic resonance,” with “the notion of the photograph as ‘conceptual bridge’ entails not simply a visual literalness but a social act of seeing and defining.”88 The point of view shifts from the near-mythical perception of the West towards a place where cultural interaction has become the center of attention. In this chapter I will also show that Klett is in the center of this transition.89 His photographs also emphasize the West as a place of constant change, and that the old image of the region is on a decline in favor of a new, multifaceted image that includes the voices of the many cultures already inhabiting the space. In fact, the old image of the region can be characterized as myth in the Barthian sense.90

Trachtenberg writes that the USGS survey “…pictures were made for government surveys and railroad companies, to further settlement and aid industries…Their primary intention was provided by the project: to show this ravine, that cliff or lake, as sharply as possible…”91 Trachtenberg goes on to argue that if the photographer wanted to insert his own interpretation on the photograph, he would need to physically “intervene”; however, “survey photographers…did not intervene to alter the clear, exact report of the lens, nor
did they attempt to convey false…impressions about the lay of the land.” 92 A photograph, no matter how staged, is a reflection of reality, pointing towards the indexical nature of photography.

“Diversity of camera angles, of subjects, and of geographical locations conveys the idea that the camera itself, the instrument of picture making, can produce various visual results, from close-ups to panorama. While it makes us aware, through the photographer’s control, of natural scenes, it also makes us aware of the photographer’s own creativity in choosing what to depict—the human and mechanical activity of camera operator.” 93

The survey photographers made clear decisions in what to depict, knowing that these photographs would be “both accurate…useful in conveying the appearance of specimens and formations, and beautiful, capable of winning the public’s attention…” 94

Mark Klett was born in Albany, New York in 1952. After having lived in California during periods of his childhood, he decided to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in 1974 from St. Lawrence University back in his home state of New York. Later on, in 1977, he also earned his Master of Fine Arts degree from the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York. 95 During the summers between his two degrees Klett worked for the United States Geological Survey (USGS) charting land in Wyoming and Montana in the hopes of finding coal for possible future mining. 96 During these trips Klett laid the foundation for what would become the Rephotographic Survey Project, which is the project for which he has been most recognized. Klett has returned many times to projects involving historical comparison throughout his career. Mark Klett,
together with Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, worked with the project from 1977 to 1979.

For the project, the team sought and was given grant money from the National Endowment for the Arts. The project was also conducted in collaboration with the Polaroid Corporation. The project was also funded by other sources. The project was also mostly conducted during the summer due to the professional obligations of all participants. Therefore, the project includes three seasons of fieldwork. According to Klett, the project encompassed between 20,000-30,000 miles of logged driving in the Southwest in order to find the exact locations from where the nineteenth-century photographers took their photographs.97

The project includes 120 nineteenth-century photographs paired together with their twentieth-century counterparts. The images chosen for the project are the nineteenth-century survey photographs by photographers accompanying the survey missions conducted in what is now the American Southwest. During the first year, Klett’s group further focused on the 1873 photographs by William Henry Jackson he took during his travels in central Colorado.98 During the second and third year, the project expanded to include other photographers such as Timothy H. O’Sullivan, John Hillers, A. J. Russell, and Alexander Gardner.

Rephotography, as Klett points out, is nothing new; it is the act of matching “one or more pictures of the same subject which are made specifically to repeat an existing image.”99 This type of photography is often used to illustrate the passage of time and change. Dramatic change occurs when intervening events affect the natural passage of time. For instance, in nature, a forest fire started by a camper will start an intervening
element, which will affect how comparative photographs of the forest will look in the future. As such, juxtaposition takes up a large role in the comparative method used in rephotography.

Klett followed a code of conduct while performing his rephotographic studies. The purpose with the rephotographs was first and foremost to replicate the original image in location and framing. In order to do so, the technical aspects, such as type of film, glass plates, type of camera and lens, were replicated when possible, but he concentrated his efforts in optics. This was because the nineteenth-century photographers often used homemade cameras, and in many cases also homemade lenses. However, as Klett explains, photographers such as William Henry Jackson and Timothy H. O’Sullivan preferred lenses covering at least one hundred degrees, a crucial detail when considering replicating the original image. The amount of equipment the surveyors used also exemplified a vast diversity in technology, with each photographer using numerous cameras and even more lenses to conduct their work. The most important element was the use of vantage point, which Klett defines in a particular way. Klett wanted to find out the exact vantage point the older photographs were taken in order to be able to mimic the exact position in his work. But they also used the term in a sense of describing the real place of the camera’s lens, not only the camera’s location. The reason for this, Klett explains, is because of his background in geology, where he learned that the ground where the original photographer once stood most likely has eroded to such a degree that it would play a significant part in what the end result would look like. Klett wanted, with mathematical certainty, to locate the exact position in space where the original photographer’s lens was located, not just where the tripod was placed.
The 1860’s were the setting for one of the most ruthless exploitations of the American West, much of which was caused by the emerging Plains Wars. In the search for minerals and other natural resources factories, mills, and mines sprung up like mushrooms throughout the landscape. A century later, however, most signs of that early exploitation are gone. Left is the myth of the untouched landscape, an illusion that the American West of the twentieth-century had been untouched for millennia. To illustrate this point, Klett decided to rephotograph Timothy H. O’Sullivan’s 1868 photograph of the Quartz Mill near Virginia City (Figure 12). The photograph shows a large mill at the side of a hill. Building are scattered around the mill, reminding us that this is a working space for many people who require sleeping quarters, a mess hall, and perhaps a convenience store. O’Sullivan’s subject calls to mind an early industrial complex, like something out of a Dickens novel transposed into a desert setting. Even though no humans are present in the photograph we are still presented of ample evidence of human activity. The mines are very much active, something which is denoted by the smoke coming out of the chimneys. There are also clear tracks visible from trucks that have passed by with loads from the mine. There is also a wagon present in the yard in front of the mine.

Juxtaposing that with Klett’s 1979 photograph of the same location (Figure 13) and the lines between “before and after” seem to blur. The 1979 image could easily have been taken before the complex was built. The mill in O’Sullivan’s photograph looks timeless, built with a purpose, but Klett’s photograph belies the industry’s (reflected in the mill) seeming indestructibility. It was expected that the community the mill created
would stay there and develop new industries and businesses in its wake; however, time and fortune eroded the mill’s (and thus industry’s) agency on the landscape.

The relationship between the two versions of the quartz mill (Figure 12, 13) opens up questions regarding the concept of progress. Traditionally, progress in context to the landscape has been denoted by indications of civilizations. The traditions related to the depiction of landscape dictates that progress comes with human cultivation of the land. Progress has worked hand in hand with human interaction in the American landscape tradition and it was not until 1975 with the New Topographics exhibition where photographers such as Robert Adams marked a switch from the established way of photographing the American West. With Robert Adams’s photographs, political ambiguity in connection to the photographs started to develop. A photograph could all of a sudden be showing great traces of human interaction yet not feel as hospitable and welcoming. Human interaction did no longer denote progress, as untouched nature now became a new ideal. All that is left from the old mine is a road that lingers by. For the by passer there would be little evidence from anything ever taking place at this location. As a monument of nature reclaiming the area a tree has grown tall in the place that once used to be the place of the mine’s central yard. The tree, perhaps by coincidence is located almost exactly where the wagon, something denoting recent human activity, was located in Timothy O’Sullivan’s 1868 photograph.

A similar situation appears in Timothy O’Sullivan’s Comstock Mines, 1868 (Figure 14). In the photograph, the viewer can observe an entire mining community with buildings named “Empire,” “Imperial,” and “Confidence.” The image is filled with houses, individual mine shafts, processing plants, and halls for different purposes and
occasions. As with O’Sullivan’s *Quartz Mill near Virginia City* (Figure 12), the community seems timeless and permanent—it is hard to imagine that it would not exist a century later.

As Klett shows in his 1979 rephotograph *Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, Nevada* (Figure 13), and his *Strip Mine at the Site of Comstock Mines, Virginia City, NV, 1979* (Figure 15), taken for the Rephotographic Survey Project, the mill and town present in the nineteenth-century photographs, along with every trace of it, has disappeared. Left is a small road on the side of where the large mill once had been (Figure 13), and a pole along with a shelved mine shaft (Figure 15). Two decades later in 1998, Mark Klett, along with Byron Wolfe, returned to the site of *Strip Mine at the Site of Comstock Mines, Virginia City, NV, 1979* (Figure 15) and took a new photograph, which he gave the same title (Figure 16). In this photograph, nature is starting to reclaim the area. The shelves once so prominent in Klett’s first rephotograph have now started to collapse into the pit. On the left is the pole, which is also visible in the 1979 version. The only aspect still visible of the town’s existence is the road leading in and out of the area. This road is now Route 341 and according to Klett, the road is still in the same place as it was back then when O’Sullivan took his first photograph.¹⁰⁵

Juxtaposed, the images almost seem peculiar, as if time had been reversed, and the chronology winds backward; it is a set of images of urban development in decline, thus speaking towards a political ambiguity in the images. If the situation were inverted, nobody would question that the land had been developed over a century and now houses a mill. Together, they make a strong case against fatalism, which is a term often used to describe the acceptance of events as predetermined and inevitable.¹⁰⁶ This speaks to the
political ambiguity between the images in the sense that progress traditionally has been
categorized as developing the land. In this case, economic and political forces have
depopulated the land instead of the opposite, creating a reversed sequence of events and
creates an ecological aspect of the word progress.\textsuperscript{107}

The reason why the Quartz Mill near Virginia City (Figure 12) and the Comstock
Mines (Figure 14) closed down might have been due to reasons of pollution and food
distribution, but according to Limerick, it might also have been because of water rights,
or simply the lack of a viable water source, and gender distribution.\textsuperscript{108} In order for the
communities to sustain themselves, they needed the structure that would give them
permanence. Since many of the workers moving West did not bring their families, the
result was that once the worker had earned enough money, he would either seek new
opportunities elsewhere where he might be able to start a family, or go home to an
already existing family back east. As such, the town lacked domestic scenes. The regions
were so heavily focused on industrializing, in essence civilizing, and the land that the
essence of human sustenance was overlooked.

This also meant that if the mill ceased to be profitable, the community would die
out because of the lack of permanent settlers. Klett proposes, however, that due to the
lack of building materials in the nineteenth-century, the fate of this mill is that it was all
moved when they reached the end of the mineral deposit.\textsuperscript{109} This suggests that the mill
did not exist long enough for a permanent community to sprout. Limerick’s idea that
early mining communities focused on profit before food supplies supports what the
viewer sees in the photograph, which is that there is no remaining trace of the mills
existence.
Klett’s photograph *Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, Nevada* (Figure 13), and the two rephotographs of the Comstock Mines also oppose the notion of myth. It shows that the Western landscape of the nineteenth-century was not a pristine paradise untouched by man. The photograph plays off the myth even more because it provides us with the illusion that the only aspect of human interaction present in the photograph is the road cutting through it. Instead, the site has already been the subject for a massive human enterprise with the goal of extracting the mountain of its natural resources for financial gain. Juxtaposed, however, the photographs reveal the myth for what it is and shows the viewer that the West has been exploited for its natural resources for centuries, and that the cities and concentrated urban centers like the quartz mill once were scattered all over the landscape. Limerick cites an article in the New York Times stating that there might be as many as half a million abandoned mines originating from, or before, the nineteenth-century in the American West. Limerick believes there are more, making the myth of the pristine untouched landscape even more visible. The tree by the road in the center of Klett’s image also lends itself to myth creation, the older the tree gets, and the more nature is reclaiming the area with restoring it to its previous state.

