MAPPING RHETORICAL FRONTIERS:

WOMEN’S SPATIAL RHETORICS

IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN WEST

A Dissertation in

English

by

Rosalyn Collings Eves

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The dissertation of Rosalyn Collings Eves was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Cheryl Glenn  
Liberal Arts Research Professor of English and Women’s Studies  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

John L. Selzer  
Professor of English

Hester Blum  
Assistant Professor of English

Stephen H. Browne  
Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

Robin Schulze  
Professor of English  
Head of the Department of English

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how the material exigencies of Western places and the circulating cultural discourses about those places constrain and enable the rhetorical choices of four nineteenth-century women rhetors living in the American West: Eliza R. Snow, a Mormon woman living in Utah; Sarah Winnemucca, a Northern Paiute woman from Nevada; Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton, a Californio woman married to a United States soldier; and Helen Hunt Jackson, an Anglo-American woman living in Colorado. By doing so, I aim to contribute to a small but growing body of scholarship theorizing rhetorics of space, and enrich our understanding of nineteenth-century rhetorical practices in America by considering such practices in the context of gender, race, religion, class—and place.

In chapter two, I draw on Eliza R. Snow’s published speeches in a contemporary newspaper, *The Woman’s Exponent*, to demonstrate how Snow uses discourses about Utah space as a constitutive rhetoric for Mormon women, ultimately using idea of Utah as a shorthand for group identity. In chapter three, I argue that Paiute activist Sarah Winnemucca’s rhetorical choices (in her public speeches, letters, and published autobiography) are influenced not only by her social position as an Indian woman, but by the expectations associated with the physical and cultural locations she occupies during her performances, including reservations, military forts, and lecture halls. In chapter four, I explore the ways Helen Hunt Jackson uses discourses of domestic, natural, and national spaces to extend her appeal for Indian reform in her novel *Ramona*. At the same time, I analyze how the ideologies associated with these discourses ultimately undercut her
reform agenda. In chapter five, I describe how María Amparo Ruiz de Burton intervenes in the perception of California spaces to challenge existing social hierarchies and reestablish the upper-class position of native Californios. The final chapter reflects on the different ways that space affects these women’s rhetorical practices, sketches out a “Grammar of Rhetorical Space” that encompasses these different effects of space on rhetoric, and offers some scholarly and pedagogical implications of this research.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“While race, class, and gender have long been viewed as the most significant markers of identity, geographic identity is often ignored or taken for granted. However, identities take root from particular sociogeographical intersections, reflecting where a person comes from and, to some extent, directing where she is allowed to go. Geographical locations influence our habits, speech patterns, style, and values—all of which make it a rhetorical concept or important to rhetoric.”—Nedra Reynolds, Geographies of Writing, 11.

At the Conference for College Composition and Communication in March 2007, I attended a panel on rhetorics of space presented by several graduate students.¹ Their presentations were mostly narrative, rather than formal scholarly arguments, but each of their narratives held something in common: they detailed how, for the first several years of their graduate career, they did not talk about the places that they were from. Each of them described a sense that acknowledging where they were from, whether it was an extremely rural town or a working class-class Italian-American family, would tarnish their academic credentials in the eyes of their professors and college peers. All of them sensed that their geographical location mattered to their rhetorical situation—both their current location in academia, which structured the style and content of their rhetorical utterances as graduate students, and their previous locations, which they feared might adversely affect their ethos. Their experience points to a critical, if often unanswered question about rhetorical practices: how do material places and their cultural associations affect writers’ and speakers’ persuasive options?

¹ These students were I. Moriah McCracken, Jack Downs, Cassandra Parente, Stacia Neeley, and D. B. Magee.
Despite the obvious influence of place in these students’ rhetorical practices, material place remains an undertheorized aspect of the rhetorical situation. This is not to say that there are no studies of rhetorical space; indeed, in the last few years several rich studies of rhetorical space have emerged: Nan Johnson’s *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910*, explains the ways that nineteenth-century rhetorical education for women—often in the form of conduct books—reinforced the message of an appropriate place for women’s rhetorical practices. But her book focuses more on how rhetoric “places” women than on how material place affects women’s rhetorical practices. Roxanne Mountford’s study of the ways that the physical shape of religious buildings constrains the rhetorical strategies of women preachers is a compelling example of the ways that material place affect rhetorical practices, but it is one of the few studies that attends to material place. Nedra Reynolds’s work addresses the ways one’s experience of place influences learning and the implications of this for composition in the classroom, but she is less interested in the effect of space on other kinds of rhetorical production. Gregory Clark’s book, *Rhetorical Landscapes*, looks incisively at the ways that landscapes themselves are rhetorical, but not at the way particular landscapes shape the rhetoric of individuals. Few of these studies look at the ways that geographic places (and the discourses that inform them) affect the rhetorical decisions and practices of rhetors.

Yet place is an essential—if often un(re)marked—factor in the production of rhetoric. As Clark points out, “scene” is the primary term of the Burkean pentad, “to the

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2 Both Nedra Reynolds and Roxanne Mountford attest to the need for more studies that consider the impact of material places on rhetorical performance. This undertheorizing of material space is not unique to rhetoric, however; spatial theorist Edward Soja suggests that, although scholars have studied how the “‘real’ material world” (6) is affected by social conditions, “relatively little attention is given to the causal flow in the other direction, that is, to how material geographies and spatial practices shape and affect subjectivity, consciousness, rationality, historicality, and sociality” (77).

3 A more complete review of rhetorics of space will be provided later in this introduction.
extent that it encompasses as well as shapes and constrains each of the [other terms]” (Rhetorical Landscapes 33). And while this fact may be widely acknowledged, we often fail to think critically about what this means. Because social relations are intimately bound up and enacted in particular places, place influences the way we perceive others. Places carry with them associations and stereotypes just as surely as do other markers of individuals, such as race, class, religion, sexual orientation, or religion. Thus, place can be an important factor constraining (or enabling) the presentation of one’s ethos. Place also informs the various subjectivities that audience members bring with them, and with which the rhetor must negotiate. Finally, place matters because it affects the exigencies of one’s daily life, and thus one’s rhetorical situation, in terms of access to audience, resources for rhetorical production, and so forth. As Mountford notes, the material aspects of particular places “often [have] unforeseen influence over a communicative event” (42) that go unexamined in rhetorical studies.

In this dissertation, I argue that our understanding of rhetorical practices in nineteenth-century America can be enriched by considering women rhetors in the American West in the context of their gender, race, class, religion—and place. More specifically, I explore how widely circulating cultural discourses about frontier spaces and the material conditions of particular places in the American West constrain and enable the rhetorical choices of nineteenth-century women rhetors. This dissertation project seeks to answer the general research question: what effect do the material and metaphorical aspects of Western space have on the rhetorical practices of nineteenth-century women living in the West? More specifically, I want to explore the following questions: How do exigencies related to geographical positioning (of the rhetor and her
audience) and the materiality of place constrain and enable these women rhetors? How do these women engage with prominent cultural attitudes toward specific places in their writing and speaking, both shaping and being shaped by these cultural discourses? How do they use and manipulate conceptions of space into rhetorical appeals on behalf of people and issues that matter to them? How are their understandings of place and space grounded in their experience of the physical landscape?

To answer these questions, I examine four nineteenth-century Western women from diverse racial, ethnic and religious groups whose writing and/or speaking grapples with issues of place: Eliza R. Snow, a Mormon woman living in Utah; Sarah Winnemucca, a Northern Paiute woman living in Nevada, Oregon and Washington; María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, a Californiana married to a United States soldier; and Helen Hunt Jackson, an Anglo-American woman living in Colorado who paid several extended visits to California.

Why Write about Western Women?

In writing about nineteenth-century women in the American West, I am inevitably confronted with questions about why I have chosen to focus on the West, and why I have chosen to focus only on women. I have selected to write about the American West because it played (and plays) a crucial role in U.S. self identification. As scholars such as Frederick Turner, Henry Nash Smith, and others have argued, the American West—in both its literal and conceptual manifestations—has had a powerful shaping influence on

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4 Although the byline of Winnemucca’s autobiography reads “Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins,” I am adhering to the practice adopted by most scholars of calling her by her maiden name.
Thus, the American West represents a particularly suitable space for exploring the influence of place on rhetorical production. Moreover, the American West is a marked place that allows me to more easily track the influence of space. Because the East often functions as the normalized site for identity in nineteenth-century America, place was naturalized in Eastern discourse in ways that it was not naturalized in the nineteenth-century West, where the cultural value of place was constantly shifting—for some the West represented the endless possibilities of the United States nation (Turner), for others it represented an untamed space that threatened civilization and needed to be domesticated (Kaplan). Thus, the West provides an ideal site for examining how space gets constructed rhetorically through circulating social discourse, and how that space in turn affects identity and cultural discourse. In addition, given increasing interest in reclaiming gendered voices of not only women but other marginalized groups, the American West proves a rewarding site for study because of its diverse populations:

5 In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner declared to the American Historical Association that “The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West” (3). In related arguments, Gregory Clark argues in Rhetorical Landscapes that American identity has been largely influenced by the shared experience of the American landscape, particularly in the West. Paul Hjartarson argues that nations like Canada and the U.S. have overcome the difficulties that “settler-invader” colonies (where invading people displace indigenous peoples, and the nation as a whole lacks the racial, linguistic, and religious homogeneity of some countries) face in establishing a national identity by strengthening and/or constructing a national identity through the public perception of that nation’s landscape.

6 I use the term “marked” in the same sense scholars invoke when discussing “marked” gender or race. An “unmarked” category—like whiteness, masculinity, Eastern space—often serves as the “invisible” category against which others are measured. One’s location in the East needed no explanation or justification, but one’s location in the West often required some measure of explanation (and often continues to do so).

7 For the past two decades, historians of western women have made convincing arguments that studies of nineteenth-century history in America are incomplete without considerations of the West, and that western histories are incomplete without considering the experiences of women (see Susan Armitage, Elizabeth Jameson, and Glenda Riley). Literary scholars like Annette Kolodny and Brigitte Georgi-Findlay have persuasively argued that gender and geographical positioning matter to women’s literary production. Following this same line of reasoning, studies of nineteenth-century rhetoric are similarly incomplete without considerations of Western women, as geographical positioning also affects rhetorical production.

8 However, as Antonia Casteñada makes a point of emphasizing, this diversity predates Euroamerican emigration west and “the recent emphasis placed on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century west as . . . the ‘most racially and culturally diverse region of the nation’ merely reconfigures and perpetuates, in another guise, the earlier myth of western America’s uniqueness” (“Women of Color” 72).
study focuses attention on three nineteenth-century populations often neglected by rhetorical scholars: Hispanic Americans, Native Americans and Mormons.

Perhaps most importantly, studies of women in the American West are virtually absent from scholarship on nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric. It was this observation that led me to a consideration of spatial rhetorics in the first place. With few exceptions, like Anne Ruggles Gere’s *Intimate Practices*, which looks at the literacy practices of women’s clubs across geographical regions and social classes, even those rhetorical studies that focus on non-white or non-elite women (such as those by Shirley Wilson Logan and Jacqueline Jones Royster) are still often concentrated on rhetors living and practicing in the eastern United States. When Western women are mentioned in rhetorical histories, they are usually included as voices within national movements (such as temperance or suffrage), without consideration for their unique cultural and geographical positioning. For instance, although studies of the temperance movement, like Carol Mattingly’s *Well-Tempered Women*, include Western women as well as Eastern, the predominant concern is for the rhetorical shape of the movement, not for

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9 Studies on nineteenth-century rhetoric of Hispanic women are fairly sparse (most studies of Chicana and Latina rhetoric are based on the work of twentieth-century rhetors) and include Jessica Enoch’s work on turn-of-the-(nineteenth) century Texas-based Chicana women’s use of definition as “a productive rhetorical site” (21); and Jesse Aléman’s (primarily literary) study of the strategies María Amparo Ruiz de Burton uses to construct whiteness in her novels. Enoch’s work, in particular, offers a useful model for my own project as she contextualizes the women she studies in place (Laredo, Texas).