Myth, however, does not only function together with landscapes and the structures placed in it. As described by W.J.T. Mitchell in his chapter “Imperial Landscape,” landscape is also intrinsically intertwined with culture as landscape and the depictions thereof reflect and represent culture. Klett’s photograph, which is not a part of his work with rephotography, called *Plywood Tee-Peas, Meteor Crater, Arizona, 5/30/82* (Figure 17), illustrates this point by showing and telling us that the tee-pees we
see in the photograph are fake because they are constructed using fabricated materials not traditional and not recently used for the native population to live in.

The photograph, like much of Klett’s work, is grayscale. The edges of the image are rough and rugged to mimic the styles of nineteenth-century photographers. The effect Klett creates through using a mixture of old and new technology, primarily by using old-fashioned lenses and mounts that usually created rugged effects in the peripheries of photographs. In the photograph, the viewer sees a very flat landscape with a clearly defined horizon. In the middle ground, a group of fake teepees are scattered. The upper three quarters of the photograph shows a completely empty sky without even a single cloud present. The ground is covered with grass that stretches out as far as the eye can see. The only breaking points from an otherwise completely straight horizon are the scattered teepees present in the photograph. The teepees are conical in shape; all have very straight edges, as if they were small arrows pointing towards the sky. The straight edges quickly suggest there is something unnatural about them, as if they are not constructed in the way ordinary teepees are constructed. Because, instead of being constructed out of hides and natural objects suited for the individual and collective needs of someone living in a place like this desert, the teepees are constructed using highly processed and manufactured materials. A closer visual examination of the photograph may not reveal this fact; however, the reader of the photograph notices there is something not quite right with how they are constructed. The landscape otherwise remains eerie and empty.

Klett is, by the captioning visible in the photograph, evoking the photograph’s title, revealing for the viewer that something is not right in this photograph and that there
are elements that should not be there. The tee-pees are placed in the desert, seemingly in
the middle of nowhere, in order to create the myth that this is how the native population
in northern Arizona lives. From a distance, the viewers cannot judge for themselves
whether the tee-pees are constructed in traditional or fake materials. Nor can the viewer
determine if people actually are occupying these dwellings.

The constructed myth present here is that unlike the natives originating in the
Great Plains, most tribes in the Southwest were stationary, or pueblo living natives.
Stanley Vestal explains that conical shelters in different forms have been used for
centuries. He also explains that the first European encounter with this form of living
was when Francisco Vásquez de Coronado in 1540-42 encountered buffalo hunters with
these tents staying with some Pueblo Indian groups in what today is northern New
Mexico. Coronado described his first encounter with the Apache nomads in the
following way: We encountered “some settlements of people who lived like Arabs and
who are called Querechos in that region” and continues with “these folks live in tents
made of the tanned skins of the cows.” These natives, Vestal explains, were probably
nomadic Apache Indians. Even though the Apache Indians lived all throughout the
Southwest, only the people originating from the plains would have used the tee-pee as a
primary form of living. The anthropologist Brasser then explains that those nomadic
groups of Apaches, or people using tee-pees, in North America only extended their reach
as far as New Mexico and the Texas panhandle. There has never been any
anthropological evidence suggesting that there were nomadic groups in northern Arizona
utilizing that form of living.
An important element that the presence of myths in the form of social construction overarches every concept present in this study. Manifest Destiny, the American West with the notion of the frontier, American Exceptionalism, and the notions of race, and ethnicity are all constructed ideologies operating under fabricated rules, which makes one social group assume control over another under these conditions. In many cases they are more than constructions. They are social traditions carried over from across the Atlantic when the European settlers first decided to cross the sea and settle North America. In order to write about the tradition from which Mark Klett is working from and its historical context it is important to define these terms so they can be applied to his photographic work. The cultural systems the United States regarded the native tribes’ use and ownership of land, as such, differed greatly from how the European nations viewed the same, and is what is central in many of Mark Klett’s photographs.

The tee-pees visible in Klett’s *Plywood Tee-Pees, Meteor Crater, Arizona, 5/30/82* (Figure 17) are visual lies lending themselves to the creation of myth. The image portrayed here is the one of TV-shows, commercials, and Hollywood movies. If, by association, the spectator of these tee-pees imagines themselves being enchanted by the fake tents because they appear in a production, they help to reinforce a historically inaccurate image of the landscape. The Navajo tribe owns the area around Meteor Crater in Arizona. However, regardless of the historical relocations of the tribe, tee-pees have never been used as a method of living on that land. This suggests that the builders of these fake tee-pees wants the spectator to experience authenticity rather than historical accuracy in driving on native land, which then would be beneficial for the hundreds of souvenir shop business owners along the heavily trafficked I-40 nearby. By placing the
tee-pees in a location where they should not be, and have not been used historically, and in addition to that, making them out of wood, the creator of these are contributing to the creation and upholding of myth in the American West.\textsuperscript{120}

Klett’s *Plywood Tee-Pees, Meteor Crater, Arizona, 5/30/82* (Figure 17) also denotes theories of ruins as they play a significant role in the history of Western expansion.\textsuperscript{121} Author James F. Cooper’s sentimental 1826 novel *The Last of the Mohicans*, which Fisher also talks about in great length, is such an example. The conclusion of the story is that the white race has become masters of the earth that once used to belong to the Indians. The natives are represented as living ruins, remnants of a race that is dying and disappearing from the earth. In Klett’s photograph the viewer can see reconstructed ruins in which the original has been replaced by a sturdier, permanent, equivalent. The original ruins, as they were made with more fragile materials and were often moved around do not remain for us to see today. Therefore, these plywood replacements serve as a stand-in for a standing desire of viewing the original.

With regards to the concept of ruins, however, Klett’s rephotographs *Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, Nevada* (Figure 13), and his *Strip Mine at the Site of Comstock Mines, Virginia City, NV, 1979* (Figure 15) serves as monuments of financial success. The monument in this case, although the buildings are lost, is the significant transformation and use of land left behind after the mines are gone. The site was financially successful, the land was transformed, claimed, and therefore the settlers can move on to the next area in need of settlement and financial exploitation.

Limerick explains that when discussing the exploration of North America, white men would still be the heroes of the story even when trying to include other sources. The
east-west orientation of storytelling still will be the most prominent method of explaining the exploration of the continent. The explanation for this dilemma originates in the very nature of American expansionism. In order to chart territory the explorer generally needs a sponsor, or someone who pays for the journey in exchange for taking part of the results. In the competition for territorial takeover, discoverers such as Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, John C. Frémont, John Wesley Powell, and Clarence King were all commissioned representatives of the United States government. Their commission rested upon them reporting their findings to their sponsor, and as the nature of their exploration was to document what they saw, historians have been able to access a great abundance of information on territorial exploration from these individuals.

As Limerick points out, since Chinese and Japanese early immigrants to North America did not have the ambition of creating empire, there was no reason for their respective governments to fund such explorations across the continent. Sucheng Chan writes that Asian immigrants to the United States, even though they were great in numbers, “left few records of their perceptions and experience.” Moreover, the immigrants rarely made observations on the landscape they viewed. Instead, they preferred to make social observations and used landscape as an analogy for experiences. After the Angel Island immigration station opened in the San Francisco Bay in 1910, many Asian immigrants used landscape in poems in order to illustrate the experience of being kept waiting for an uncertain amount of time. Limerick’s argument resides in the notion that there are so few sources from other ethnicities other than White Anglos, with the exception of the Hispanic explorations up the Rio Grande Valley in the seventeenth-century, is because of the lack of government sponsorship. The exploration of the
American landscape is therefore stuck with a very ethnocentric interpretation of the land and how it should be used. This ethnocentric interpretation consequently later gives ground to other interpretations of the territorial development of the United States, which includes Manifest Destiny and the notion of the frontier.

Peggy Pascoe further elaborates on the problem of point of view in her essay *Western Women at the Cultural Crossroads* when she points out three factors determining how much attention a specific group of people has been given by historians. She complicates the problem by emphasizing that historians in the past have been putting more weight on white powerful politicians, generals and military affiliated people, and corporate leaders than people of other ethnicities and women. She lists three disadvantages people have for being mentioned in historical texts. The first one is gender. Women, until recently, have not been given as much room as men in history texts. The second one is class, which would include factory workers and other types of people associated with the lower classes. The third, and last one, is race. People belonging to all these three categories and falling out of the norm of the Anglo, male, upper classes has been seriously neglected by historians.

Mark Klett, in his photographs, is aligning himself with the New Western historians, of which Pascoe is part, by focusing on all these three categories of people in his photographs. Klett has with his photography attempted to provide a voice for the people settling the West coast in today’s United States. In the late 1980’s Klett was involved in a project documenting the Marin Coastline at the Golden Gate Bridge in the San Francisco Bay area. His 1989 photograph *Remains of Rescue Boat Pier, Bonita Cove* (Figure 18), although descriptive in nature, is of an old rescue boat pier on the outer side
of the San Francisco Bay built in the nineteenth-century to provide support in the event of
a wreck. In the background, the viewer is able to see the Golden Gate Bridge shrouded in
the haze. The vantage point from which Klett takes the photograph reveals the vast
expanse constituting the bay where the pier is located. The haze further emphasizes the
harsh weather conditions that could be present, even on a bright and sunny day such as
the one Klett made this photograph.

Mark Klett’s photographs from the Marin area that illustrate evidence of
immigration and the past use of the land only start making sense when viewed in a
documentary aspect. It is the history of the land connected to what is left, remnant, on the
land Klett is photographing that constitutes the histories of the place. The subtle
clues left behind by past users of the land are what have caught Klett’s interest in the area. The
photographs are therefore ambiguous and can be either taken at face value, at their pure
indexical meaning, or given the known histories of the areas, they are given a new
meaning.

Klett’s photograph visualizes the great influx of traffic and immigrants that were
present on the West coast during the nineteenth-century. It shows that immigration
occurred in large numbers on the West coast as well as the East coast, whereas
exploration and travel stories such as the one by the early explorers would be possible to
occur from a west-east orientation instead of the traditional Anglo version of east-west
narrative exploration.\textsuperscript{128}

The photograph, as with many of Mark Klett’s works, is shot in black and white
with rugged edges meant to mimic, but not copy, the styles of photographers of the
nineteenth-century. This mostly means that he is mimicking the optics used by the
photographers before him. He does not go as far as using wet plates but keeps to using modern techniques such as film, and later digital cameras, to capture his work. The use of the correct type of optics, however, results in the photographs turning out similar to the techniques used in the past. This, Klett argues, he does to remind the viewer and himself of the mission of his photography, which is to link the present to the past through historical narratives.\textsuperscript{129}

Mark Klett’s 1989 photograph \textit{Fruit Tree Planted long ago by Farmers, Oakwood Valley} (Figure 19) illustrates another aspect of immigration to the Bay Area, which interacted with the landscape, but the narratives have since become lost through the lack of written records. The photograph, taken at the Marin Coast by the Golden Gate, is of a fruit tree, assumingly apples. Although the nature of which type of fruit it shows is undisclosed, the viewer is able to see its branches reaching down towards the ground. The branches in turn clearly hold fruit, which is heavily bearing down on the tree. The background shows the viewer the forestation and hilly landscape of the Marin Coast. No buildings are visible in this seemingly rural area; however the variety of vegetation visible in the image shows that this is a very diverse area. The pine tree visible on the lower right part of the image further signifies this aspect. Once, again, as with Mark Klett’s other photographs, the photograph is black and white with a frame suggesting a connection to the photographers of the nineteenth-century he is aspiring to mimic in order to establish a dialogue between past and present. He does so by revisiting the places where the early immigrant inhabitants of these areas have lived and documented what traces remains of their occupation of the land.
Few clues of the purpose of this photograph exist within the image itself. The evidence of what it represents is clearly visible. Fruit trees, like the one seen in Klett’s photograph, were planted by one of the many people emigrating from Portugal in the nineteenth-century. The fruit trees are not endemic to the area of the Marin coastline, and as such need to have been planted there. The mere height of the tree and its well-developed branches further suggest that the tree has been around for quite some time. We can conclude that the tree could have been planted fairly recently, within the past couple of decades. Given the history of the area another narrative behind the tree soon unfolds.