10 Other studies of nineteenth-century American Indians include Malea Powell’s work on Winnemucca and Susan La Flesche (the first Native American woman M.D.); Jessica Enoch’s studies of Zitkala Ša’s critical pedagogy; Ronald L. Pitcock’s study of nineteenth-century Native American literacy; Benson Tong’s dissertation on Susan La Flesche; and DeLinda Day Wunder’s dissertation on “strategic utterances” in Winnemucca, Zitkala-Ša, and Mourning Dove. Malea Powell’s critique is typical of many of these studies: “we’ve done a pretty good job of not doing a very good job of critically engaging with Native texts” (“Rhetorics of Survivance” 397).

11 The only rhetorical studies of Mormon women, aside from Anne Ruggles Gere’s account of Mormon club women’s literacy practices, are graduate level theses and dissertations, including Robbyn Thompson Scribner’s study of Mormon women’s epideictic rhetoric in praise of polygamy, and Carly Kay Paul’s master’s thesis, which looks at how conceptions of the geographic Western frontier and symbolic rhetorical frontier of women’s rights both impacted Mormon women’s identity. However, none of these studies specifically address Snow’s rhetorical strategies, nor do they attend to the materialities of place (Paul’s interest is largely in the deployment of “frontier” as a metaphorical concept).
regional differences within it. Although the relative scarcity of individuals in the West compared to the more settled East might account for some of this neglect, it seems to me to also suggest a kind of spatial bias that either prioritizes the East over the West, or assumes that all places were relatively uniform and that rhetorical experience translated across space. Thus, my study of nineteenth-century women in the American West provides not only a critical look at space, but also draws attention to a neglected aspect of nineteenth-century women’s rhetorics.

Although place inevitably affects both men and women, I have chosen to focus specifically on women because, as Johnson demonstrates, women occupy spaces of rhetorical performance differently than men do. Additionally, in a region like the American West, which was (and continues to be) identified primarily in masculine terms, gender mattered (and matters) to one’s experience of that space.¹² Finally, because common nineteenth-century binaries aligned masculinity with the mind and femininity with the physical body, women were often more firmly established in place—a theoretically untethered mind can more easily transcend the restrictions of regional location. Moreover, place, like other factors positioning women, potentially complicates their relationship to prevailing ideologies of womanhood in interesting ways.

Finally, I have chosen to focus on these four women—Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Winnemucca, Helen Hunt Jackson and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton—because place seems to play a significant role in each of their writings or speeches. All of these women wrote and spoke about (and often in response to) experiences of displacement. As Chicana literary scholar Mary Pat Brady notes, displaced people often exhibit a marked spatial turn in their writings, in part because the value of a particular place is often not

¹² See also Krista Comer’s work on gender and geography in the twentieth-century West.
realized until it is lost. In addition, these women’s writings and speeches allow me to examine the ways that material spaces affect discursive choices as well as the ways discourses of space get utilized rhetorically: Winnemucca adapts her rhetorical performance in distinct ways to her physical location; Snow, Jackson, and Ruiz de Burton all make extensive use of spatial discourses as part of their rhetorical strategies.\(^{13}\)

### Defining Space and Place

Because discussions of space and place figure so prominently in this dissertation, I want to begin by defining these terms.\(^{14}\) Space is not simply a neutral object or container for activity, but can be best understood as a network of relationships between things and individuals that occupy a given place (Lefebvre). Like other critical social factors, such as race, class, and gender, space is socially constructed and constructing; cultural factors shape the ways that we interpret particular places and landscapes, and these places and landscapes in turn influence the social behaviors of the individuals.

\(^{13}\) In addition, these women span a spectrum of ideological, religious, and ethnic positions. In the introduction to her work on temperance women, Mattingly points out that many rhetorical studies valorize progressive women, with whom modern audiences can readily relate. She argues, however, that scholars need to be attentive to women who may not seem as progressive if they want to develop a complete picture of nineteenth-century rhetorical practices (Well-Tempered Women). The women in this study cannot be easily categorized as conservative or progressive, thus illustrating the complexity of individual women’s positionings and adding variety to the many valuable studies of progressive women. Eliza R. Snow belongs to a church today widely considered conservative (although it was seen as much more radical in the nineteenth century); María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, although critical of imperialistic land practices, was largely indifferent to the plight of native people upon whom her beloved lifestyle was based, and she couched her appeal for sympathy by drawing strong parallels between Californios and former Southern gentry (i.e., slave holders); Sarah Winnemucca was also supportive of the U.S. government and military in ways that some of her fellow Indians found to be a betrayal, and she was known at one point to have voiced the unpopular opinion that the U.S. should return to stricter military control of the Indian reservation system (West). Yet all of these women also speak powerfully in behalf of themselves and their peoples.

\(^{14}\) The last few decades have seen a proliferation in spatial theorizing, in part because space is, for many, becoming one of the hallmarks of postmodernism. Michel Foucault and Edward Soja both argue that where the nineteenth century (and modernism) were obsessed with history and temporality, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are increasingly interested in space and movement. Nedra Reynolds notes that this interest is reflected in scholarly fascination with tropes such as “contact zones” and “borderlands” (Geographies of Writing).
situated within them. Because spaces are continually being (re)constructed, they are best understood as dynamic rather than static sites. Most spatial theorists distinguish between space as an abstract or relational term, and place as a concrete site (Soja, McDowell). Although I recognize that there is considerable overlap and slippage between these two terms, I will follow scholarly convention and use “place” when I am talking about a specific location and “space” to indicate the abstract conception of a site. Because my dissertation focuses on material as well as metaphorical space, I provide here an extended definition of place.

In this dissertation I understand place in three particular ways: 1) as the physical characteristics of a given site; 2) the cultural discourses that endow particular places with meaning and dictate “appropriate” behavior within that site; 3) and the resulting network of relationships among people, objects, and materials that occupy a given space. These

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15 Ecocompositionist Julie Drew argues that ignoring the role of space suggests that geography is fixed and outside of ideology and that space is an object upon which time acts. This prioritization of time at the expense of space helps mask the politics of space, and the way spaces are socially constructed to include some while excluding others.

16 Michel de Certeau makes a similar distinction when he suggests that places are familiarized spaces. However, Soja suggests that this division between space and place is a distinction that limits the meaning of both terms; he points out that Lefebvre never really distinguished between place and space, but preferred to use “everyday life” and “lived space” to refer to the more conventional sense of place.

17 However, I do want to note that separating the material and metaphorical aspects of space is an arbitrary division; increasingly, scholars of spatial theory recognize the interconnectedness of metaphorical and material aspects of space. Gillian Rose, a feminist geographer, critiques the material/metaphorical binary of space because the distinction between such “real” and “non-real” spaces is often made in gendered terms. Rose argues that scholars need to connect metaphorical space to its material source without falling into the fallacious assumption that material spaces are somehow more “real” than metaphorical ones. When scholars fail to make the connection between material and metaphorical space, they limit their ability to look critically at familiarized metaphorical spaces. Lefebvre offers the term “social space” to describe the interconnection of cultural and material aspects of space; the material aspect of space may trigger the cultural aspect (for instance, churches are meant to be read in particular ways), and the cultural aspects of space may shape the material construction within that space (i.e., because churches are socially associated with divinity worship, their interior architecture and open spaces often suggests a specific relationship of the individual with the divine). Both Lefebvre and Soja work against binary definitions of space by conceptualizing space as triadic: Lefebvre sees space in terms of social practices (how space is perceived socially), representations of space (professional designs for space), and representational space (the individual experience of space, mediated through images and symbols). Soja sees space in three dimensions: Firstspace, or the “‘real’ material world” (6); Secondspace, the way this material dimension is interpreted; and Thirdspace, a space that critiques and positively deconstructs the other spaces.
three dimensions of space are obviously interconnected, as cultural discourses as well as material characteristics influence the relationships formed in space; and these relationships also structure the cultural discourses that emerge to either uphold or transform these relationships. As Michel de Certeau explains in a theoretical essay on walking, the physical shape of a given place (whether “natural” or constructed) matters because it may limit the possibilities for movement within that space. The material characteristics of a site (particularly when overlaid with cultural implications) influence our emotional and behavioral responses to that site. Finally, as spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre explains, the nature of a place may influence the relationships we have with one another. For instance, when we approach a religious building, like a church, the physical construction of that site constrains our behavior in specific ways: the construction of aisles guides our movement through the space, the vaulted ceiling may inspire a particular emotional response, and the location of pews sets up particular expectations about our relationship with other congregants and the minister.

These material dimensions of space are also culturally constructed, as cultural discourses about space help dictate how individuals should respond emotionally to physical places and how they should move through them. As art historian Simon Schama explains in his study on landscape and memory, our individual perceptions of a given landscape are largely colored by cultural directives. At the same time, however, these interpretive choices are also constrained by the landscape itself (Schein). For example, a church built to look like a log cabin might not inspire the same emotional or behavioral responses as a medieval cathedral, although social conventions suggest that churches be approached with awe and reverence.
Places are also in part defined by the relationships established within them. As feminist geographer Gillian Rose explains, the “character” of a place is the product of its interactions with the outside world, its local and global history, and the relationships of individuals in that space. Individuals move through spaces and form relationships with those spaces in materially and culturally defined ways. As Mountford explains, places have a “cultural dimension”: “that sense of locations as having hierarchies and forming relationships between human residents” (49). Extending the example of a church, not only are the relationships between individuals structured by the material characteristics of the church, but by cultural expectations as well. The church itself is, in turn, defined in part by the spiritual community (and hierarchy) established in that space. Thus, spaces both influence social relations within their scope and are influenced by those relations; as feminist cultural geographers have maintained, “Social relations, including, importantly, gender relations, are constructed and negotiated spatially and are embedded in the spatial organization of places” (Duncan 4-5).19 These social expectations enable individuals, quite literally, to “know their place.”20

The experience of place is ultimately not separable from the individuals who experience that place, or from other critical social factors that categorize individuals. As Belden Lane notes in his work on sacred space, physical bodies influence how we move

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18 Although the primary emphasis of my dissertation is on understanding the effect of space and place on rhetorical production, I need to note that space cannot be understood independently of time—part of each chapter (or, in the case of chapters four and five, the interchapter) is devoted to providing a brief history of the place that situates the rhetorical action of the chapter.

19 Lefebvre further separates these social relationships into the “social relations of reproduction,” which affect relationships between the sexes and among families, and the “relations of production,” or “the division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions” (32).

20 However, although individuals are often guided by social expectations, de Certeau suggests that they may move through space and form relationships to it in unique or unexpected ways.
through and perceive landscapes. Thus, individuals experience particular places differently on the basis of their age, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation. (One need only think about how a middle-aged white man might experience an empty street at night, as compared to how a young black woman experiences the same site.) For nineteenth-century women, who were often discursively constructed as an embodied Other (S. Smith), the material body functioned as an important aspect of the space that they inhabited. While my analysis in this dissertation focuses primarily on discourses of space, I also attend to other cultural discourses as they impinge on these women’s experience of place.

Rhetorics of Space

Despite the growing number of rhetorical studies that emphasize some aspect of space (whether material, metaphorical, or the interaction of both), there does not seem to be much consensus on what is meant by rhetorics of space or rhetorical space. For instance, although Roxanne Mountford clearly defines rhetorical space as “the effect of physical spaces on a communicative event” (“On Gender,” 41-2), other scholars, like Richard Marback, seem to fluctuate between a definition of rhetorical space as either a physical space (ala Mountford) or a created space representing the possibility of discourse. This latter definition of rhetorical space seems almost indistinguishable from current understandings of the rhetorical situation. For the purpose of this dissertation, I

21 Edward Casey argues that the body is itself a place.
22 Mountford suggests that Lorraine Code is also drawing on this definition of rhetorical space when Code explains that rhetorical spaces carry with them codes that constrain the kinds of utterances that can be made. However, as I argue later in this dissertation, material spaces also work to constrain utterances.
23 See especially Lloyd Bitzer’s discussion of the rhetorical situation as an event or situation that can be modified or solved by discourse, including consideration of the rhetor, audience, rhetorical message, and context for the situation.
use the term “rhetorical space” to refer to a particular site (in both its material and metaphorical aspects) that grounds rhetorical action. Additionally, I use the term “spatial rhetoric,” to refer to the ways rhetors use spaces and their attendant discourses for rhetorical purposes. Finally, I understand “rhetorics of space” to refer to studies exploring the intersections of rhetoric and space. In what follows, I describe briefly some of the primary ways scholars approach rhetorics of space.

One prominent trend in rhetorics of space is to focus on the ways that space itself is rhetorical, either through its discursive construction or through its symbolic operation. To the extent that place is constructed through social discourse and symbolic interaction, it is rhetorical. As John Ackerman explains, one of the functions of rhetoric is to produce and maintain social spaces. James Young’s *The Texture of Memory*, which emphasizes the ways in which Holocaust monuments are constructed in particular places for particular rhetorical ends, is a good example of the study of spatial construction through rhetoric. In a pair of companion pieces published in *Rhetorical Education in America*, Michael Halloran and Clark demonstrate the ways that the educational experiences of public spaces, like national parks, are shaped through careful rhetorical framing of the site.

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24 I would like to note that this definition helps resolve some of the seeming contradiction between earlier definitions, like Marback’s, as it acknowledges both the physical and created aspects of a space. Rhetorical space does not just refer to the ways that rhetors create an opportunity for their discourse, but also includes consideration of the ways that these opportunities are connected to particular spaces. Crucially, however, this definition of rhetorical space remains grounded in material space. Thus, in Nan Johnson’s *Gender and Rhetorical Space*, I would understand rhetorical space to encompass not just the discourses that dictate women’s rhetorical options, but the physical spaces that these discourses establish as suitable sites for women’s rhetoric (like the parlor).

25 Moreover, Young’s study also includes accounts of the ways in which particular places (both the physical sites and the broader national culture) influence the construction of these monuments, demonstrating the interdependence of place and cultural construction.
Related scholarship explores the way that place functions rhetorically to move individuals. Clark’s study, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America*, suggests that as perspectives of space are shaped through discourse, the experience of particular places becomes rhetorical—that is, particular spaces have the rhetorical power to draw diverse individuals together in a national community through their shared experience of place. Marback’s study of narratives about Robben Island, where opponents of apartheid in South Africa were held prisoner, explores the way that the island begins to function as a symbol or “a commonplace for injustices of apartheid” (7) that instructs readers how to emotionally respond to both the site and narratives about the site. In a similar vein, cultural geographer Richard Schein explains that cultural landscapes offer competing arguments about how a particular place should be interpreted, experienced, and acted upon. In other words, like any kind of symbolic discourse, landscapes function symbolically to move individuals to action.

A second major trend in rhetorics of space focuses on the different ways that rhetoric can be said to be spatial: the influence of spatial metaphors on rhetorical thought; the rhetorical functions of spatial discourses; and, finally, rhetoric’s situatedness in place. Both Reynolds and Mountford demonstrate the ways that material spaces influence the spatial metaphors with which we understand our lived experience. Reynolds

26 Other ways that rhetoric can be said to be spatial include the historic link between rhetoric and place and the situating function of rhetoric. Studies like Marback’s, which emphasize the way that space can be used as a rhetorical commonplace, gesture to the traditional association of rhetoric with place, in the form of topoi, or sites for invention. Similarly, Mary Carruthers and Frances Yates both demonstrate that early rhetorical concepts of memory (which provided the resources for invention) grounded memory in particular places in the mind. Rhetoric is also frequently used to situate individuals—the language we use both identifies ourselves to others, but also places them in relationship to us. As Martin Nystrand and John Duffy explain in the introduction to *Towards a Rhetoric of Everyday Life*, “The discourses of institutions and popular culture are rhetorical in the sense that they situate us in our worlds: they shape our ideas about ‘the way things are,’ who we are, where we belong, and guide what we talk about and what we say” (ix). This situating function of rhetoric—its ability to indicate where we belong—is inextricably bound with notions of space.
explores the ways that spatial metaphors of a frontier, city, and cyberspace structure our understanding of composition. She notes that even our notion of “moving” audiences relies on a spatial metaphor. Similarly, Mountford demonstrates the spatial element of the common Pauline injunction that “a woman’s place is to keep silent”; this argument makes no sense without reference to a material space—when we think of a woman’s place in the church (i.e., the pews, not the pulpit), then we understand more readily why her place is a silent one.

Other scholars (not all of them self-identified rhetoricians) study the rhetorical function of discourses about space. For instance, Mary Louise Pratt’s foundational study of travel writing demonstrates the way that travel narratives serve to create an imperialist subject; at the same time, discourse of landscape “deterritorializes indigenous peoples” (135), separating them from their own lands. Literary scholar Krista Comer similarly argues that landscape in Western discourses “serves as the medium for the expression of every kind of nationalist and imperialist discourse” (29) as well as masculine desires. But at the same time, landscape discourses can be used to subvert dominant cultural discourses.

Finally, a few rhetorical scholars are interested in grounding discourse in material place; however, as Mountford and Reynolds both argue, there remains a pressing need in rhetorical scholarship for more of these studies. Lefebvre explains that “[e]very language is located in a space. Every discourse says something about a space (places or sets of

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27 Reynolds critiques, however, the disassociation of these metaphors from their material grounding, arguing that metaphorical conceptions of space become particularly powerful when we lose sight of the political ramifications of the spaces that engender these metaphors (for instance, inside/outside, center/margin, etc).

28 Gaston Bachelard argues that spatial metaphors often structure our understanding of the relationships between ideas.
places); and every discourse is emitted from a space” (132). Ackerman suggests that Lefebvre’s writings are important to rhetorical studies because they imply a spatial dimension to rhetorical situations—a dimension present but unacknowledged in Lloyd Bitzer’s early formulation of “The Rhetorical Situation.” Jerry Blitefield similarly expands scholarly understandings of rhetorical situations to focus on place. He redefines kairos to include place, arguing that rhetorical agency happens when kairos (appropriate timing) coincides with the right place: “kairoi come into existence in places, as places” (730). In other words, any understanding of the context of a speech must attend to its location in time and place. Not surprisingly, many of the rhetoricians who connect rhetoric to material place also attend to the implications place carries for rhetoric. Mountford’s study of women preachers demonstrates how the material spaces of churches—particularly pulpits—in tandem with their spatial connotations, work to constrain rhetorical choices, especially for women. Reynolds’s work theorizes how experiences of place affect identity, which in turn affects learning and writing.

Although the studies I’ve described here attest to the breadth of scholarship on rhetorics of space, they also serve to underscore the need for this study, which analyzes both the ways that material place influences rhetorical practices, and the ways that rhetors draw on discourses about space as part of their rhetorical strategies. While a few studies (like Pratt’s and Comer’s) address the rhetorical effect of spatial discourses, they do not adequately explain how and why a particular author might adapt spatial discourses to her own ends. In addition, while acknowledging that place is an important aspect of the

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29 Kenneth Burke suggests that “situation” is a synonym for “scene,” and refers to the when and where of a particular rhetorical action (*Grammar of Motives*).

30 Ecocompositionists like Sidney Dobrin are also interested in understanding how the environment (understood in both metaphorical and material terms) in which writing takes place affects the production of texts.
rhetorical situation, none of these studies (with the exception of Mountford’s work) attempt to theorize how place affects rhetorical performance.\(^{31}\) This dissertation analyzes the effect of material location (with its attendant cultural discourses) on rhetorical practices in the work of four Western women rhetors: Eliza R. Snow, Sarah Winnemucca, Helen Hunt Jackson, and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton.

**Background and Context**

Because rhetorical performance is always situated—in time, in space, in particularities—I provide here an overview to the temporal and spatial context that informs this project. I describe first the cultural context for nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric and provide an overview of scholarly work in nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric. I then provide some background for understanding the cultural significance of the American West and the place of women rhetors in it.

*Recovering Nineteenth-Century Women’s Rhetoric*

As feminist rhetorical scholars have argued for the last decade or two, recovering women’s rhetorical practices is important not simply because such practices have been neglected for so long, but because they help illuminate traditional assumptions about the nature and practice of rhetoric.\(^{32}\) Because rhetoric has traditionally been gendered male (both in theory and praxis), the cultural constraints facing historical women rhetors differ from those facing their male counterparts; to practice rhetoric, women often resorted to

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\(^{31}\) Although many of these studies do address the influence of place on identity, which naturally affects rhetorical performance, these studies do not make explicit the link between identity and rhetorical production.

\(^{32}\) What studies of women’s rhetoric reveal to us are not only the ways in which women sought for available means of expression, but also the kinds of cultural constraints that faced women (Glenn, “Locating Aspasia”). In addition, such studies can help expose, in Lorraine Code’s words, “how rhetorical spaces are mapped so as to produce uneven possibilities of establishing credibility and being heard” (xv).
stratagems unknown or unnecessary to contemporary male rhetoricians. The default rhetor in nineteenth-century America was white, male, Protestant and literate and anyone who lacked this cultural currency had to compensate for it or risk public censure.\textsuperscript{33}

As increasing numbers of women began to speak publicly in the nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{34} the pressure on these women to conform to nineteenth-century ideals of silence and confinement to private spheres correspondingly increased.\textsuperscript{35} Some women, however, in availing themselves of all available means of persuasion, were able to translate gender expectations into powerful rhetorical strategies. Both Karlyn Campbell, in \textit{Man Cannot Speak for Her}, and Carol Mattingly, in \textit{Well-Tempered Women}, argue that many women reformers justified their participation in public movements on the grounds of women’s moral superiority. John Gonzalez has also persuasively demonstrated how white women like Helen Hunt Jackson were able to capitalize on cultural beliefs in the domesticating and civilizing mission of women in order to assume public positions as educators, or, in Jackson’s case, a position as a federal agent for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (“Warp of Whiteness”).