The Portuguese population settled the Marin area in order to escape a twenty-year enlistment in the British Army, a result of a debt owed by the government of Portugal to England. The many immigrants arrived in the area with the blind eye help of American whalers who let the Portuguese slip onboard when the ships were restocking supplies in the Azores. The whaling ships would then, again, dock in Sausalito harbor for the same reasons, whereas the Portuguese would jump ship and disappear into the Californian landscape. These people started to lease land from the landowners in the Marin area where they would start establishing dairy farms. As such, one more Western immigrant population’s narrative is present, but not heard in the history of the West. Klett’s photographs of the Marin area help bringing all these narrative out into the open, which is important in creating a complete picture of the history of the West.

The narratives of these people and their experience with the landscape, however, are close to undocumented and only consist of fragments such as the ones documented afterwards in Mark Klett’s photographs Remains of Rescue Boat Pier, Bonita Cove (Figure 18) and Fruit Tree Planted long ago by Farmers, Oakwood Valley (Figure 19).
As mentioned, only governments in the search of Empire provided funding for expeditions across continents with the purpose of documenting landscape.\textsuperscript{133} The groups arriving after the American conquest of 1848 had no reason and no means for exploring the landscape eastward. However, as Sucheng Chan, “The Chinese themselves left few records of their perceptions and experience.”\textsuperscript{134} This is why the documentation of such journeys, even though the narratives exist in the form of farming and railroad construction, is scarce at best. The evidence is there, however, it is not written but present in the form of building projects, such as the railroads, and farms, such as seen in the fruit trees in the Marin area.

Klett’s photographs provide a voice for these ethnicities that do not have readily available travel stories of their own to tell. The photographs therefore provides the viewer with visual evidence that the landscape, as the journeys were sponsored by the government, was not only interacted with and discovered by the white Anglo making a journey westward, but was networked with by many different cultures who made their first communications and discoveries of the American landscape from the western coastline. Whether a movement eastward was or was not done, such as the Chinese that participated in the construction of the railroad, or the Portuguese who established farms on the Marin coastline, the different cultures left their footprints in the American landscape the way they interacted with it. Klett’s photographs show us this footprint.\textsuperscript{135}

In 1921, the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner states: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at 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.”\textsuperscript{136} With this, he states that because there is no longer any westward
movement within the country, the frontier is therefore closed and as such, it “marks the
closing of a great historic movement.”\textsuperscript{137} The frontier, Turner argued, meant the steady
development of independence from European influence.\textsuperscript{138} It provided the ability for the
United States to mature on its own terms, which meant that with each step westward, the
nation grew more independent and more powerful in terms of politics and economics.
Further on, the ethnocentricity of the East versus the West is also noted by Turner who
states that the East called out “important schemes of internal improvement”, which will
give the West a foundation to build upon.\textsuperscript{139} As such, Turner argues that the East
provides a social and political base for the West to develop from. This emphasizes the
ethnocentricity of the word frontier, and further underscores how the history of the
United States is read, which is east to west.

Barthes’s notion of myth is applicable to the idea of the frontier. The myth
requires an origin story, which is precisely what Turner provides. The traditional way of
viewing the history of the United States has been from an ethnocentric east-west
perspective that omits other cultural interpretations of the region. Mark Klett’s
photographs challenge Turner’s notion of the frontier in this precise way. Turner’s myth
is a narrative, meant to be read in a certain way in order to make sense. When the
narrative becomes inconclusive by including other stories such as the ones present in
Klett’s two photographs \textit{Remains of Rescue Boat Pier, Bonita Cove} (Figure 18) and \textit{Fruit
Tree Planted long ago by Farmers, Oakwood Valley} (Figure 19) the notion of the frontier
does not hold up under scrutiny. Klett’s oeuvre places itself well into the theoretical
framework of new western history.
Much of Klett’s work is centered on the conception of movements, both westward and eastward, across the North American continent. As previously mentioned, Mark Klett, together with Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg initiated the *Rephotographic Survey Project* in 1977, which was a project in which they traveled across the American West in order to rephotograph the photographs from the geographical survey projects of the nineteenth century. The project lasted until 1979, however, in 1997, Mark Klett together with Kyle Bajakian, William L. Fox, Michael Marshall, Toshi Ueshina, and Byron Wolfe reopened the project in order to once again revisit the sites and collect them all in a project which they called *Third Views, Second Sights: A Rephotographic Survey of the American West*. The project lasted for four years, until 2000, and incorporated one hundred and ten revisited sites of both the original project, and new views from nineteenth century originals. The photographs created for the Third Views project together show upon a westward expansion that has bounced back in a way that it now instead is presenting cultural exchanges, both westward and eastward.

William Henry Jackson’s 1869 photograph *Pulpit Rock at the Mouth of the Canyon* (Figure 20) is one of these photographs. In the photograph, the viewer can identify a peculiar rock, which the photographer has identified as Pulpit Rock. On the rock, two men have climbed up in order to enjoy the view. Around the rock and around the adjacent cliffs, more men are standing, all seemingly looking towards the photographer and the camera. Some, for example the one directly under the man standing on top of the rock itself in particular, seems to be posing for the camera. Artifacts associated with human enterprise in the American West surround the area around the rock. These are the telegraph poles located on the cliff on the right hand side in the
picture plane, and the railroad, which is located on the far lower side of the photograph. There is also a small road, whether man made in order to ease walking in the area or just a natural element in the landscape is unknown, leading out from the picture plane towards the cliff and the rock.

The location, with its towering rock and majestic cliff, looks completely different a century later when Mark Klett took his rephotograph for the Rephotographic Survey Project. In 1978, Klett took his rephotograph, which he named Site of Pulpit Rock, Echo Canyon, UT (Figure 21). In the photograph, Pulpit Rock is gone, and the telephone poles, which possibly are repurposed, are moved to the side of the railroad tracks. Instead, the viewer can observe a highway cutting through the space where Pulpit Rock once stood. According to Mark Klett, the rock was removed in the 1930s in order to make room for the highway seen in the photograph, which is paralleling today’s Interstate 80.\(^\text{141}\) The rock was originally removed so it would not fall down on the tracks below.

Klett’s photograph with the same name as his last one, Site of Pulpit Rock, Echo Canyon, UT (Figure 22), which he took two decades later in 1997, does not differ much from the original rephotographic image from 1978. It does, however, portray one important aspect in Klett’s work, which is the element of movement. On the railroad, the viewer is able to observe a train moving on the railroad through the picture plane. The railroad is still today an active route of the Union Pacific Railroad, and serves in both moving people and goods from one side of the country to the other. Klett’s inclusion of the train in movement is important. This is because it shows activity, that the region in which the tracks are in place is not stagnating, that the activities set in motion more than a
century earlier with the construction of the railroad is still an active ingredient and power in the region’s economy and social status.

The train’s movement, along with the changes seen in the three different photographs serves as a monument for a successful conquest, or progress. The land has been used and is still used for what was intended, to transport goods on. This speaks to Fisher’s definition of ruins as opposed to monuments as the land’s use is a monument for the success of the conquest and exploitation of the land.142 If the land would not have been used or further transformed in Klett’s third photograph, it would serve as a ruin and subsequently as a monument for the conquest’s failure. Klett’s photograph hence marks a continuation of the conquest. Furthermore, it also puts more emphasis on the continuous development and use of the land, as the rail tracks are not as prominently visible in Klett’s first rephotograph.

Together the three photographs display a development in the depiction of the American West. The first stage, present in William Henry Jackson’s 1869 photograph, (Figure 20) displays the construction and expansion of empire. The second image taken by Klett in 1978 (Figure 21) illustrates a continuation of these ideas with the construction of the highway and with the removal and conquering of the natural elements through the removal of the rock. The third photograph, taken by Klett in 1997 (Figure 22) shows a social consciousness, that the construction of enterprise and the formation of the ideas set in motion centuries before, and portrayed in Jackson’s photograph in 1869, is still active and alive in the region.

Even more peculiar is an image William Henry Jackson produced c.1880 called *Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, Utah* (Figure 23), in which the viewer observes a natural
formation emerging out from the side of a mountain. The formation constitutes the two sides of the mountain that have seemingly been pressed together and thus created something that resembles a playground slide. Underneath the formation, the railway is passing by. This location, roughly seventy-five miles from Promontory, the location where the meeting of the rails connecting the East with the West coast took place in 1869, today has developed into somewhat of a tourist attraction.\textsuperscript{143} This is evident through the photograph Klett took in 1978 with his second view titled \textit{Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, UT} (Figure 24). In this photograph, the viewer observes a change in the construction of a freeway, Interstate 84, which is built right along the tracks in between the natural formation and the railway. The forest is cleared for the construction of the freeway but not much else has changed in terms of vegetation. A pole, presumably carrying telephone or electrical wiring has also been constructed. The third view, taken by Kyle Bajakian, who was a student of Klett’s while the project took place, took the third view, which carries the same title as the second view, \textit{Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, UT} (Figure 25). Here the viewer can notice an upgrade to the freeway in terms of safety with a fence being added on the freeway. There has also been a rest area installed.

These images show the same relationship as the previous pair of images with Jackson’s \textit{Pulpit Rock at the Mouth of the Canyon} (Figure 20). The third image, \textit{Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, UT} (Figure 25), expresses movement and exchange of goods. However, the difference between the other third view, Klett’s \textit{Site of Pulpit Rock, Echo Canyon, UT} (Figure 22), and Bajakian’s photograph of Devil’s Slide is the implementation of tourism to the area. As mentioned, a rest stop has been added to the
freeway right by Devil’s Slide, showing the dramatic effects the natural formation has on the viewer’s mind.

The question why Jackson took his photographs in 1869 and 1880 is answered through a classic east-to-west reading of American history. On March 21, 1867, Clarence King, a geologist born in Rhode Island, got a letter from Brigadier General A. A. Humphreys, Chief of Engineers at the Department of War telling him that he was going to be put in charge of a survey to “direct a geological and topographical exploration of the territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada mountains, including the route or routes of the Pacific Railroad.”

The objective for the mission was to collect information for the government in Washington about the geological conditions in the American West in order to find out about the natural resources present there. The result of the survey would be a five-volume work that King titled *Report of the Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel*, which would include works about presumptive mining operations, geological encounters with descriptions and photographs of rock formations, and information about zoology and botany of the area. Together, the volumes span more than two thousand pages with accompanying travel stories. Works like King’s report, and other expeditions funded by the United States government are central in the popular east-to-west reading of American history.

The central part of their mission was also to name all these peculiar formations along the railroads throughout the American West. The explorers of the region needed to name the places they placed on the map. As Alan Trachtenberg points out: “A map is, of course, a kind of symbolic picture. It is one way of ‘seeing’ the land, and as a part of the enterprise it helps clarify the role of photographers in the “great surveys.”
naming a natural formation is a way of claiming possession. John Wesley Powell, one of the directors of the surveys, noted that naming a view the native population of the region viewed as a great sin.