While some women drew on cultural ideologies of womanhood and domesticity to justify public speaking, others used public speaking and writing to challenge these

\textsuperscript{33}For instance, as Carol Mattingly demonstrates, successful women rhetors such as Frances Willard often took great pains with their dress and appearance, knowing that their \textit{ethos} depended in large part upon how successfully they conformed with conventional notions of femininity (\textit{Appropriate[ing] Dress}). Such attention to personal appearance was unnecessary for male rhetors, who did not risk being branded unchaste simply for appearing in public. In “Forging and Firing Thunderbolts: Collaboration and Women’s Rhetoric,” Lindal Buchanan explains the kinds of consequences women’s public speaking can have on a women’s characters. She relates the story of Abby Kelley, an abolitionist speaker whose public speaking engagement was cancelled after a local preacher branded her a “wanton woman” for not only appearing in public but traveling with men to her speaking engagements.

\textsuperscript{34}Nan Johnson demonstrates in her study \textit{Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life}, that rhetorical practices became increasingly gendered during the nineteenth century in proportion to the growing presence of women in public spaces.

\textsuperscript{35}It should be noted that these gender conventions and norms are predominantly those formulated by and for white, middle-class Americans, although as normative standards they were generally imposed on other class and ethnic groups.
ideologies. As Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish demonstrate in their analysis of Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Jacobs uses her narrative to critique not only the institution of slavery, but some of the ideologies of white womanhood which could not be uniformly applied to slave women as well as free white women. Rhetorical scholars are increasingly recognizing that the tenets and ideologies associated with the “cult of true womanhood”—which required women to be pure, pious, domestic and submissive (Welter)—often break down when applied to women of color and other non-elite women, such as working class women.36

Many, and perhaps most, of the earliest studies of nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric focus on women’s reform movements and the women engaged in these movements. Campbell’s ground-breaking *Man Cannot Speak For Her* draws on women from all three of the major nineteenth-century reform movements: abolition, suffrage, and temperance.37 Mattingly’s *Well-Tempered Women* explores temperance women’s rhetorical practices in a variety of arenas—in public speaking, education, and fiction, among others. Although none of the women in my study were heavily involved in the more prominent nineteenth-century reform movements, understanding how women drew on moral authority to carve out a public space for their reform work helps me provide a context for Jackson’s involvement in Indian reform later in the century. Sarah

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36 Although Nan Johnson argues that “nineteenth-century women were encouraged to see the home as their rhetorical space and not to seek public forums to express their ideas and interests” (175), such ideological constraints may exist primarily for upper- and middle-class white women.

37 The Grimké sisters, with their work in abolition and women’s rights, have garnered attention from scholars such as Stephen Browne, Gerda Lerner, Suzanne Daughton, and Jami Carlacio. Susan Zaeske’s *Signatures of Citizenship* examines women’s anti-slavery petitions.
Winnemucca also engages with rhetorics of Indian reform, and some of her most prominent supporters included Indian reformers like the Peabody sisters.\footnote{Unfortunately, as Malea Powell points out, there is very little work in rhetorical studies on the rhetoric of these Indian reformers, despite fairly widespread involvement by white women and an abundance of texts (“Princess Sarah”). Thus, models for understanding rhetorics of Indian reform will necessarily come from studies of more prominent reform movements.}

Other recovery work of nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric includes the ways that social practices and ideologies shape women’s rhetoric and the ways that these ideologies are expressed in texts:\footnote{Examples of the former include Eldred and Mortenson’s numerous studies of the ways women envision and engage in female civic rhetoric, and Campbell’s study of the ideological constraints of women’s genres. Studies of nineteenth-century rhetorical texts and genres include studies by Jane Donawerth on nineteenth-century conduct books (“Nineteenth-century Conduct Book Rhetoric”), and Johnson’s book length study of conduct books, letter-writing manuals, and parlor rhetorics, \textit{Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1860-1910}.} studies of nineteenth-century women’s literacy and rhetorical education;\footnote{Such studies include Anne Ruggles Gere’s in-depth study of women’s clubs and literacy practices, \textit{Intimate Practices}; Jacqueline Bacon and Glen McClish’s study of nineteenth-century African American literary clubs in Philadelphia; and Royster’s study of African American women, \textit{Traces of a Stream}.} studies of alternative rhetorical practices; and studies that use nineteenth-century rhetorical practices to reconceptualize traditional canons of rhetoric.\footnote{Examples of the former include Carol Mattingly’s study of nineteenth-century dress, \textit{Appropriate[ing] Dress}; Kathleen Torrens’s study of the dress-reform movement; and Lindal Buchanan’s study of collaboration among women rhetors (“Forging Thunderbolts”). Both Mountford and Julie Nelson Christoph address the reconceptualization of \textit{ethos} through nineteenth-century rhetorical practices, and Buchanan’s study of the relationship between maternity and delivery emphasizes the difficulties women rhetors (particularly mothers) faced in trying to publicly negotiate their presentation of femininity and maternity (“Regendering Delivery”). Donawerth’s “Poaching on Men’s Philosophies of Rhetoric” might also be included here, as it illustrates the ways that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women cleverly adapted traditional rhetorical strategies for their own ends, such as Eliza Farrar’s letter writing textbook which presents traditional rhetorical instruction in letter writing and then adapts it to include more recent women’s work on conversation to suggest that letters ought also to be “agreeable” and exhibit sympathy.}

None of these studies, however, focus on the influence of place on individual identity or rhetorical performance. And, as indicated previously, very few of these studies include
women in the American West, particularly those from minority groups such as Mormons, Native Americans, or Hispanic Americans.42

Some literary and history scholars do focus on the effect of geographic place in women’s writings and explore the ways women’s writings both shape and are shaped by public discourse about the West. However, these studies are not couched in a predominantly rhetorical framework, nor do these studies address the way the material conditions of place in the American West affect women’s rhetorical choices. Annette Kolodny’s groundbreaking study of Western women writers, The Land before Her, explores how early nineteenth-century pioneer women (mostly white) sought for gender specific metaphors to articulate their relationship to the Midwestern plains and prairies.43 Brigitte Georgi-Findlay’s The Frontiers of Women’s Writing investigates the ways in which women writers “engaged with, contributed to, and at times rejected the development of a national narrative associated with the American West” (xi). She describes how many travel writers of the 1870s and 1880s tended to portray the West in terms of Eastern or European conventions and often saw the landscape in gendered terms—the masculine West versus the feminine East. Vera Norwood and Janice Monk’s collection of essays, The Desert is No Lady, explores the way the landscape of the

42 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s sourcebook of women public speakers in the U.S. during the nineteenth century includes only a handful of women from west of the Mississippi, such as Clara Bewick Colby and Helen Jackson Gougen, and only one woman, Abigail Scott Duniway, for the Far West (a term generally referring to the Pacific Northwest, Southwest, and Rocky Mountain regions). Additionally, an informal study of publications and dissertations in rhetoric and speech communication over the last fifteen years reveals fewer than ten dealing explicitly with western women rhetors. These results are based on my own survey of the following databases and journals: the MLA Bibliography, Dissertation Abstracts, College Composition and Communication, College English, Philosophy of Rhetoric, Rhetorica, Rhetoric Review, Rhetoric Society Quarterly, Quarterly Journal of Speech, Western Journal of Communication, Women’s Studies in Communication, and Written Communication.

43 As Kolodny demonstrates, not only does place shape (sometimes significantly) the exigencies of women’s daily existence and the exigences of their rhetorical situations, but women’s rhetoric also shaped outside notions of the west. Kolodny illustrates suggestively how women writers impacted national perceptions of the west, softening masculine versions of the west as an American Eden with no place for women, and making the West habitable for other women settlers.
Southwest has inspired nineteenth- and twentieth-century women artists and writers. Although thought-provoking, these studies are more concerned with literary and artistic practices than rhetorical ones and their idea of space remains more conceptual than material. Although they address the ways material landscapes were read through cultural lenses, they seldom examine the way the physical experience of these landscapes altered the conceptual framework.

*Woman’s Place in the American West*

Women writing and speaking in the American West were influenced not only by dominant cultural ideologies of womanhood and expectations for female rhetors, but were additionally constrained by national perceptions about the West. The nineteenth-century was heir to several powerful mythologies about the West that were often used to justify westward expansion. Frederick Jackson Turner, writing around the turn of the century, gave perhaps the canonical articulation of this frontier thesis, arguing that the development of America has been dependent upon the frontier: not only is frontier life essential for the development of democracy, but continuous westward expansion repeatedly puts American society in contact with the primitive conditions of renewal found on the frontier.  

Henry Nash Smith describes several interrelated myths that fueled Turner’s frontier thesis: a belief that the topography of North America determined her destiny as a great empire; a belief in the agrarian settlements of the West as the “garden of the world,” or a kind of Eden; and a veneration of the “sons of Leatherstocking” type (what Kolodny calls the “American Adam”)—rugged outdoorsmen with an intimate

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44 Henry Nash Smith argues that “one of the most persistent generalizations concerning American life and character is the notion that our society has been shaped by the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward” (3).
connection with nature, antipathy towards civilization, and solitary (often celibate) existence.45

These unique cultural mythologies that have come to characterize the American West are, largely, mythologies grounded in place; Turner’s argument about the psychological impact of the frontier in the American imagination, for instance, stems at least in part from the possibilities suggested by the wide open spaces of the prairies and plains of the Midwest. California’s role as a “western Eden” grew out of the magnificent redwood forests and sublime landscapes of Yosemite (Starr, Schama), all of which had tremendous cultural value for an American culture newly learning to appreciate wilderness as a kind of divine sanctuary. Both the conceptual and material aspects of the West shape the rhetorical situations and spaces of the women in my project.

The mythologies about the American West, particularly the idea of the American Adam and the West as a kind of Eden, complicate the position of women in the West because they obviate the need for women.46 Scholars of Western women’s history have argued that these dominant versions of Western American history—that of trailblazing men and adventurers—are insufficient to understanding the settlement of the West. In their collections of Western women’s histories, Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson have worked to frustrate images of this masculine West, arguing that any established

45 In the last few decades, scholars have begun to challenge many of these prominent mythologies of the West, particularly Turner’s frontier thesis and the veneration of the American Adam. Some critiques suggest that these myths cloak a variety of economic motivations and were used to justify the expansion west (S. Johnson). Julie Roy Jeffrey suggests that Turner’s notion of the frontier as a place where savagery and civilization meet, “legitimated the westward movement by suggesting that white settlers were the bearers of civilization and progress. It tarnished indigenous peoples as savage with no lasting claim to the lands they occupied” (4). Kolodny also notes that these myths were inherently contradictory—the value of the West lay in its “virgin land,” yet settlers went west precisely to cultivate and exploit that natural richness, violating the very condition that made the land valuable.

46 Georgi-Findlay notes that the frontier myth equating wilderness with a new Eden not only places white women in the role of “other,” but it figures her as the obstacle that a man faces on his way to freedom; like Eve, women then become the scapegoat responsible for the loss of paradise.
settlement required women as well as men. More recently, feminist scholars have noted
the gendered nature of these mythologies. Susan Lee Johnson argues that the West was
construed “masculine” during the late nineteenth century in response to “a larger late-
nineteenth-century ‘crisis of manliness’ in the United States—a crisis in which older
definitions of white, middle-class manhood that emphasized restraint and respectability
(manly men) gave way to newer meanings that focused on vigor and raw virility
(masculine men)” (91). Not only, then, did myths of the American West remove women
from the landscape, but the masculinization of the West suggested an environment that
was inimical to them.

Popular stereotypes arising out of mythologies of the West depicted white women
as ladies unfit to survive the harshness of the frontier (schoolteachers, missionaries, or
other women with civilized tastes); “sunbonneted helpmates” worn out by work; and bad
women, who may have a kind of glamour or power, but who often come to a bad end
(Jensen and Miller, Armitage). Another, sometimes overlapping stereotype categorized
women as “gentle tamers,” whose gentility was meant to civilize the wild West. The
problem with this last stereotype, as Armitage notes, is that it portrays women as passive
agents who did not have to do anything for their civilizing influence to be felt. Still other
stereotypes categorized women of color as either “good” or “bad,” “princesses” or
“squaws,” who respectively exhibit Christian values and facilitate white settlement, or are
dark-skinned, heathen, oppressed, and immoral.47 In reality, the experience of women in
the West was much more complex than these stereotypes suggest. Anglo-American

47 Antonia Casteñada explains that within this dichotomy, “‘good’ women of color are light-skinned,
civilized (Christian), and virgins. They are ‘good’ because they give aid, or sacrifice themselves, so that
white men may live; white men marry them. ‘Bad’ women are dark-skinned, savage (non-Christian), and
whores; white men do not marry them” (“Women of Color” 75).
women often worked alongside their husbands, shifting between traditional women’s roles and men’s work as necessity dictated (Armitage and Jameson). In her introduction to *Mormon Sisters*, Claudia Bushman notes that because the demands of the frontier—farming and irrigating the land, building new houses, establishing communities—required men and women to contribute equally, women’s social contributions were often more highly valued in the West than in the East, where middle and upper-class women’s roles were often seen as more ornamental than functional. Julie Roy Jeffrey makes a similar argument, suggesting that the desert climate made women necessary—they were encouraged to work and considered substantial economic partners.

Women’s experiences also differed according to cultural group. Casteñada has repeatedly asserted the need to understand the experiences of minority women (Hispanic, American Indian, Chinese American) in terms of their own cultural group and demonstrates that the passive image of Hispanic women comes largely from outsider representations (“Women of Color”); when we examine women’s own words we find an images that belie the stereotype (“Memory, Language and Voice”). Similarly, Glenda Riley suggests the limitations of viewing American Indian women through settlers’ documents (*Confronting Race*); in contrast to Anglo-American perceptions, Sarah Winnemucca describes in her memoir a culture that, far from mistreating and overworking their women, gives them more say in tribal governance than Anglo-American women find in their own communities.

Some scholars argue that the geographic displacement of Eastern white women destabilized prominent ideologies of womanhood. Historian Sandra Myers argues that the

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48 Although some scholars want to see this shifting as evidence for a more egalitarian West, this was not always the case; in some cases, women’s isolation and domestic load increased on the frontier (Georgi-Findlay).
less conventional life in the West meant that some women were more likely to step outside of women’s conventional sphere. Even for women whose concerns were primarily domestic or whose ideologies remained fairly complicit with eastern imperialist projects, movement into the frontier sometimes challenged these roles in interesting and unexpected ways. For instance, most white women unquestioningly accepted their role as moralizers and civilizers of unsettled western territories (especially in regards to their non-Christian neighbors). Yet some women also found that, despite their presumed superiority and civilization, they needed native knowledge of terrain, flora, and fauna in order to effectively settle these new regions, thus troubling easy assumptions of superior culture. Moreover, as white women encountered other cultural groups like American Indians, Hispanics, and Mormons, among others, they inevitably encountered non-Anglo-American ideologies of womanhood.

However, in most cases Anglo-American veneration of domesticity continued to hold strong sway in the lives of these women. Robert Griswold argues that it might be more useful to think of domesticity less as “a well-defined ‘cult of true womanhood’ than a way common women made sense of every day existence” (15). He suggests that the persistence of domestic values on the frontier is not necessarily a negative thing: “the cultural values of domestic ideology had a powerful appeal to female settlers: they gave meaning to women’s domestic work, made the blurring of sex roles culturally intelligible, helped confirm women’s self-worth, offered a sense of stability in an inherently unstable

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49 See studies by Julie Jeffrey, Robert Griswold, Vera Norwood, Janet Floyd, Brigitte Georgi-Findlay
50 Glenda Riley, in *Confronting Race*, identifies Mormon settlers as a separate cultural group from white Anglo-American women, who often exhibited strong prejudice against Mormon women, presumably because their religion marked them as outside dominant cultural norms.
51 Vera Norwood concedes that “Life on the frontier challenged this ideology [the cult of true womanhood] only to the extent that gentility was complemented by virtues of strength and ingenuity” (155).
Domestic ideology was also a tie to the past, to home communities that women had left behind, and it helped forge friendships between non-related women by “offering women a cultural system of social rules, conventions, and values—a moral vocabulary of discourse—that gave meaning to their daily behavior and to their friendships with other women” (21). This domestic ideology motivated women to act as conservators of culture, preserving cultural traditions along the frontier and encouraging the construction of cultural facilities, like churches and schools (Riley, *The Female Frontier*). For the women in my study, as for most of their contemporaries, discourses of domesticity formed a powerful shaping influence in their writings and speeches. Even those women who did not necessarily endorse domesticity themselves, like Sarah Winnemucca, found themselves using these discourses as a kind of common language with their audiences.

**Some Methodological Considerations**

Because I am arguing that Western women’s rhetoric needs to be more widely considered in the context of nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric in America, I am interesting in including rhetors from a spectrum of populations inhabiting the American West. Although I have chosen women from different populations living in the American West, I do not intend these women to be representative or token figures. Certainly, Winnemucca, as a chieftain’s daughter, and Snow, as president of the Mormon Relief Society and wife of the Mormon prophet-leader Brigham Young, were not typical of the women of their people. Rather, I see these women as individuals belonging to a particular group of people, whose cultures influenced their actions and their rhetorical styles, but are not the sole determining factors on their behavior, speech, or writing. Nor do the
communities these women belong to represent the full extent of women living in the American West. My study neglects many groups of white women—missionaries, army wives, miners’ wives, educators—who also populated the West, not to mention the more disreputable women (white and non-white), like prostitutes or outlaws. Nor does my study consider working women, African American women, European, Chinese immigrants on the Pacific coast, or women who were considered outside dominant Anglo-American population by virtue of their religion (i.e., Jewish or Catholic). However, as Western women, all of these women were to some extent influenced by the contextual issues of place that my study addresses, issues that differed from those of Eastern women.

My overarching methodology is fueled by a couple of interrelated theoretical frameworks. First, I view this project as a historiographical one, rather than a purely historical one; a historiographical approach to the history of rhetoric assumes that histories of rhetoric are multiple, that rhetoric (both its theory and its practice) is shaped in different ways in different historical periods, and that the role of the historiographer is to critique, rather than to simply venerate the past. I am not trying to tell “the” story of women’s rhetorical practices in the American West, or even “a” story, but rather a series of interrelated stories that will (ideally) to flesh out our understanding of the ways that women drew on rhetorical knowledge and utilized rhetorical strategies, and the socio-cultural contexts that shaped their speaking (in both positive and negative ways). As this project also seeks to recover women’s rhetorical practices, my readings will also be influenced by gender studies, which view gender as constructed along a power differential (so that individuals can be gendered not only by biological sex, but by race,
socio-economic class, religion, etc.). As described earlier, theories of space constitute an additional theoretical framework for this study. In terms of my specific methodology for this project, I use a three-tiered approach: close textual analysis of primary source material; historical contextualization of both primary documents and broader socio-cultural framework; and interpretation of primary texts through theoretical frameworks.

Mapping Chapters

Each chapter in this dissertation engages in different ways with the question of how space and geographical positioning influence the rhetorical practices of nineteenth-century women living in the American West. Each chapter begins by situating the particular woman within her cultural context and describing the rhetorical exigences to which her work responds. These chapters are arranged roughly chronologically, so that Eliza R. Snow, who published and spoke primarily in the 1870s, comes first, followed by Sarah Winnemucca, whose autobiography was published in 1883 and whose lecturing career spanned from 1879 to 1885. Following Winnemucca, I look at Helen Hunt Jackson, who published *Ramona* in 1884, and I conclude with María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, whose *The Squatter and the Don* appeared in 1885.

In chapter two, “‘As Sisters in Zion’: Eliza R. Snow’s Use of Place as a Shorthand for Mormon Women’s Identity,” I explore how circulating discourses about a specific place—Utah territory— Influenced the rhetorical choices of a prominent nineteenth-century Mormon woman. Drawing on Snow’s published speeches in a contemporary newspaper, *The Woman’s Exponent*, I demonstrate how Snow draws on
discourses about Utah space as a constitutive rhetoric for Mormon women, ultimately using idea of Utah as a shorthand for group identity.

In chapter three, “Shaping Rhetorical Practices: Sarah Winnemucca’s Rhetorical Response to Disciplinary and Performative Spaces,” I argue that Paiute activist Sarah Winnemucca’s rhetorical choices (in her public speeches, letters, and published autobiography) are influenced not only by her social position as an Indian woman, but by the expectations associated with the physical and cultural locations she occupies during her performances, including reservations, military forts, and lecture halls.

Between chapters three and four I have included a short interchapter on California history and land-use. Because both chapter four and chapter five depend on an understanding of California space, I have provided this historic context in an interchapter preceding both chapters, rather than repeat the same information twice.

Chapter four, “‘Dreaming of This Fair Land’: The Rhetorics of Place in Helen Hunt Jackson’s Ramona,” addresses the rhetorics of place in Jackson’s Indian reform novel Ramona. I explore the ways Jackson uses discourses of domestic, natural, and national spaces to extend her appeal for Indian reform. At the same time, I analyze how the underlying ideologies associated with these discourses ultimately allow her audience to take home a very different message, one that undercuts her reform agenda.

In chapter five, “Making Space for Californios: María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s The Squatter and the Don,” I focus on the ways that Ruiz de Burton intervenes in the perception of California spaces to challenge existing social hierarchies. First, by drawing on existing discourses about California space, like those depicting California as a Western Eden, Ruiz de Burton presents her Californio (native Californian) characters as
cultivated, upper-class individuals. Second, by analyzing the transformation of land under Anglo-American settlement, Ruiz de Burton critiques U.S. imperialist policies and argues for a revised view of California land that restores Californios to their rightful social place.

The final chapter reflects on the different ways that space affects these women’s rhetorical practices and sketches out a “Grammar of Rhetorical Space” that encompasses these different effects of space on rhetoric. It also suggests some specific considerations for rhetorical scholars as they engage with the question of space, reemphasizing the notion that place matters to the production of rhetoric as it affects the material exigencies of daily life, the ways individual rhetors identify themselves (to themselves and others), the ways individuals move through space and thus form relationships, and the ways individuals understand their place in society.

Ultimately, this study contributes to existing theories of rhetorical space by exploring the ways location and discourses about space affect rhetorical choices, and by analyzing how discourses of space are transformed into rhetorical strategies, either compelling an emotional response from audiences, intervening in existing social hierarchies, or creating shared space for rhetorical engagement.
“What a sad and alarming spectacle this in [sic] the nineteenth century and in America! An alien host, a hostile church, a treasonable government set up in the very midst of the Republic. Two hundred thousand taught daily, in the name of God, to hate what we love . . . Surely, this perversity and folly combined must be severely taken in hand, and looked to with zeal and determination which never flag, or else mischief of the gravest will be wrought.”—“What Shall be Done with Utah?” Independent, August 1886

“The degradation of woman in Utah is a common phrase. It is common with our inveterate enemies—those who would annihilate us as a people, and it is repeated by many who, politically, are our friends . . . if to be loved, honored, and respected as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters by good men is degrading them, then the women of Utah are degraded.”—Eliza R. Snow, “Degradation of Women in Utah,” Deseret News, April 1870.