Among all the North American Indians, when in a primitive condition, personal property was almost unknown; ornaments and clothing only were recognized as the property of the individual, and these only to a limited extent. The right to the soil as landed property [...] recognized in civilization are intensely obnoxious to the Indian. He looks upon our whole system of property rights as an enormous evil and unpardonable sin, for which the gods will eventually punish the wicked and blasphemous white man.146

This means that despite Powell and the United States government knowing about and recognizing the natives’ disapproval in the new settlers and surveys naming the landscapes, the surveyors proceeded anyway. Naming natural elements and formations is a way of claiming territory for the nation in the creation of empire.147

In recent years, Klett’s work has been more and more oriented towards commenting on the east-west reading of American history through the channels the government explorers did it themselves, which is through their own published books, photographs, narratives, and prints. In 2010, Klett and his colleague Byron Wolfe made a collage from a scanned page from Clarence Dutton’s Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District, which was published in 1882 with an atlas and images over the district. It was a written monologue in which Dutton explained his view and experiences with the
landscape, something people arriving at the West Coast did not receive government sponsorship. What makes Dutton’s account stand out from the previous ones is that he is not only following up on the work of John Wesley Powell, but also expanding it. Along with him, Dutton brings artists such as Thomas Moran, engravers, and photographers to extensively document the landscape and include it in his book.

The work concluded in 2010 with a collage that Klett and Wolfe named *Pinnacles on the Brink*. Book Page and engraving: *Second Annual Report of the United States Geological Survey of the Interior, 1880-81; Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District by Capt. C. E. Dutton* (Figure 26). The viewer sees a scanned copy of page 148 of the book Dutton wrote, in which there originally existed only one engraving. Inside the engraving, Klett has collected and inserted photographs from people visiting the area, including his own and including one by J. K. Hillers from 1873. Something to note: even though only one group of people were privileged enough to receive government sponsorship for taking photographs, exploring, and providing written accounts of the American West, other people are given a voice through Klett’s work. He emphasizes that not only one person or organization has the right, or should be given the opportunity to give their version of the American West, but that everyone has the right to comment on, or write their own account of their experiences with the landscape, regardless of race, ethnicity, or origin.

Mark Klett, a person who grew up on the East coast, but moved to the West in order to follow his profession, as such follows a pattern established much earlier by artists, explorers, and writers. However, what makes Klett stand out from the previous is his ability of providing a voice and highlighting that the east-to-west reading of American
history is not the only version that is, and should be available and told. Through his photographs, Klett provides visual evidence and clues of other ethnic groups arrivals and interaction with the American landscape. Examples of this aspect include Klett’s *Remains of Rescue Boat Pier, Bonita Cove, 1989* (Figure 18) and *Fruit Tree Planted long ago by Farmers, Oakwood Valley, 1989* (Figure 19) where Klett is telling us a visual story of the Portuguese immigrant populations first interactions with the American landscape. Since very few written records exist of whom and why the Portuguese immigrants lived on these places most of the remaining evidence exists through remnants left on the places. The same way, *Remains of Rescue Boat Pier, Bonita Cove, 1989* (Figure 18) tells the story of early Latin American arrivals in the United States.

Klett’s photographs also highlight the economic aspects of the highly emphasized east-to-west reading and movement of American history. Photographs such as his *Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, Nevada, 1979* (Figure 13) and *Strip Mine at the Site of Comstock Mines, Virginia City, NV, 1979* (Figure 15) tells the story of the enormous exploitation in achieving the goal of the east-to-west expansion of the United States. They show that Manifest Destiny was a driving force behind the growth of such enterprise, and that the temporality of the industry would aid the growth of the railway. This is because the mines provided opportunities for workers to move westward, seek temporary jobs, and then hopefully stay there once the mine had ran out of resources. In many cases, such as with the Gould and Curry Mine (Figure 13), and the Comstock Mines (Figure 15) the temporality of the industry only gave way for the construction of the roads and railways that would help in connecting the both coasts with each other.
Klett, through his photographic work, highlights all these aspects of the multifaceted American story, a story that did not only require one reading, but many from every direction and aspect of how people arrived in the country. His work denotes that the common reading of the American experience has been from east-to-west, but that the story needs a revising to include multiple origins. In his work, Klett is also illustrating many of the aspects Philip Fisher writes about in his work *Hard Facts*, amongst the most visible one being the discussion regarding ruins and how ruins are seen and how they are visible in the American landscape. The difference between ruins and monuments, and why a ruin is a synonym for failure on the one side, and victory on the other is speaking to the ambiguity in Klett’s work. This ambiguity, sometimes political, is visible in his photographs concerning origin stories not confirming the traditional reading of American expansion. He is emphasizing solutions to the absence of a ruin, which is to create an artificial one through contemporary constructions. Klett is showing upon a transition in American art that is including all of these stories, and is also underlining the ruthlessness in the way Manifest Destiny took its course Westward through the country. Klett shows that this method was effective in shutting out other stories that would have required and needed a voice in the creation of the United States. He shows the readers of the work that such stories are visible in the modern landscape in very detectable, but subtle ways.
CONCLUSION

Creating representations of landscape, embedding meaning, supporting political ideas, and imposing cultural values onto the land through art, is nothing new. For centuries, a prominent part of landscape representation has been the connection of land to ideas through visual representation in order to justify annexation by claiming it as a pre-destined and evident course of events. These depictions work as justifications of actions, whether ideological or social, that functions within a cultural framework. With these depictions, myths are established, telling a visual tale of a narrative of a progression of events that are more idealized than true. The history of the American West, the claiming of the land, and the people living, working, and traveling across the land, has taken a prominent part of the telling of the westward expansion of the United States. The narrative marginalizes the previous inhabitants of the land. Native Americans have cultivated, and have inhabited the land, for millennia. People migrating north from South- and Central America, along with enclaves of French and Spanish people, have established and maintained trading posts across the western hemisphere for centuries.

These stories have been extensively marginalized by the narrative of the settlers with oxen and wagons, cowboys, and surveyors exploring and settling the Western part of the land. The narratives, however, usually take place in a singular direction, from East to West. The Chinese workers who traveled east to take part in the construction of the railways, along with the Portuguese who fled conscription and established farms in California during the first half of the nineteenth-century, have been either forgotten and marginalized. These stories began appearing in literature, both academic and fiction, but as this thesis has discussed, the debate has not yet been elaborated on in the realm of Art
History. For example, when talking about the Portuguese presence in the Americas, the history of the people fleeing conscription on the other side of the Pacific Ocean will not be a part of the popular narrative. This reminds us that the narratives of different cultures meeting in the American West are a collection of narratives formed by families and individuals.

Trying to form a coherent singular, and overarching, narrative of the American West becomes a giant problem because of the exclusions the authors chose to make in favor of a mainstream narrative. The marginalization of the narratives other than the one of the East-Westward movement of settlers has continued in the realm of art, and it is not until recently that artists have begun to diversify and saturate the narratives present in the artistic depictions of the American West. Mark Klett and Robert Adams have been at the center of this discussion, resisting, through their art, the main narrative of the establishment of the American West.

The preceding chapters, highlighting the oeuvres of Robert Adams and Mark Klett, focused on dismantling the myths surrounding the popular narrative of the American West. The chapters outlined the intents and purposes of the artists’ depictions, as well as the results of marketing the American West as a continuous frontier that remains to be conquered at a cultural level, meaning that even though the borders of the nation already encompass a territory, assimilation continues on different levels. The chapters have focused on several overarching themes, including sublime natural parks, the settlement of cultural groups across the continent, the movement of different peoples within the West, and how ideas about living and exploiting the landscape travelled across
the continent. The chapters have also shown the ruthless effects the ideas of Manifest Destiny have had on the landscape, both culturally and topographically.

Both artists illustrated the same issues regarding the development of the American West, involving exploitation of the land, cultural homogeneity, and the emergence of a popular and mainstream history. Their methods, however, are different. While Mark Klett has a methodological approach in archiving history and representing present times through his use of materials, Adams has chosen a more poetic approach, which forces the viewer to independently puzzle the ideological and environmental pieces together. Adams’ photographs encourage the viewer to ask questions about the art, about the landscape, and the people inhabiting it. Klett’s approach is more self-explanatory, a kind of road map that lays out the differences in the landscape.

Klett’s photographs illustrate an abundance of both ruins and monuments. In some cases, former mining sites, towns, orchards, or streets serve as a reminder of what once was. In other photographs, he showcases the importance a certain road had on the culture that built it by taking a new photograph, where the road has turned into a railway, highway, or both. Adams’ photographs, on the other hand, express a more stagnant environment, wherein the criticism he puts forth makes the viewer believe that even though what we see is new, it will be a part of the future as a ruin. This is because he, throughout his work, is criticizing the exploitation of the area’s environment, which, with its bare and open land, cannot sustain large populations.

Throughout this work, the treatment of stereotypes has taken a prevalent role. Both artists discuss and contrast stereotypes of the West and highlight them in different ways. Klett creates images of lingering historic stereotypes, which promote simplified
histories of how people move, lived, and behaved, and truncates the present nuances. His photographs of wooden tee-pees in Arizona, a place where tee-pees are not a traditional element present on the land, has brought questions regarding how the Native American stereotype has been abused for commercial purposes, mostly tourism. Adams’ work breaks the stereotypical image of the American West, which is the one of great natural formations, spectacular forests, and an abundance of natural splendor and beauty, and demonstrates the overexploited areas of the American suburbs in the West.

Robert Adams’s images become a work of contrast from the images of Ansel Adams, whose rise to prominence was due, in large part, to revealing very small patches of land that are now part of the national parks. The criticism against Ansel Adams’ work derives from the commercial sign post they have become, which has led to overexploitation of the West’s small remaining patches of wilderness to such an extent that they are not only shrinking, but are effectively destroyed due to human interaction.

Ansel Adams’s photographs of the American West are a celebration of the use of land, the national parks, whereas Robert Adams’s photographs break away from the tradition and instead criticize the same. The popular image of the American West, serving both as an exaggerated simplification of the area and as an advertisement, was meant to lure more people to settle the region. By only showcasing the increasingly small area of nature in a certain way, and by displaying cultures in a way that is directly false in order to create a dramatic effect, more people are brought into the area with the belief that they too can become a part of the natural splendor.

The tee-pees represented in Klett’s images also take part in the process of simplifying the history of the American West and transforming it into false advertisement
of the region’s history and culture. In Klett’s photograph the viewer sees reconstructed ruins in which the original has been replaced by a sturdier, more permanent, equivalent. It functions as a backdrop for a history that is fabricated, or a myth created in order to better align itself with the stereotypical view of the Native Americans inhabiting the land. From a distance, the viewer cannot judge for him or herself whether the tee-pees are constructed in traditional or fake materials. Nor can the viewer determine if people actually occupy these dwellings.

By exposing the myth of the American West through their photography, Mark Klett and Robert Adams uncover the stereotypes, simplifications, and social constructions that have previously prevailed in the historical depiction of the region. While myth thrives in simplifications of larger concepts and social constructions, Klett and Adams’ photographs show a nuanced image of the American West that is not easily visible in the homogeny of the popular narratives. Their photographs are ambiguous in nature as the themes they convey can propel a multitude of different ideologies depending on from which perspective they are viewed, whether historical, environmental, or ecological. They display the American West as a cultural melting pot and a crossroads of people and their traditions, histories, and cultures. Furthermore, the images also reveal that each cultural group has several sub-groups that are visible straight down to an individual level.