In an editorial for the Independent in August 1886, an anonymous writer asked a national audience of Americans “What shall be done with Utah?” conflating the physical desert territory with the religious practices of the Mormons located there. The author viewed Utah as a hostile, perverse territory that poses a serious threat to American stability and values. Some sixteen years earlier, in a speech aimed at Mormon women, Eliza R. Snow presented a diametrically opposed view of the territory as a location of sanctuary and respect for Mormon women. Both of these views, by conflating physical location and spiritual and political position, point to the inextricable link of place and identity. This link became one that both Mormons and their opponents hoped to exploit: by intervening in the physical and political arrangements of the territory, anti-Mormon and anti-polygamy advocates hoped to dismantle the spiritual identity assumed by Mormons. Conversely, by linking their physical location with their spiritual roles, Mormons sought to solidify their group identity and strengthen their religious community.
Articulating a unique spiritual identity (in part through its link to place) was particularly important for Mormon women in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, as they faced considerable prejudice both within and outside Utah from non-Mormon Americans,¹ which sought to define them as weak, degraded and oppressed beings who were virtual slaves in their communities.² Rather than submitting to these negative definitions, many Mormon women sought to actively define Mormon womanhood through periodic articles and letters to the editor in the *Woman’s Exponent*, a bi-monthly periodical published by Mormon women.³ But no single Mormon woman was more influential in arguing for Mormon woman’s identity than Eliza R. Snow, the president of the Mormon women’s Relief Society, plural wife of Mormon leader Brigham Young, and the most prominent Mormon woman of her time. Throughout her long and active career as a leader of Mormon women, Snow consistently sought to help Mormon women understand “their place in time and eternity” (Derr 25).⁴ Study of Snow’s published speeches in the *Woman’s Exponent*, demonstrates the power of place as an element in individual positioning. Not only does Snow’s physical location inform her own spiritual and cultural identity, but she uses common tropes about Utah spaces to encourage Mormon women to identify with a particular version of Mormon womanhood.

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¹ Although the formal name of the Mormon church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I will be using the more familiar, colloquial name for the church (one that Mormons themselves often identify with).
² Harriet Beecher Stowe believed that Mormon polygamy was “a slavery which debases and degrades womanhood, motherhood, and family” (qtd. in Embry and Kelley 1).
³ Louisa Lula Greene [Richards] was the editor of the *Exponent* from (1872-1877). She was succeeded by Emmeline B. Wells, who edited the journal for many years, until the end of the *Exponent*’s run in the early twentieth century.
⁴ According to Mormon historian Jill Derr, Snow “had a clear sense of how to situate herself within Mormon theology and Mormon community” (“Remembering Eliza R. Snow” 2), and Snow wanted to extend this self-understanding to other Mormon women.
Although Snow clearly had a significant influence on Mormon women, she and her community remain largely unknown to rhetorical scholars. Despite the recent rise in historiographical projects that recover nineteenth-century American women’s rhetorics, there is little recovery work of nineteenth-century Mormon women, including Snow. Anne Ruggles Gere’s work on nineteenth-century club women is one of the few published rhetorical texts to include Mormon women. This neglect may stem from a tendency among feminist rhetorical scholars to identify most strongly with the progressive women of the abolition and suffrage movements, whose feminist projects seem more worthy to twentieth and twenty-first century readers. Mormon women, belonging as they do to a church now widely recognized as conservative, do not seem to merit the same rhetorical attention as progressive women (Mattingly). Yet, as Carol Mattingly suggests, focusing solely on women with radical political projects can distort our understanding of nineteenth century women’s political participation, in part because it prevents us from acknowledging other effective rhetorical projects. Moreover, dismissing nineteenth-century Mormon women as conservative on the basis of current representations of Mormonism is a mistake, given the radical origins of Mormonism (Keller, “Forum”). With some justification, Eliza R. Snow could claim that, “No where on the earth has woman so broad a sphere of labor and duty, of responsibility and action, as in Utah” (“An Address” 62). These women believed they were instrumental in creating a revolutionary Kingdom of God on earth; were among the first to achieve woman’s

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5 Some twentieth century Mormon women writers, like Juanita Brooks and Terry Tempest Williams, have proved an exception to this general trend.

6 Even were the appellation “conservative” appropriate, I would still argue in favor of studying the rhetoric of Mormon women. Although I recognize that scholarly study is often driven by what scholars find personally compelling, I think that to focus solely on those rhetorics that are sympathetic to our current interests and mindsets is somewhat short-sighted. If our aim is to truly redraw the rhetorical map, that redrawing may require recognition of the variety of different rhetorics in productive tension with one another.
suffrage (in 1870); established the first enduring women’s journal west of the Mississippi, the *Woman’s Exponent* (Beecher, “Eliza R. Snow”); and, at one point in the latter half of the nineteenth century had more women doctors than any other state or territory (Firor). It was to these women, with their exalted view of their own possibilities, that Snow addressed her rhetoric.

As part of my broader dissertation project, which seeks to understand the effects of place on women’s rhetorical practices, this chapter focuses on the ways that Snow uses discourses about Utah spaces to constitute her female audience as specifically Mormon women. Although spatial rhetorics are not the only strategies she uses to exhort her audience to become the “holy women” she envisions them to be, space/place constitutes a powerful theme in her various addresses. Perhaps more importantly, place—in both its physical and conceptual aspects—shapes her rhetorical strategies in three specific ways: her location (geographical and spiritual) informs her own identity as a Mormon woman (and thus the identity with which she invites her readers to identify); common tropes rooted in the material landscape of Utah provide her with resources for invention; and physical place becomes a vehicle for identification. I argue that Snow drew on Mormon women’s shared experience of Utah space—and the discourses used to understand that

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7 Historian Julie Roy Jeffrey suggests that Mormons were the largest and most successful frontier utopia, and that their success “lay in [Mormonism’s] ability to create strong individual and group loyalty” (184). Arguably, rhetorics like Snow’s played a substantial part in the creation of this individual and group loyalty.

8 Snow also relies on direct exhortation, jeremiads, biographical narratives (which hearers can identify with and enact in their own lives).

9 Similar to my argument about space as a resource for invention, Richard Marback’s “The Rhetorical Space of Robben Island” explores the way that the island serves as “a commonplace for injustices of apartheid” (7).
space as a redeemed desert, Zion, and a mountain home—as a means for fostering group identity among her Mormon sisters.  

Understanding Eliza R. Snow’s Place in Mormon Society

“This eminent and highly cultured lady is perhaps more widely known, here and abroad, than any woman in the Church of Latter-day Saints. She occupies the highest position among the sisters, and may with all propriety be designated, ‘The Elect Lady.’ . . . Not only has she been elected by the people and ordained and set apart to expound the scriptures and preside over the sisters . . . but she has been baptized as by fire and sanctified through suffering of the keenest and severest character.”–Emmeline B. Wells, “Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman,” p. 33

Because so little is known about nineteenth-century Mormon women in rhetorical circles, this section provides some background to the Mormon church and Snow herself, attending particularly to the places that anchor this background. Jill Derr suggests that we can understand Snow in part through her location—where she was situated spiritually and physically in relation to her community. As this section makes clear, Snow assumed roles as a poet, prophetess, and presidentess in response to exigencies of her particular physical and spiritual location.

Eliza Roxcy Snow (b. 1804) first met Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church, in the early 1830s at her parents’ Ohio home and was baptized into the Mormon congregation in 1835 (“Sketch” 10). At that time, Mormonism was still a relatively new

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10 I am not trying to argue that Snow originated these spatial motifs (they were, in fact, widely circulating at the time), but rather that she invoked these motifs to constitute Mormon women’s identity *precisely* because they were so well known for women. In addition, because Snow was publicly known as a leader of Mormon women and as “Zion’s Poetess,” her use of particular identity tropes was especially influential. As Jill Derr has explained, Snow’s era was one in which “the role of the poet was both to articulate and to shape public sentiment” (“The Lion and the Lioness” 58; see also Maureen Beecher, “The Eliza Enigma”). In other words, Snow’s spatial rhetorics articulated circulating understandings of space and shaped those spaces particularly for women.

11 Prior to her conversion, Snow had attended community schools in the “Connecticut Western Reserve” in Ohio, and attained a more than adequate education, despite the limited quality of the schools (Beecher “Three Women”). As a child, she was fond of poetry and began publishing her own in regional newspapers, starting in 1826 (Beecher, “Inadvertent Disclosure”). Her poetry gave her experience in gauging particular rhetorical situations; according to Beecher, Snow’s early poetry was all written “with a specific audience in
According to Joseph Smith, in the late 1820s he translated writing on gold plates, which he had found in response to divine direction, and which contained the records of ancient people living in the Americas. This record, published as the Book of Mormon in March of 1830, became one of the foundations of the religion Smith established.12

Following her conversion in December of 1835, Snow moved to Kirtland, Ohio, where other members of the Mormon church were gathering. From this moment on, Snow’s physical location reflected her close association with her new religion, as she joined members of the Mormon church in their frequent relocations. In 1838, after increasing tension between Mormons and non-Mormons, she followed the body of the church from Kirtland to Missouri (“Sketch” 12). Within a year, in response to increasing mob violence and a governor’s order that the Mormons leave the state, Snow and her family moved to Commerce, Illinois (later re-named Nauvoo).

Some of the formative events of Snow’s life occurred in Nauvoo (Beecher “Inadvertent Disclosure”; Derr, “Significance”). In 1842, the women of Nauvoo, with authorization from the prophet Joseph Smith, formed the Nauvoo Female Relief Society, with Joseph’s wife Emma as president and Snow as secretary.13 During her time in mind, a particular newspaper to reach a known body of readers, and usually to celebrate some momentous occasion, plead some cause, or present some moral lesson” (“Inadvertent Disclosure” 95). Although Snow was not necessarily an intellectual, she was highly intelligent; Beecher claims that “her early poetry bespeaks both an awareness of the larger world and an amazing wealth of vocabulary and rhetorical skill with which to respond to that world” (“Three Women” 35).

12 Although the creation of a new church in an era of fervent religious revivalism was not unusual, historian Jan Shipps has pointed to a couple of factors that made this church radically different from many contemporary religious movements. First, the Book of Mormon claimed to be new scripture, a parallel text to the Bible. Also, Mormon doctrine about the apostasy, a falling away of authority and doctrine in the centuries following Christ, effectively erased Mormonism’s historical connections to traditional Christianity and rooted them instead in primitive Christianity.

13 Although in many ways this society reflected the aims of other benevolent societies of the era, it was organized after the pattern Joseph Smith had established for the male priesthood and was viewed as a
Nauvoo, Snow became widely recognized as “Zion’s Poetess,” whose poetry functioned as a commentary on her people’s experiences and “reflected a growing sense of community identity and intimacy” (Derr, “Significance” 88-9). Also in 1842, Snow became a plural wife of Joseph Smith, a practice that church members believed was divinely instituted, and which was, in the 1840s, practiced in secrecy among a select few. The final formative event was the 1844 lynching of Joseph Smith by a hostile mob, a loss that Snow felt deeply, both as a wife mourning her husband and a believer mourning her prophet.

As Derr eloquently explains, Snow’s time in Nauvoo also provided some resolution to an individual quest to understand her own position relative to God and her religious community. In 1845, just over a year after the prophet’s death, she published what remains one of her best-known works, the poem “Invocation” which provides one of the first, and clearest, articulations of the Mormon belief in a Mother in Heaven.