This problem has been tackled in the writings of historical interpretations of the American West; however, it is a problem that needs to be more visible in works of visual art. Individual artists describe the histories of their respective backgrounds but need to be tied together with how the cultural groups have interacted throughout the history of the American West. The region could never have evolved the way it has without the
interaction between cultures. To hide this fact between histories of single cultures, without explaining how these cultures have intermingled with others, would not have worked without extensive academic writing. By this I mean that what the two artists show in one single photograph in the blink of an eye, requires thousands of pages and years of scholarship to accomplish. Mark Klett and Robert Adams visualize through their work that the American West is a crossroads of continuously interacting cultures.
FIGURES

Figure 1. Robert Adams, *Cherry Trees, Öglunda, Sweden*, 1968.
Figure 2. Robert Adams, Kerstin's grandfather, the family farm, Öglunda, Sweden, 1968.
Figure 3. Robert Adams, *Colorado Springs, Colorado*, 1968.
Figure 4. Thomas Cole, *The Oxbow*, 1836.
Figure 5. Paul Strand, New York (Wall Street), photogravure from Camera Work 48, 1916.
Figure 6. Walker Evans, *Coca-Cola shack in Alabama*, 1935.
Figure 8. Dan Graham, *Homes for America*, 1966.
Figure 9. Tony Smith, *Die*, Steel with oiled finish, 183x183x183 cm, 1966.
Figure 10. Ansel Adams, *The Tetons and the Snake River*, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, 1942.
Figure 4. Timothy H. O'Sullivan, *Quartz Mill near Virginia City*, 1868.

Figure 5. Mark Klett, *Site of the Gould and Curry Mine, Virginia City, Nevada*, 1979.
Figure 14. Timothy O’Sullivan, *Comstock Mines*, 1868.

Figure 15. Mark Klett, *Strip Mine at the Site of Comstock Mines, Virginia City, NV*, 1979.
Figure 17. Mark Klett, Plywood Tee-Pees, Meteor Crater, Arizona, 5/30/82, 1982
Figure 19. Mark Klett, *Fruit Tree Planted long ago by Farmers, Oakwood Valley*, 1989.
Figure 7. William Henry Jackson, *Pulpit Rock at the Mouth of the Canyon*, 1869.
Figure 21. Mark Klett, *Site of Pulpit Rock, Echo Canyon, UT*, 1978.
Figure 8. Mark Klett, *Site of Pulpit Rock, Echo Canyon, UT*, 1997.
Figure 9. William Henry Jackson, Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, Utah, c.1880.
Figure 10. Mark Klett, Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, UT, 1978.
Figure 11. Kyle Bajakian, Devil’s Slide, Weber Canyon, UT, 1997.
to one between a fine cathedral town and a metropolis like London or Paris. In truth, there is only a very limited ground of comparison between the two localities, for in style and effects their respective structures differ as decidedly as the works of any two well-developed and strongly contrasted styles of human architecture.

Whatever is forcible, characteristic, and picturesque in the rock-forms of the Plateau country is concentrated and intensified to the utmost in the buttes. Wherever we find them, whether fringing the long escarpments of terraces or planted upon broad mesa, whether isolated or upon expansive plains, they are always bold and striking in outline and ornate in architecture. Upon their flanks and crests the decoration peculiar to the formation out of which they have been carved is most strongly portrayed and the profiles are most sharply cut. They command the attention with special force and quicken the imagination with a singular power. The secret of their impressiveness is obvious enough. Why one form should be beautiful and another unattractive; why one should be powerful, ornate, and suggestive, while another is meaningless, are questions for the psychologist rather than the geologist. Sufficient here is the fact. Yet there are some elements of impressiveness which are too patent to escape recognition. In nearly all buttes there is a certain disposition of form which is peculiarly emphatic, and this is seen in their profiles. Their ground plans are almost always indefinite and capricious, but the profiles are rarely so. These are usually composed of lines which have an approximate and sometimes

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Limerick, Patricia Nelson. "What on Earth is the New Western History?" Montana: The Magazine of Western History 40, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 61-64.


Olsson, Christian W. "Interview with Mark Klett, conducted by the author." Tempe, Arizona, 12 12, 2010.


ENDNOTES

1 Patricia Nelson Limerick, "What on Earth is the New Western History?" *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 40, no. 3 (Summer 1990), 62.


4 Limerick, "What on Earth is the New Western History?" 62.

5 Ibid.

6 Limerick, "What on Earth is the New Western History?" 61.


8 Ibid.

9 Conversely, at the time, contemporary scholarship published around the time of the launch of New Topographics in 1975 also proves to be scarce. As the subject has had time to mature, recent scholarship has portrayed the New Topographics exhibition in a more nuanced and multifaceted perspective compared to that described by previous generations of academics. It has become a great example of how a subject needs to be reflected and looked back upon in order to conceptually mature into something palatable.


13 Examples include Greg Foster Rice, John Rohrbach, and Catherine Zuromskis, all who have defined Robert Adams as central to the exhibition by making him the main focus of their respective articles.


15 Zuromskis, “Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography,” 300.

16 Zuromskis, “Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography,” 294.

17 Zuromskis, “Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography,” 290.
Zuromskis, “Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography,” 291.


Ibid.

Mark Klett, interview by Christian Olsson, Tempe, AZ, December 12, 2010.


Examples also include many modern popular Western movies and narratives such as The Lone Ranger (1933), How The West Was Won (1962) that were produced as historical dramas re-creating narratives of the past. Several authors of novels also experienced these narratives themselves in first person. Examples include Laura Ingalls Wilder and her Little House on the Prairie and John Steinbeck and The Grapes of Wrath.

Amy S. Greenberg, Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents. (Boston, Massachusetts: Bedford / St. Martin’s, 2012), 2.


Barthes writes “Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion.” He is using an ad produced by Paris Match in which a black child wearing a French uniform is saluting, meaning that the image is obscuring and showing French imperialism in the form of a manifestation of the French Empire. The image is showing imperialism while obscuring the real facts behind the act of creating an empire. This is what Barthes means is the true manifestation of myth. Roland Barthes, Mythologies. Translated by Anette Lavers (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 129


Yale University has recently put together a retrospective exhibition of all of Robert Adams’ work. In the online catalogue they have published and presented a brief chronology of Adams’ life. The exhibition, which is travelling world wide, is scheduled to continue until the summer of 2014. Yale University Art Gallery, Robert Adams: The Place We Live, http://artgallery.yale.edu/adams/chronology.php (September 2010).

34 Even though this statement is outdated and not relevant to the current situation in Gothenburg, Sweden, it certainly was when Adams made this personal account. Robert Adams, *To make it Home, Photographs of the American West* (New York, New York: Aperture, 1989), 168.


37 Ibid.

38 Robert Adams, "Introduction," xi-xii.


41 Barthes writes “Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion.” Barthes, *Mythologies*, 129


43 *Virgin Land* is viewed as the start of the field of American studies and marks a significant contribution to the field. This foundation is what Marx continues building upon. Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 6-7.


49 Miller, *The Empire of The Eye*, 47.

50 Miller, *The Empire of The Eye*, 83.

51 Miller, *The Empire of The Eye*, 58-59


53 Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, 53.

54 Today, the museum’s name is George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film. It is the world’s oldest museum of photography and opened in 1949. The building itself is from 1905 and is since 1966 a designated National Historic Landmark.

56 Ibid.


62 Szarkowski, Walker Evans, 17.


66 Ibid.


70 According to Jurovics, photographers such as Wynn Bullock, Minor White, and Paul Caponigro also favored this type of aesthetics. Toby Jurovics, "Same as it Ever Was: Re-reading New Topographies." In Reframing the New Topographics, by Greg Foster-Rice and John Rohrbach (Chicago, Illinois: Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2010), 1.


78 Finis Dunaway, "Beyond Wilderness," 25.


80 Zuromskis, “ Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography,” 300.


82 Finis Dunaway, "Beyond Wilderness," 27.


84 Miller, The Empire of The Eye, 47, 58-59, 83.

85 Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs, 128.

86 Approaching the issue of regionalism while adhering to the modern standard of West being west of the Mississippi River, in defining the regionalism of Klett’s work, consider the Western states omitted from his purview: Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

87 Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs, 143.

88 Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs, 135, 149.

89 Throughout his oeuvre, Klett emphasizes the West as a cultural crossroads rather than a financial and economic success story created by economic and political interests in the power centers of the eastern United States. Klett explores the issue of the standard Anglo-American migration narrative, and how it interacts with other cultural narratives occupying the same landscape. In the words of Donald Worster, “the invaded and subject peoples of the West must be given a voice in the region’s history.” Donald Worster, “Beyond the Agrarian Myth” in Trails: Toward a New Western History ed. Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 16. Klett, within his oeuvre, provides this voice to the peoples of the Western territories who were not of Anglo-American descent. Klett’s work highlights the impact of Manifest Destiny as explained in Philip Fisher’s book Hard Facts, in which he describes and defines the many different aspects of Manifest Destiny, American Exceptionalism, and what the influx of European and Anglo-American mythologies about the region, ideologies, stereotypes, and social constructions, such as race and ethnicity, have had on the invaded subjects in the West.

90 In his book Camera Lucida, Barthes claims that a photograph is truer in its appearance than a painting and as such has more legitimacy. He says that the “photograph is literally an emanation of the referent,” which would serve as an umbilical cord between the referred object in the photograph and the viewer. To this extent, the photograph would be more effective to reinforce elements of myth than a painting, lithograph, or a drawing, which in turn makes it more powerful to give agency to such myths. Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 80.

91 Trachtenberg, Reading American Photographs, 128-129.
Mark's father, Henry Klett, was also from upstate New York and served as a flight instructor during World War II and while stationed in California he met Mark’s mother, who is from the San Joaquin Valley. Fox, *View Finder*, 127. Later on, Henry became an airplane pilot for TWA. When Mark turned sixteen, he made his own solo flights in a plane. The family was quite privileged, making it possible for Klett to take up the art of photography first as a hobby, and later also as a profession. Fox, *View Finder*, 127-128.


Mark Klett "Preface,” 2.


Klett "Rephotographing Nineteenth-Century Landscapes,” 15.

Ibid.

Klett "Rephotographing Nineteenth-Century Landscapes,” 12.


Mining in the West introduced a new settlement pattern vastly different from the usual pattern of settling land. It meant a rapidly urbanized type of settlement in very concentrated populations. The author lists ten points of how mining affected the American West. She starts out with the violation of land rights and the forced movement of the present native population. She later continues with listing logistical, social, financial, and political matters. In the second part of the essay, she continues with explaining that the nineteenth-century mining boom in the West was not the largest mining boom in the United States but was

For example, the Eastern and what would become the Midwest parts of the United States were settled with very dispersed rural populations that used the land for farming and ranching. The settlement pattern of the West skipped that step and instead constructed mining towns overnight. This meant that the large communities that sprung up overnight had no means of providing food for their populations. They were completely reliant on shipments of supplies coming either by rail or by wagon. They were tangibly bound to the industrial centers on the coasts, or to nearby urban areas. This created a paradox between myth and reality. Limerick explains that even though these communities have an historical reputation of independence, they became the least independent newly formed settlements in the United States because of the lack of food and the focusing of finding minerals rather than providing sustenance. The development of these communities therefore became reversed in terms of their priorities when compared to their eastern counterparts, with food coming second after wealth. Limerick also explains that when farms finally did started to appear close to these communities, the crops were poor due to the amount of pollution emerging from the mines. Limerick, “The Gold Rush and the Shaping of the American West,” 32.


114 Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, *The Journey of Coronado 1540-1542: from the City of Mexico to the Grand Canon of the Colorado and the Buffalo plains of Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska as Told by Himself and His Followers* (New York, New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1904), 65.