O my Father, thou that dwellest
In the high and glorious place;
When shall I regain thy presence,
And again behold thy face? . . .
In the heav’ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare;
Truth is reason—truth eternal,
Tells me I’ve a mother there.

The positions Snow articulates in this poem—that women and men are children of deity and capable of an intimate relationship with them and that both sexes possess divine role models—are ones that powerfully informed not only her own identity, but the Mormon identity she proffered to others.

Less than two years after Smith’s death, the members of the church he had established were forcibly driven from Illinois (much as they had earlier been driven from Ohio and Missouri). Snow also fled Nauvoo, in company with several of Brigham Young’s plural wives (Beecher, “The ‘Leading Sisters’”). She herself was one of Young’s wives, having married him following Smith’s death, primarily for economic reasons (Beecher, “Priestess”). The Mormons chose to settle in Utah, in part because Utah was then outside the jurisdiction of the American government that had failed to provide them with religious protection, and in part because, while reports of the dry landscape might reliably discourage less committed settlers, Brigham Young and other church leaders believed that the climate was sufficient for raising necessary crops (R. Jackson, Arrington and Bitton). In seeking to build a new settlement in Utah, the saints

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18 In 1847, when the first companies of Mormons reached the Salt Lake Valley, the region was still part of Mexican territory, although the 1849 treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded that territory to the United States.
19 Members of the Mormon church often referred to themselves as saints, for a couple of reasons. First, the name of the church itself authorized it, as members became “Latter-day Saints.” Second, Mormons were drawing on New Testament tradition, where such practice was common among followers of Christ. This concept of “saint” is distinct from the venerated religious figures of traditional Christianity.
were motivated by two different but complementary factors: the need to find refuge, and
the need to continue to build a “Kingdom of God” (O’Dea). Anti-Mormon sentiment
increased in the years following Mormon removal to Utah; some critics saw Mormons as
a threat to the spread of American democracy in the West, because they believed that
Mormonism was a threat to American values and institutions (Davis)\textsuperscript{20}; others, virulently
opposed to Mormon polygamy, made comparisons between polygamy and slavery.\textsuperscript{21}

The establishment of a new settlement in Utah, in tandem with the development
of a new religion, had a powerful impact on the identities of Mormon women, including
Snow. The physical isolation from other Anglo-American settlers allowed Mormon
women to practice, and fully identify with, their new religion in peace. This physical
distance from Eastern conventions of femininity also arguably provided women with the
opportunity to try out new, expanded roles.\textsuperscript{22} Yet unlike other Western women,
conditions particular to Mormon communities made their experience of the Western
frontier different. For one thing, Mormon communities were highly structured from the
outset, and most Mormon women were integrated into the Mormon women’s Relief

\textsuperscript{20} Nineteenth-century Congregationalist minister Josiah Strong argued that “the American West, and thus
the destination of the nation and the world, was imperiled by Mormonism, Catholicism, and socialism”
(Davis 151).

\textsuperscript{21} John M. Coyer, a Salt Lake journalist, wrote in 1878 that “There is an irrepressible conflict between the
Mormon power and the principles upon which our free institutions are established, and one or the other
must succumb. The arguments, the dogmas, and the whole line of defense of this system are so similar to
those used years gone by, by the defenders of the system of slavery, that it is, indeed, well named the ‘Twin
Sister.’ And now I say to the American people that, if something is not done soon to stop the development
of this law-breaking, law-defying fanaticism, either our free institutions must go down beneath its power,
or, as with slavery, it must be wiped out in blood” (qtd. in Mulder and Mortenson 407-8). Kate Field, a
popular lecturer about the “Mormon Monster,” derided Mormon women’s assertions that they were happy
under this system, explaining, “Before the abolition of slavery the world was assured that negroes were
happy in their chains and individual slaves may have said as much” (qtd. in Gordon, “The Liberty of Self-
Degradation” 830).

\textsuperscript{22} The suggestion that physical removal to the West liberated women has been widely debated among
Western women historians. Some suggest that the demands of establishing new settlements may indeed
have unsettled gender roles (Jameson); others point out that the harsh lifestyle and often lonely position of
women may have substantially offset the positive advantages of “liberation” (Graudich). Still others note
that many women did not challenge traditional gender roles, but merely incorporated them in new form in
their present environment (Riley, Griswold, Jeffrey).
Society, which provided an outlet for creative and charitable abilities. In addition, because Mormon men were often absent because of priesthood responsibilities, particularly foreign missions, women were often called on to perform men’s labor as well as their own (Arrington and Bitton). Also, the Mormon practice of polygamy (at its best) provided women with additional opportunities, as the system could free some women to pursue other interests while their sister wives helped raise their children; polygamous wives were also likely to have more independence, act as head of households, and share financial responsibility (Jeffrey). All of these factors contributed to a sense of capability and independence that often found expression in the pages of the Woman’s Exponent.

Like her Mormon sisters who found new opportunities in the Utah society, Snow also came into her own in Utah. In partnership with Brigham Young, Snow rose to greater visibility through their mutually supportive roles as prophet/poet, husband/wife, and president/presidentess (Derr, “The Lion and the Lioness”). As prophet, Young patronized her poetry; as a poet, she upheld his role as prophet. As husband and wife they supported one another with friendship and council. And as president of the Church, Young’s work was complimented by Snow’s work as presidentess (her preferred title) of the Relief Society, which was reinstated in 1867, and which “achieved for Mormon

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23 In Nauvoo, as Beecher has demonstrated, Snow was relatively obscure, known primarily for her poetry (“Inadvertent Disclosure”).

24 Beecher also suggests that Snow’s rise was part and parcel of a general rise of a particular group of women who all rose to prominence in Utah. These women shared a number of characteristics: they were related by marriage or blood to prominent Utah men; they had been part of the initial organization of the Relief Society in Nauvoo; and they had bonded together in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, prior to the trek to Utah in spiritual sessions (“The ‘Leading Sisters’”).

25 The Relief Society had been temporarily disbanded in 1844, in part because of Joseph Smith’s wife Emma’s public opposition to leaders of the church over polygamy, although it is not clear whether the women themselves discontinued it or whether church leaders stepped in. (For a detailed discussion of this era, see chapter two of Derr, Cannon, and Beecher’s Women of Covenant). Later, not only did the move to Utah disrupt many social organizations, but Young was leery of giving too much autonomy to groups of women within the church, given the Relief Society’s prior challenge of church leadership (Derr, Cannon,
women a power base and a degree of public influence unequalled by ‘gentile’ women on the frontier” (Beecher, “Priestess” 153). As president of the Relief Society, Snow was central to the various projects of the Relief society, which included various home industries (such as raising silk worms and growing grain), charity work, women’s health education and the organization of a hospital for women, among others. (Beecher, “The Eliza Enigma”). Snow also filled roles as a “prophetess” for her manifestations of pentacostal gifts such as healing and speaking in tongues, and “priestess” among the women for her work officiating in the endowment house, where private, sacred ordinances were performed for women (Beecher, “Eliza Enigma”; “Priestess”). In these roles, Snow served as a model for other Mormon women.

These various roles offered Snow abundant opportunities for the practice and refinement of her rhetorical abilities. Even before her increasingly active assumption of responsibilities in 1867, Snow participated in public colloquiums, for example, defending women in addresses composed for the Polysophical society, which was established in 1854 to discuss ideas, recite poetry, perform music, etc. (Beecher, “Three Women”; Derr, “Significance”). Through most of her public addresses, Snow aimed to elevate and defend her “sister saints” against wide-spread anti-Mormon prejudice (Derr).

Beecher). It was largely because of Young’s trust and respect for Snow that he authorized her to organize branches of the Relief Society throughout church settlements in Utah Territory.

26 Because, as will be explained in more detail later, Mormons saw themselves as spiritual heirs to the biblical Jews, they often tended to use similar religious language in referring to non-believing outsiders as “Gentiles.”

27 Snow also played a central role in establishing the other major auxiliary organizations within the church, including the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association and the children’s Primary Association.

28 According to her contemporaries, Snow’s rhetorical abilities were substantial: Emmeline B. Wells, long-time editor of the Exponent, in a series of biographical articles about Snow, wrote, “I doubt if any other woman has accomplished so much in organizing and in public speaking among women” (“Pen Sketch,” 1 Mar. 1881, p. 147). Her relative importance as a speaker and the weight her audiences gave her is suggested by various meeting minutes published in the Woman’s Exponent—where other speakers are summarized in a few brief lines, Snow is often quoted verbatim and at length (see for example Caroline Daniels’s report).
In the last two decades of her life, from the mid 1860s until her death in 1887, Snow’s mission to unify her sisters in their shared identity took on an added importance. Not only were Mormon women faced with outside prejudice, but the increasing presence of non-Mormons in Utah threatened to disrupt their tight-knit community, challenge their spiritual lives through the introduction of “worldly” values and goods, and undermine their self-identification.\footnote{The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 and the discovery of rich mineral deposits in the 1870s brought increasing numbers of outsiders to Utah. Arrington and Bitton note that the railroad raised the Gentile presence in the Salt Lake Valley to 10%, which in turn led to the creation of an anti-Mormon lobby that could claim to speak on behalf of Utah (unlike federally appointed leaders in the territory).} For Snow, the physical and spiritual locations of women were crucial to their ability to withstand potentially corrupting influences. Using discourses rooted in the material landscape of Utah, Snow helped Mormon women understand and
recommit to their identity as spiritual heirs of the biblical Israelites and women of Zion. Finally, Snow turned to rhetorics of a “mountain home” to help make the landscape of Utah habitable for women.30

Constituting Group Identity

“I thought when I was abroad, I thought before I went, and I have thought much since I returned, how necessary for the Saints of the living God to be more of a distinct people than what they are, to be the Saints of God in very deed—and to be as different from the rest of the world as our privileges are more exalted.”—Eliza R. Snow, “An Address”

Snow’s rhetoric works to constitute her female audience as a “peculiar people” both through the nature of her address, which assumes their shared identity, and the particular spatial tropes she invokes which provide her audience with shared symbols for identity. In his oft-cited article on constitutive rhetoric, Maurice Charland argues that audiences do not exist separate of discourse, but are called into being by that very discourse. In other words, the process through which groups assume identity is ultimately a thoroughly rhetorical process. A rhetoric becomes constitutive when it provides an audience with the means necessary for assuming a group identity. As audiences recognize and acknowledge being addressed by a particular discourse, they (consciously or unconsciously) accept the subject position, or ideological identity, assigned to them by that discourse. Unlike other methods of persuasion, constitutive appeals take effect from

30 It should be noted that the reading that follows presents Snow as a woman with a relatively stable, unambiguous sense of identity. In actuality, this was not always the case. As Derr has explained (“Significance” “Woman Question”), Snow often struggled, particularly in her early life, to understand her spiritual place in Mormonism as a woman. Moreover, as Beecher notes in her introduction to Snow’s writings, Snow was a very private woman, often difficult to know. If this reading fails to convey a sense of personal doubt and ambiguity that Snow may have felt, this may stem from a disinclination towards personal disclosure, the obligations attendant upon her position as a public voice for Mormon woman (such as the need to present a unified front with Church leaders), and the possibility that by this point in her life (in her 70s and 80s), she may have resolved or come to terms with any personal tensions with Mormon doctrines or practices.
the moment of address, prior to the use of any particular appeals. Since most individuals vacillate between a variety of identity positions and are often addressed in a variety of ways, that constitutive rhetoric is most successful which can best resolve conflicts between subject positions, or which provides the most compelling narrative of identity. Snow’s rhetorical texts, which address her Mormon sisters as spiritual beings with extraordinary potential, presume for women the identity she expects them to assume.31