116 Manifest Destiny is a term deriving from the 1845 when politicians acted according to puritan and founder of Massachusetts Bay colony John Winthrop’s words in 1630 when he said that the new colony of New England “shall be as a City upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.” Robert C. Winthrop, *Life and Letters of John Winthrop, from his Embarkation for New England in 1630, with the Charter and Company of the Massachusetts Bay, to his death in 1649* (Boston, Massachusetts: Ticknor and Fields, 1867) 19.

Manifest destiny was first used in July 1845 by columnist John L. O’Sullivan offered a single term for this sentiment, which incorporated many ideas. These ideas included a vision of a prophecy, a division between what was determined to be pre-history and modern, but also a sense of conquest and ideas about racial classifications and categorization, as well as rights to both ones own body as to ones own claim to land. Fisher argues that the power of the phrase originates in its first word.“...it is only at a certain moment that the future becomes evident and inevitable and that then, as a result, the past can be sorted into […] significant features that contributed to the founding of what can now be seen to be the future end and […] historical debris, fruitless possibilities that will never be realized. Once destiny is manifest, and is felt by
consensus to be manifest, the writing of history can begin.” Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 25.

Amy S. Greenberg explains that the politicians, and among them many citizens, believed that the United States was a special place God wanted to thrive and protect. It was God’s divine will that the country should expand across the North American continent. But Winthrop also envisioned the new land to be a call for people all over the world to establish the superiority of Puritanism over Protestantism and Catholicism. Greenberg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion*, 2-4.

The supporters of this belief insisted that the course towards an American empire was both obvious, a manifested right, and inescapable, that it was destined to happen. The first use of the word Manifest Destiny was in connection to the aftermath of the War of 1812 when John Quincy Adams defended Andrew Jackson’s invasion of Florida. The document in question he called the “great gun” in which Adams defended and justified American expansionism to both Europeans and to American citizens. The term was meant to scare and persuade European nations to believe that it actually was God’s will for the United States to expand beyond its current borders and the best action for those nations should be to give America the territory it required and demanded to continue expansion. For the American people, the document was meant to give the population confidence in God’s will and to support the expansionist plans of the government. Weeks, *Building the Continental Empire*, 59-60.

Even though the term was first coined in 1812, the sentiments that it stand for originates and have been used ever since Winthrop’s original words in 1630. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson published a book, which he called Notes on the State of Virginia. In this work, he writes about how land should be used. He writes, “Those who labour (sic.) in the earth are the chosen people of God, of ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 242.

This statement was his attempt to explain that the United States cannot stop expanding even though urbanization and industrialization now provides for the needs of Americans. Instead, he argued, that people should move back into the countryside and continue to expand the nation. Furthermore, he argued, that if the earth is farmed, it is also used, which means that the settlers have the right to claim the land. This is not the case if the farmers decide to settle in an urban environment. He also argued that government and organizations were corrupt but the common man could never be corrupted, providing he keep continuing to expand the nation. Because of the virtue of the United States and its citizens, farmers in particular, Americans should consider it their mission to further expand across the continent. Weeks, *Building the Continental Empire*, 62.

117 American Exceptionalism is another central component to Manifest Destiny and originates along the same trail of ideas. William Bradford’s account from 1650 in his *Of Plimoth Plantation* provides a similar narrative as the one of Winthrop’s in 1630. The difference is that he establishes the foundations for the racially based struggle between Bradford’s own colony of civilized Europeans and the nonwhite savages, which he on one more than one occasion call barbarians in need of God’s grace. William Bradford, *Bradford’s History “Of Plimoth Plantation”: From the Original Manuscript* (Boston, Massachusetts: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1898), 434.

Greenberg argues that Bradford’s statement provided a foundation upon which expansion could be justified on the grounds of race, social structure, and religion. It did not matter whether the opponents happened to be Native tribes, or French and Spanish Catholics, who all claimed territory south and west of the original English settlement. The expansion of the early Republic was therefore seen as inevitable since virtually every other composition of people inhabiting the North American continent was by the settlers considered as inferior in one, or many, of the three conditions. Religious and racial, followed by social superiority made the inhabitants of the new republic look upon themselves as God’s chosen people for the continent.

The concept of American Exceptionalism was born, and was to become the center most important element in the social construction of Manifest Destiny. Greenberg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion*, 4-5.

To this extent, American Exceptionalism and the rules it operated under was also subject to the citizens of the United States. During a debate in congress in November of 1811 the question of voting for the elections in the newly acquired Louisiana Territory came to question. It shows the sentiments present in the United States during the times of who was the right kind of people to settle the newly attained territories. The original motion put forward in congress concluded that “every free while male citizen residing in the said
the British ceded the territory, the United States viewed it as an invitation to claim the land. Controlling a
Paris, who still regarded the land belonging to the Empire rather than the
British had adopted the French model of treatment once France ceded the land to Britain after the Treaty of
would rather see
and guns were luxuries that were now viewed as necessities for modern life. Therefore, the native tribes
traders for support. Goods the native populations had seen no need for in the past such as blanket, knifes,
Appalachian Mountains. By 1763 the native populations in these areas relied on either French
Britain, especially after the American War of Independence, began allying with the native tribes west of the
Spanish, would come together and withstand the American expansion. However, Spain lacked both the
westward expansion. The belief was that the many native tribes together, under the assumed friendship
Spain in order to survive once Spain owned most of the land used for agriculture. Later on during the
eighteenth-century, however, Spain adopted the French model in order to repress the ongoing American
settlements, respected their use of land. Douglas Hurt, The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846
(Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), xiii.
France’s liberal policies towards land ownership in North America even allowed native communities to
acquire land through formal governmental procedures if they recognize themselves as being subjects of the
French Empire. Although it was successful for the French-Native relationships it was not successful for
France’s ambitions for empire. Fisher mentions that the population aspect was one of the most fundamental
Since they failed to populate their territories, they also failed to keep them. Therefore it is important not
only to lay claims to land, but also to hold it through keeping it settled. Fisher says that without a successful
marriage, there is no future and therefore, the territory that is claimed soon also becomes a ruin of the past.
Since the French often did not bring their families to the new land, many of their settlers intermarried with
the Native Americans and therefore, they also soon became more integrated with the Indian populations
than the opposite. Fisher, Hard Facts, 56.
Spain used several methods to deal with the native populations’ right to landownership. The most common
practice for the Spanish was the method of inclusion and assimilation, which lead to the many missionary
outposts in today’s American Southwest. The tactic was to assimilate the native population into their own
culture meaning first and foremost becoming Catholic and abiding under Christian laws. Hurt, The Indian
Frontier, 1763-1846, xiv.
Marc Simmons explains that even though the Spanish treatment of the native population was poor at best in
the early years of Spanish presence in today’s Southwest, they believed they had a right to life and their
property. However, as this was the case, in the same time they also believed it was in their right to reshape
the native population in God’s image, “for their own good.” Simmons writes not just about Albuquerque,
NM in this work but incorporates the entire Southwestern United States and the lower Rio Grande in his
narrative. He explores how the Spaniards treated the native populations of New Mexico as well as what
would become the surrounding states before continuing with exploring the history of the city itself. Marc
Simmons, Hispanic Albuquerque, 1706-1846 (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico
Press, 2003), 2.
In Upper Louisiana the Spanish decided to follow the French model of trading and exchanging gifts with
the native population in exchange for land. This way, the tribes would be dependent on the friendship of
Spain in order to survive once Spain owned most of the land used for agriculture. Later on during the
eighteenth-century, however, Spain adopted the French model in order to repress the ongoing American
westward expansion. The belief was that the many native tribes together, under the assumed friendship of
Spain, would come together and withstand the American expansion. However, Spain lacked both the
commitment and financial resources for such an endeavor, which in practice left every native tribe to fend
for themselves in the struggles against the United States. Hurt, The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846, xiv.
Britain, especially after the American War of Independence, began allying with the native tribes west of the
Appalachian Mountains. By 1763 the native populations in these areas relied on either French or British
traders for support. Goods the native populations had seen no need for in the past such as blanket, knifes,
and guns were luxuries that were now viewed as necessities for modern life. Therefore, the native tribes
would rather see status quo retained than starting a conflict with Britain regarding land ownership. The
British had adopted the French model of treatment once France ceded the land to Britain after the Treaty of
Paris, who still regarded the land belonging to the Empire rather than the individual tribes. However, when
the British ceded the territory, the United States viewed it as an invitation to claim the land. Controlling a
The cultural systems the United States regarded the native tribes’ use and ownership of land, as such, differed greatly from how the European nations viewed the same, and is what is central in many of Mark Klett’s photographs. After the American War of Independence (April 19, 1775 to September 3, 1783) the newly formed United States adopted a strict policy of separate spaces between natives and settlers. According to Hurt, the policy included the elimination of native rights to land with “cession treaties that gave them legal title to specific land that white settlers could purchase as their own.” This is because, in contrast to the Spanish, British, and French who considered the land the native tribes occupied their own without any violent removal, the United States demanded the native tribes to give up their land and move before the land could be considered being under the control of the United States. This more than often resulted in violent conflicts between settlers who often squatted, meaning setting up settlement illegally without permission, on native land. The squatting was often the preceding the cession treaties, which were designed to protect the settlers and drive the native population away. The policy, based on American Exceptionalism involving racial and cultural superiority and the desire for land, power, and empire, therefore is considered exclusionary in contrast to the inclusionary method based on inclusion and integration adopted by the European Empires trying to establish colonies in North America. Hurt, The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846, xiv.

One of the main problems, which also are its great lasting success, with the Indian removal policies in the United States during 1850’s is the grouping together of many Native American tribes into one unit. When the decade was over, Cherokee, Creeks, Delawares, Iroquois, Moravian and wild Apaches had all been lumped together under one umbrella term, which came to be “Indians.” By the end of the decade, they were all robbed of their status as individual nations, and thus also of their individual and separate cultures, structures, languages, and distinguishing marks and became classified as Indians when dealing with the United States government. Fisher, Hard Facts, 32.

One of the most notable manifestations of this are the many depictions by George Catlin of Native Americans, which he represented with a whole array of symbols from many different tribes appearing in a single painting. As with any umbrella term, it has the sole purpose of generalization. As mentioned by Fisher, one of the effects of the term is that accomplishments, but more importantly punishment and responsibility, became shared by all the Native American nations alike. This meant that the sin of the one nation also became the sin of every nation, and that every nation had to share responsibility equally through collective legislative punishment. By categorizing the tribes under one single umbrella term “Indians” the deprivation of cultural identities became easier, an undertaking which has lasting effects up until this day. The total collapse of subcategories meant that the government gave itself the right to question indigenous peoples’ right to individual patches of land. The classifications emphasized that the distinction between Native groups that settled in a specific territory, with established villages, was no different than a nomad group. This underlined that in the eyes of the United States government the land did not belong to the nomad tribe simply because they were their first. The land in the officials’ eyes was not used nor worked on, which meant that there could not possibly be any claims to the same land regardless if tribes had used the land as a hunting ground for generations. Because the land was not physically settled and used, or to use the official term “improved upon,” the land could not be claimed as owned. Only the individuals who use the land and convert it from wilderness into settlements have any real claims to the land. This policy and definition became very convenient for the United States government in solving the question of land rights. By using the umbrella term Indians, and by doing so confining all of them to a single set of definitions, the groups who were not physically settled anywhere automatically lost all their lands. And as a group, they were racialized. Fisher, Hard Facts, 54.

While discussing American expansionism and Manifest Destiny the notion of race becomes the central element from which every single notion rests upon. The massive displacement, persecution, and systematic extermination of the groups of people already inhabiting the North American continent before the European settlers arrived is the very dark side of both Manifest Destiny, and what the term American exceptionalism really implies. Ian F. Haney López writes that the notion of race especially is a definition of a “large group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their

Because race is a social constriction and does not follow any scientific logic it is also a part of a larger context and is often related to gender and class. López, “The Social Construction of Race,” 170. Also, because race is an aspect of comparison, one race cannot exist without another to compare it to. The concept of race is irrelevant if it does not have a comparison. Therefore, because the concept is based on comparison, races are bound to become pinned against one another by people trying to gain from such an evaluation. López, “The Social Construction of Race,” 168.

Race is therefore central in understanding how Manifest Destiny functioned as a constructed ideology. Greenberg points out that racism as a concept is not an American invention or exclusive to the newly formed United States but is a European concept brought to the North American continent in the seventeenth-century with a clear defined sense of European racial superiority. Amy S. Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 91-92.

Racism, according to Richard Drinnon, “was in a real sense the enabling experience of the rising American empire.” The idea was that inferior races, meaning everyone of non-European descent, would disappear under the pressure from the constructed and imagined Anglo-Saxon race of European-Americans. Richard Drinnon, Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), xxvii.

Racism of this sort soon provided grounds for emerging pseudo-sciences to develop further. One of these sciences, phrenology, arose in the early nineteenth-century and meant that the measurement of skulls would prove that intelligence and racial superiority would provide legitimate grounds for the proceeding of Manifest Destiny. These studies provided pseudo-evidence that the larger the skull, the more intelligence a person possessed. The studies also would provide questionable evidence for that the race with the larger skull would not only be more intelligent, but also more aggressive and capable to defend itself during an attack. Since the native population, according to these studies, possessed the smaller skulls they were considered weaker in both intellect and moral values. Therefore, it was the white peoples’ destiny to conquer and educate these people. Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire, 93.

L. Bradford Prince’s (born in New York in 1840, died in 1922) The Student’s History of New Mexico, the first survey book of the history of New Mexico published in 1921 provides a good example of how education of the native population played a big role in the continuation of Manifest Destiny in the Southwest. He writes, “the education of the Indians has not been neglected. The University at Santa Fé took up this work in 1886 and established for that specific purpose the Ramona School in memory of Helen Hunt Jackson. This was successfully carried on for a number of years, until 1894, when it was superseded by the government Indian schools, established in Santa Fé and Albuquerque.” This tactic implies that the native population needs special schools in order to learn. The studies also quis to develop further. One of these sciences, phrenology, arose in the early nineteenth-century and meant that the measurement of skulls would prove that intelligence and racial superiority would provide legitimate grounds for the proceeding of Manifest Destiny. These studies provided pseudo-evidence that the larger the skull, the more intelligence a person possessed. The studies also would provide questionable evidence for that the race with the larger skull would not only be more intelligent, but also more aggressive and capable to defend itself during an attack. Since the native population, according to these studies, possessed the smaller skulls they were considered weaker in both intellect and moral values. Therefore, it was the white peoples’ destiny to conquer and educate these people. Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire, 93.

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the terms frontier and the West interchangeably as if they stood for and explained the same concept. Instead, the ethnocentricity of the terms West and frontier suggest a point of origin. The English settlers needed to define the place that separated their settlements from the center, and furthermore required to find a term for the border between the newly acquired territories and the constantly moving border. As such, the newly conquered territories became the West and the border separating the West from the rest of the landmass that was soon to be conquered became the frontier. The ethnocentricity of the term West has tempted historians and scholars to create another term, which they define as the Far West. The Far West, Limerick argues, is a term describing Utah, Oregon, New Mexico, and California. Patricia Nelson Limerick, “The Case of Premature Departure: The Trans-Mississippi West and American History,” The Journal of American History, Vol. 78 No. 4, (March 1992), 1380-1.

The answer to the question what the Far West is far from therefore becomes obvious. It is far from the original colonies from which the United States originated. Therefore, it also suggests that the ethnicity of which the United States originates from is the Anglo settlers from Europe. The Hispanics and the hundreds of Native groups already occupying the territory constituting the Far West therefore automatically becomes subjects of the rulers creating the terminology of what constitutes the West, and furthermore the Far West. Furthermore, Asian populations had started arriving on the North American West coast very early on in the country’s history. Eastern provincialism therefore becomes the ruling agenda of the Far West. An Eastern point of view dominates the agenda, putting the east in the center, which therefore creates the room for a definition of a West and a Far West. These distinctions emerge from definitions put in place when European settlers first arrived on the Eastern seaboard. The ethnocentricity of the scholars who put these terms into place continues onto this day. They have since become established terms for which to define the nation.

Limerick elaborates on why the history of North America is always read from an Eastern perspective. The history of the United States, she argues, is seen as a linear narrative originating in the East, and ending in the West. She challenges this east-west reading of American history by inserting not only the Indian populations in the equation, but also the Asian migration, most prominently the Chinese, foremost landing the American West coast. Also, she notes, the American explorers travelling and documenting the geography, geology, and cartography of the United States explored what they described as wilderness, “a kind of pristine natural landscape in which Indians lived more as symbols than as three-dimensional human beings.” The problem with recognizing other discovery stories about the United States is originating in the problem of point of view together with multiculturalism. Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Disorientation and Reorientation: The American Landscape Discovered from the West,” The Journal of American History, Vol. 79 No. 3, (December 1992), 1022.


120 Another suspect for the creation of myth, and stereotypical images of the American West and the native way of living in the nineteenth-century is the American photographer Edward Curtis, and his work with taking portraits of the Native American populations throughout the West. The problem with his work becomes evident when studying the artifacts used as props in his portraits. In many cases his photographs were staged to such a degree that they rather served as stereotypical reinforcements rather than as the ethnological studies they were intended for. While his belief was that he was making an accurate documentation of Native American life, his work falls short when he stages the scenes with taking away modern artifacts such as clocks from his images, puts feather hair pieces on the heads of natives from tribes not participating in that tradition, and staging the backgrounds with backdrops. Martha H. Kennedy, “Introduction” in The Plains Indian photographs of Edward S. Curtis ed. Edward S. Curtis (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska University Press, 2001), 2-3.

120 Martha A. Sandweiss, however, argues that the fact that Curtis staging his photographs is not that important since the accuracy of his photographs was not important for his commercial goals. By saying so, Sandweiss is participating in the myth surrounding the Native Americans and their way of living and by doing so, upholding the stereotypical image of the native cultures in the United States. Martha H. Kennedy, “Introduction” in The Plains Indian photographs of Edward S. Curtis ed. Edward S. Curtis (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska University Press, 2001), 2-3.
Curtis, as Sandweiss argues, did not think that faking the portraits were impediments to his commercial goals; rather, he thought that it was important for the natives he portrayed. By portraying them in a stereotypical way, he hoped that viewers on the east coast would be interested in native goods and what they have to sell. Martha A. Sandweiss, “Picturing Indians” in The Plains Indian photographs of Edward S. Curtis ed. Edward S. Curtis (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska University Press, 2001), 31-33. Therefore, Curtis argued, faking the photographs would strengthen the native economy within the United States. By doing so, he is participating in myth creation regarding the native cultures. Parallels can be drawn to Klett’s Plywood Tee-Pees, Meteor Crater, Arizona, 5/30/82, where the builders of the tee-pes might have similar goals. By upholding a certain myth about the native cultures and the natives’ way of living, the viewer will get a feeling of false authenticity. The stereotypical image is a powerful way of portraying genuineness and legitimacy, which would lend itself to any business owner trying to earn something on the side. As such, the myth itself is a financial and cultural exploitation.

Philip Fisher notes that a ruin is seen as a reverse monument. A monument signifies success and triumph whereas a ruin signifies human failure. An empty cabin, a foundation, or other remnants left behind carries witness of a lost history and a lack of continuation. Ruins can be represented either through material things such as houses, but also through people. The last of a tribe is a ruin of that people’s history and marks and end. They represent the dying and the past, which will be replaced by something new. Fisher, Hard Facts, 121.


Limerick also explains that the Asian experience and encounter with the American landscape first and foremost was expressed during times of social uncertainty and stress. One example is the poems originating from the Angel Island facility in the San Francisco Bay area where Asian immigrants were kept waiting for weeks and sometimes months. Later documentations of the landscape did not occur until World War Two, when Japanese immigrants and their children were sent to internment camps in the American desert. They often commented on the aridness, lack of plant life, the heat, and flatness of the landscape. Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Disorientation and Reorientation: The American Landscape Discovered from the West,” The Journal of American History, Vol. 79 No. 3, (December 1992), 1028-1029.


Of course, neither the English nor Latin American immigrants were the first people to settle the Bay Area. The first set of people arriving to the area came around 10,000 years ago and consisted of Miwok and Penutian tribes coming from the north. The estimates are that they settled the Bay Area around 5,000 years ago and have, linguistically, been connected to the Maya people. Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 11. Little is left of these early settlers but it is clear that they set up permanent settlement in the Marin area around this time. During the centuries, the authors, Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, of the book Headlands argue, they achieved something that is rare in human history, which is that archeologically, there has been no sign of conflict or war for millennia while these...
people lived alone in the area. The first European contact in the Bay Area came in 1597 when Sir Francis Drake passed the area looking for a northwest passage. Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 12.

While he ultimately sailed across the Pacific not establishing a colony in California the Spanish governor of Alta California, Gaspar de Portola did when he lead an expedition 1769, which was like the later ones by the United States, financed by the government. According to the records, he spent forty-four days in the Bay Area mapping, exploring, and conversing with the Miwok people.

Around the same time, Russians had crossed the Behring Sea in order to establish fur trading posts along the coast. In 1812, the Russians purchased land from the Indians sixty miles north of the Bay Area. The land developed into a trading post from which the Russians, unendorsed by the Spanish crown, conducted trading with the Spaniards until Mexican independence 1822. Support from St. Petersburg, however, gradually declined and in 1841, John Sutter of New Helvetia bought the land from the Russians, with that Russian influence in California ultimately disappeared. Russians had rediscovered the Northwest North American continent as early as the sixteenth-century when Admiral Behring crossed the Behring strait over to what now is Alaska. There had for long been a Russian presence in Alaska and for long, it was seen as an extension and natural part of the Russian Empire. The main means of income in this area was the same as later for Russians arriving in California, which was fur trading. Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 14.

With the Mexican-American War 1846-1848, the United States seized control of California through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February 1848. According to the authors, John Sutter of New Helvetia made a good deal when purchasing the land from the Russian as gold soon was discovered on the land and contributed to the California Gold Rush. Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 15.

Amy S. Greenberg adds that three months after signing over California to the United States the gold was found on his farm. These two events marked a new type of immigration, the ones of the Asians and the Latin Americans in the search of gold. Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 263. This, apart for being the last shift of power in California, came to be the end of uncontrolled immigration to the area.

The reason a large network of these piers was constructed in the Bay Area is because of accidents such as the one that occurred on March 5, 1853. The Pacific Mail steamer *S.S. Tennessee*, a ship barely four years old, was running shuttle service between the Panamanian port of Isthmus and San Francisco, carrying gold-seeking immigrants to, and bringing gold out from the Bay Area. Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 99-100.

On this occasion, she was carrying 551 passengers from Panama and the Mexican port of Acapulco. But on the morning of March 5, heavy fog delayed, and ultimately brought the final ledge of the voyage to an abrupt halt. The ship struck ground and ultimately sank. None of the 551 passengers lost their lives but the wreck is still present in the bay as a memorandum of the heavy traffic and the perils present in the San Francisco Bay. Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 100-102.

The after effects of the wreck was that a lighthouse was constructed on the site, something congress had set aside $25.000 for before the accident, but also led to the construction of piers around the bay area to aid in the event of an emergency.


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Temporary Chinese workers who were brought in to work on the railways but decided to overstay and become a part of American society established long before the Portuguese pattern of overstaying Miles DeCoster, Mark Klett, Mike Mandel, Paul Metcalf, and Larry Sultan, *Headlands: The Marin Coast at the Golden Gate* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 106.

During the construction of the transcontinental railroads Charles Crocker, who founded the Central Pacific Railroad in 1861, was first confronted with the problem with lack of cheap labor when approaching the Sierra Nevada in 1865. He had previously hired Dutch immigration workers for other construction projects. There are many problems with Ambrose’s book; one of them is his treatment of Chinese, Irish, and Native American workers in connection to their work of the Central Pacific Railroad. He relies on stereotypes when saying that the “Chinese were ideal workers. Did as they were told…” without even criticizing or intellectually confronting his sources or quotes. He is simply buying the argument said about the different ethnicities, which is not good for academic development and tradition. The book also contains many factual errors such as how interstates today are crossing each other, when Germany was unified (he states 1861, and that N. B. Judd was appointed ambassador at that year) when it was not unified until ten years later. He also states that the railroads introduced standardized time zones in 1878 when the fact stands that they did it in 1883. However, for a history of Chinese workers working for the railroad the book is a good compliment to others available. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing like it in the world: The Men who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 149.

At the time, there were around sixty thousand Chinese immigrants living in California. The reason they were scoped out for being willing to work for the railroad was pure racism. They had come to California for the same reason as the immigrants arriving on the *S.S. Tennessee* and the many thousands of white settlers did, which was to get rich by finding gold. However, the Chinese immigrants were severely discriminated against by both companies and California law. By law, they had to pay a certain mining permission tax of $4.00 per person plus a $2.00 water tax. If they had children, many more taxes would apply such as a certain $2.00 school tax and property tax. These were taxes that did exist to some degree for other miners but not as prominently as for the Chinese. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing like it in the world: The Men who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 151. These immigrant waves would come to rival the slave trade on the East Coast during a time where slave labor was increasingly frowned upon. However, Chinese immigrant workers were still frowned upon by calling them “coolies,” a Hindu word meaning “unskilled labor.” Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing like it in the world: The Men who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 150.

The actual Chinese immigration wave started in 1858 after a series of pamphlets had been distributed throughout China advertising that Chinese merchants and workers living in the United States, and San Francisco in particular, received high wages. Companies that promised a safe journey and a free return in exchange for a percentage of the immigrant’s wages, plus a bonus on top of that, carried out the deal of shipping people across the Pacific Ocean. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing like it in the world: The Men who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 151. These immigrant waves would come to rival the slave trade on the East Coast during a time where slave labor was increasingly frowned upon. However, Chinese immigrant workers were still frowned upon by calling them “coolies,” a Hindu word meaning “unskilled labor.” Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing like it in the world: The Men who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 150.

The term was widely used throughout the British Empire and was later adopted by Americans who applied it to the Chinese. Governor Stanford of California, while campaigning, called the Chinese the “dregs of Asia” and in 1858 California banned Chinese immigration. Still, however, they kept arriving in greater numbers due to the lack of immigration and population control and due to the trafficking companies who kept advertising back in China. It is also important to mention that, as Eric Jay Dolin points out, that the United States by the nineteenth-century already have had a long and well established relationship with China. Right after the Boston Tea Party took place and when an embargo was placed on British exports to the United States was established the newly formed nation sought out ways of trading tea, fabrics, furs, silver, and other products directly with the Middle Kingdom. Eric Jay Dolin, *When America first met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York, New York: Liveright, 2012), xvii.

The first ship, the Empress of China, arrived in Canton, today Guangzhou in China, on February 22, 1784, only one year after the end of the revolution and the establishment of the new republic. Eric Jay Dolin,
The arrival of the Empress of China in China marked a very important statement, which said that the newly formed United States was now ready to compete on an international arena alongside its former adversaries and other nations around the globe. Even if, as Dolin points out, the date happen to coincide with President Washington’s birthday was just a coincidence, it still proved to be an important symbolic action for the United States. It marked the beginning of a relationship, which, as Dolon argues, would speed up the organization of western North America into American colonies for the purpose of trade, and would also mark the beginning of Chinese immigration to the United States. Eric Jay Dolin, *When America first met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York, New York: Liveright, 2012), 4-5.

Concluding facts of immigration to the Bay Area before the United States annexation in 1848 include the arrival of the Indians more than ten millennia ago, the arrival of the English in the sixteenth-century, the Spanish two centuries later, the Russians gradually arriving during the time in-between, American traders arriving over time, and the Mexican liberation of 1822. After the United States had annexed the area in 1848, however, people from more countries started arriving for the California Gold Rush, including the Portuguese who fled the British Empire in fear of a twenty year conscription, and the Chinese who were trafficked to the United States with the promise of high wages. Many Chinese later started working for the railroad because of the many discriminatory taxes and sentiments towards the people.


135 Important to the east-west reading of American history is the notion of the frontier. Historians and scholars more than often use the terms frontier and the American West interchangeably, and sometimes contradictory, can be found in their own textbooks. Gerald D. Nash writes in the introduction of his 1991 book *Creating the West* that “over the years historians have considered the West as a frontier, as a region, as an urban civilization, and as a mythical utopia.” Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), vii. He continues with writing that his “primary aim in this volume is to provide a succinct interpretive synthesis of these efforts since 1890.” The reason Nash is using 1890 as a starting point is because that is the year Frederick Jackson Turner declared the frontier closed. Nash’s book was published in honor of the centennial of that event. This also goes to prove that Nash’s belief in the frontier was strong. In both this book and his other volume called *The American West Transformed* from 1985, he focuses on the economical and financial success story of “the West” since the closing of Turner’s frontier. Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), vii.

The frontier and the West, as Nash claimed, is therefore the same thing. In Reginald Horsman’s book *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815* from 1975, Horsman talks about the frontier messengers that carried messages to the “Indians of the tans-Appalachian West.” Reginald Horsman, *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), 1. In his chapter on “The Development of Frontier Society,” the confusion between the two terms becomes even more evident when he describes frontiersmen as travelers pushing into the West. As such, the historians talk about the frontier as the West, but sometimes as a phenomenon following the frontier. The West, according to Horsman, becomes the region immediately following the border known as the frontier. But sometimes also, as in his chapter on the frontier society, frontiersmen also become people traveling in the West. To this extent, he defines the West as being the area on both sides of the frontier. Reginald Horsman, *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), 126-147.

The fluidity of the term West therefore further becomes subject to questioning. When the United States was founded, the West constituted the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains and east of the Mississippi River. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 4.

After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the West moved across the Mississippi River. During the Civil War, the West moved back across the river and Vicksburg, Mississippi all of a sudden represented the western most part of the country, as Texas constituted a separate entity in the struggle over slavery. After the Civil War, the West once again moves across the Mississippi River and turns into the West of today. But then, Limerick explains, the textbooks start talking about a “folding frontier,” which explains the frontier as a moving line unfolding in one direction, which is westward. Limerick explains the term as being invented for a textbook, *American Pageant*, in which the authors Bailey and Kennedy explains the frontier as an unknown map of opportunities unfolding, in terms of territorial expansion, for the United States. Limerick,"The Case of Premature Departure," 1382-1383.

Early historians preferred to talk about it as a fluid frontier, as opposed to the static one of European borders. The most significant aspect of the American frontier, the early historians argued, is that it lied on the border of “free land,” which was land they considered being up for the taking for whomever wanted it the most. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 3.

It is with the definition of the folding frontier the terms West and frontier takes one step further and develops into the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny is a socially constructed ideology that should be traced as a step-by-step process that have evolved from the ethnocentricty of the term West and how it relates to the center, which later became the frontier, which then evolved into the notion of the folding frontier, which then furthermore took a seemingly natural step and evolved into the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Scholars today have therefore settled with defining the frontier as the moving neutral border between the annexed, also called organized, new territories of the United States where meetings and exchanges between cultures occurred. R. Douglas Hurt defines it as a border in which European and Anglo-American cultures “interacted with the Indian nations in both commerce and war. Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846*, xiii.

Hurt suggests that the term must be used in a way that gave it meaning in the past. He highlights that the term had numerous meanings even for the various settlers and cultural groups present on the North American continent. The most prevalent meaning shared by the governments of France, Great Britain, and Spain was that the term frontier connoted the unsettled, sometimes scarcely populated area that both whites and natives used and sometimes shared. If not shared, it connoted an area which both, or many, cultural groups laid claim to based on each group’s cultural, economical, political, and military needs. The conflicted territory therefore became an armed frontier. Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846*, xiii.

Hurt also suggests that the people living in the area, defined as the frontier, very well knew what the word meant in practice, as they knew they were living in some sort of a buffer one between many different cultures attempting to gain and retain control over the territories. Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846*, xiv-xv.

It was an area where not only whites and native cultures met to exchange goods, but also to compete for space in the form of land, and land for the newly emerging United States meant control, which leads to power, and power ultimately leads to empire. The frontier therefore, as Hurt points out, is a cultural and social construct, but it makes it neither unreal nor more invalid. Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846*, xv.

As such, he claims, the frontier is not only a meeting space but also the real struggle for power of land in the pursuit of empire


This quote is found amongst Powell’s notes about the surveys regarding the native population in the area. Powell, John Wesley; National Academy of Sciences. *Surveys of the Territories.* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1864), 26.

The construction of the railroads therefore became closely associated with what is called Manifest Destiny. In David Haward Bain’s *Empire Express: Building the first Transcontinental Railroad*, he explains that the railroads would be the most effective means to conquer the North American interior from east-to-west. Bain, *Empire Express*, 49-50.

He argues that the construction of the railroad, from the east coast to California, which was granted statehood in 1850, would bring people to all the communities the railroad pass through. When the railroad passed through communities and cities such as Chattanooga, Atlanta, Detroit, and other cities further westward would grow. In order to apply for statehood, the regions need a larger population, and that growth would come with the railroad. As the California gold rush came underway and gained intensity, the railroads would start bringing goods both ways. Bain, *Empire Express*, 50.

It would bring goods and supplies towards California, and natural resources and wealth back to the East. Meanwhile, the cities along the way would provide jobs for the settlers moving westward by offering jobs associated with the repair of the trains and maintenance of the railroad. The expeditions led by King would further explore this area and the natural resources so that further industrial endeavors could follow the railroad and the gold rush and get people and enterprise to move westward.

In his book *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* from 1959, William H. Goetzmann provides the reader with a historical reading of the west that is in direct opposition to, and which the New Western Historians reacted towards, saying that “had the world seen such an assemblage of scientists and technicians marshaled under one banner. And like Napoleon’s own learned corps, these scientists, too, were an implement of conquest, with the enemy in this case being the unknown reaches of the western continent.” Goetzmann’s books and teachings aligns itself very well with what in the historiographies has been referred to as post war history, in which the economic and financial development of the American West is explained through the enterprises expanding through the region, one of which being the railways. William H. Goetzmann, *Army exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1959), 305.

This reading of history also aligns itself with the idea of Manifest Destiny, an idea which fundamental principles included a divine right for the United States to expand across, and conquer, the North American continent. By writing this, Goetzmann aims to connect the expansion of the United States, and Manifest Destiny with it, with past historical European empires, which lends itself to the east-to-west reading of American history.

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144 Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 121.


146 This quote is found amongst Powell’s notes about the surveys regarding the native population in the area. Powell, John Wesley; National Academy of Sciences. *Surveys of the Territories.* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1864), 26.

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150 Barthes, *Mythologies*, 129