But rhetoric can constitute identity not only through the mode of address, but through the particular symbols a rhetorical address invokes. According to Kenneth Burke, identification occurs when a speaker persuades an audience member “by identifying your cause with his interest” and that the extent of one’s persuasive ability depends on the extent to which “you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (Rhetoric 24, 55). In other words, identification requires the articulation of shared properties between the speaker and hearer, “properties in goods, in services, in position or status, in citizenship, in reputation, in acquaintanceship and love” (24). Identification through shared properties often occurs “through rhetorical exchanges of collectively meaningful symbols,” which “provide those who share them with common ‘resources of identification’” (Clark 3). Thus, as Gregory Clark insightfully demonstrates in his study of rhetorical landscapes, landscape itself can function rhetorically to constitute shared identity among individuals. Although Clark’s

31 Although the idea of identity has been charged as essentialist and an “ideological fiction . . . imposed from above, and used to divide and control populations” (Alcoff and Mohanty), I agree with scholars Linda Alcoff and Satya Mohanty, who argue that identities arise out of a complex interaction of outside forces and individual agency: “We contend that identities can be no less real for being socially and historically situated, and for being relational, dynamic, and, at times, ideological entrapments” (6). For the purposes of this paper, I assume identity to mean the discourses and practices that help individuals make sense of their experience in the world and their relationships to others in their community. I use the term “identity” rather than the more current term “subjectivity” because Snow and her audience would have understood these discourses as forming a part of their identities.
study is focused on the rhetorical effects of physical landscapes (i.e., how experiencing a particular landscape influences one’s identity), rather than the ways landscape symbols are used in constitutive discourse, his understanding of how Burkean identification proceeds through symbol sharing is critical to my analysis here.

In this chapter, I demonstrate the ways that Eliza R. Snow draws upon the landscape of Utah as a shared symbol of identity, around which she encourages her listeners to rally. Given the dislocation of Mormons in the history outlined above, it is not surprising that Snow should turn to space as a powerful resource for symbolic invention. Because land, like other markers of dominant culture identity, often becomes an invisible marker of privilege, land is often only noticed or valued in its absence: displaced people often write with urgent attention to place (Brady). In the wake of their own displacements and dislocations, Mormons, like the Israelites they took as their spiritual predecessors, (and like their Puritan predecessors, whose influence often went unacknowledged),\(^{32}\) increasingly invested their physical place with spiritual significance.\(^{33}\)

“The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose”: Utah as the Spiritual Heir of Israel

Twas dry and desolate—
But they had come, searching their way across
The trackless desert plains, to find a home
For persecuted Saints; and here they found

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\(^{32}\) Because early Mormons were intent on grounding their religion in the Christianity of the New Testament, the often overlooked or downplayed their religious indebtedness to the Puritans, who were similarly invested in a narrative of divinely ordained place. But since many of the early converts came from New England stock, it seems likely that Mormon rhetorics of place borrowed from Puritan rhetorics, whether this borrowing was done consciously or not.

\(^{33}\) Of course, many Mormons reworked this dislocation into a divinely shaped narrative. Edward Tullidge suggests that one of the primary attributes of Mormons is their history of pioneers (suggesting that their forced location was voluntary and divinely ordained): “In this both their Church and family history have a national significance. Trace their family migrations from old England to New England in the seventeenth century; from Europe to America in the nineteenth; then follow them as a people in their empire-track from the State of New York, where their church was born, to Utah and California! It will thus be remarkably illustrated that they and their parents have been pioneering not only America but the world itself to the ‘Great West’ for the last two hundred and fifty years!” (27).
A parched and sterile waste—the heritage of crickets,
And the Indian’s stamping ground;
Which none but those who fully trusted in
The living, speaking God of Abraham,
Would have essayed, or struggled to redeem.--Eliza R. Snow, 1875 Jubilee Poem.

In this excerpt, from a longer poem written for an 1875 Pioneer Day celebration,34 Snow draws on a powerful narrative of space to not only emphasize the faith of early Mormon pioneers but to suggest their spiritual identity as heirs of the biblical Jews, who similarly worshipped the God of Abraham. Here, as elsewhere in her writings, Snow uses a landscape trope of the desert redeemed both to help her listeners understand their identity as God’s chosen people and to serve as a shorthand symbol for that same identity.

Although this particular Jubilee poem does not, as many of her other writings did, allude to the subsequent fertility of this desert region, the mention of “A parched and sterile waste” would have signaled to her readers that she was invoking a powerful Mormon mythology that opposed the sterile land with the nearly miraculous cultivation by Mormon settlers. This particular mythology held that God had led the Mormons to refuge in the deserts of the West (an isolated, unwanted space where their enemies would not follow them) and made the deserts bloom to support their settlement. The perception that God altered the nature of the landscape to benefit Mormon settlers served to reemphasize Mormon’s belief that they were a chosen people of God. Indeed, the language most commonly used by Mormons (and non-Mormons) to describe this phenomenon was that God made “the desert blossom as the rose,” a quotation from the Book of Isaiah, describing the prophesied renewal of Israel: “the desert shall rejoice, and

34 This annual celebration commemorates the arrival of the first group of Mormon settlers in the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847.
blossom as the rose” (35:1). Mormons believed that their settlement fulfilled this biblical prophesy. This narrative of a desert redeemed influenced Mormon settlers and non-Mormon visitors alike in their perception of the Salt Lake Valley. At least one visitor in 1862 noted that “Truly the Mormon prophesy has been fulfilled: already a howling wilderness blooms like a rose” (qtd. in Mitchell 338).

Ironically, this mythology did not accord with the initial perception of Mormon settlers, many of whom (Snow included) found the Great Salt Lake valley more fertile and promising than the Wyoming and Nebraska plains they had crossed. R. Jackson demonstrates that many of these earlier settlers subsequently modified their narrative accounts of settlement to emphasize God’s role in leading them to Utah, including a greater emphasis on the sterility of the valley. (It is, however, true that early Mormon settlers had chosen to settle in Utah territory in part because the land was widely held to be less desirable than other Western regions and therefore less likely to be overrun with non-Mormon settlers). These settlement narratives also downplayed Mormon research on irrigation techniques prior to moving west, in order to suggest that their irrigation practices were also evidence of God’s divine blessing. In part, these revised narratives helped Mormons overcome the seeming paradox of God’s chosen people being driven out of their assigned Zion (common Mormon belief held Jackson County, Missouri, to be the site of the new American Jerusalem). Moreover, as Jackson argues, the desertification of the Great Plains in these settlement narratives helped Mormons see themselves as

35 Geographer Richard H. Jackson suggests that non-Mormon visitors took their descriptions of the valley from early Mormon histories such as one by Edward Tullidge, who described the valley as a “dry, sterile desert” (qtd. in “The Mormon Experience” 51).
36 In a poem written by Snow during the exodus to Utah, she explained: “We go to choice and goodly lands,/With rich and fertile soil,/ That by the labor of our hands/ Will yield us wine and oil” (reprinted Woman’s Exponent, 1 Nov. 1880, pp 81-2).
spiritual heirs of Israel: “The Great Plains as an American Sinai became the proof that the Mormons were indeed the latter-day inheritors of the Israelites’ promises, a chosen people whom God required to be proven by trials through an exodus to an unknown land” (“The Mormon Experience”). And like biblical Israelites, Mormons developed a sense that persecution was “both fate and test of the chosen people” (Arrington and Bitton 63).

Like other Mormon contemporaries, Snow saw the fertility of the purported desert region as evidence that God had chosen the Mormons, as he had earlier chosen the Israelites, to prosper in an unpropitious environment. And like some of her contemporaries, Snow draws on the image of the desert blossoming to remind her audience of their identity as a chosen people. Thus, her discourse transforms the material facts of the land into a powerful symbol of shared identity. Clark’s distinction of land and landscape here becomes crucial: “Land is material, a particular object, while landscape is conceptual. . . . Land becomes landscape when it is assigned the role of symbol, and as symbol it functions rhetorically” (Clark 9).

Snow presents the experience of surviving and taming the desert landscape as a crucial part of the history—and identity—of her people. In 1886, Snow published a description in the Woman’s Exponent of a meeting she had attended where the predominant audience members were “old folks,” of whom she herself (in her eighties at the time) was one. Rather than point to their age or other weaknesses, Snow rejoices in the beauty of these “old folks,” and uses the occasion to remind her readers of the

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37 This spiritual parallel to the biblical exodus from Egypt began with the Mormon exodus West. Brigham Young has frequently been hailed as an “American Moses,” and Young and other church leaders called the leading party of the Mormon movement the “Camp of Israel.” According to Arrington and Bitton, “Biblical rhetoric was used to heighten the Saints’ sense of leaving a place of persecution for a Promised Land and of being miraculously blessed and guided” (96).
importance of their pioneer heritage—a heritage that she links explicitly to the mythology of a desert redeemed:

I know that many of those whose faces expressed integrity and firmness, had in times gone by, drank freely of the cup of sorrow from the merciless hands of persecution—had from time to time been homeless and destitute—had journeyed over trackless wastes to this Mountain recess, then the veriest personification of barrenness and desolation which never would, and never could have been redeemed from its sterility, and utilized, by any other people than such as were before me, whose indomitable courage, nerved by unswerving faith and trust in the living God, which inspired them with more than mortal strength to contend with adverse circumstances and draw forth subsistence from unpropitious elements. Now that same desert blossoms as the rose. ("The Old Folks" 20, emphasis added)

For Snow, this narrative demonstrates the indomitable faith and courage of those early settlers, a crucial part of Mormon pioneer heritage and identity. Significantly, this narrative of identity is tied to the landscape of Utah: the transformation of the landscape, from the “veriest personification of barrenness and desolation” to a blooming rose, becomes both a symbol of and evidence for their faith. By invoking this narrative, Snow reminds her readers of their powerful heritage of faith. Moreover, because a heritage is something of value meant to be transmitted to future generations as well as the present, her invocation of this narrative also exhorts her listeners to identify with and exhibit this same faithful identity.
This narrative also serves to connect her listeners with the God of the Bible, rooting Mormons not in a traditional Christian identity, but a primitive Christianity, a move characteristic of Mormonism’s self-identity.38 This rooting of a new religious identity in the Bible, as spiritual heirs of the biblical chosen people, endows new Mormon converts with a sense of a much longer, established religious tradition than by rights belongs to a new religion.39 In a psalm published in the Woman’s Exponent, Snow praises God for his role in bringing Mormons to Utah:

Thou who didst command Abraham to leave his native land, and to separate himself from his father’s house, Thou art my God. . . .

38 Jan Shipp explains that Mormonism’s belief in an apostacy, or falling away of authority after the death of Christ’s apostles, rooted them to primitive rather than traditional Protestant or Catholic Christianity. In other words, Mormons saw themselves as the direct successors of the biblical apostles in the New Testament. (This may also be similar to the way that early Protestant faiths saw themselves as returning to the primitive faith of the New Testament).

39 In some ways, this process of creating/inventing a tradition is typical of almost every new movement, whether religious, social, or political, as Hobsbawm and Ranger demonstrate in The Invention of Tradition.
In Thine own wisdom, and with outstretched hand, Thou hast brought thy people to these mountain vales; and here Thou hast inspired the hearts and nerved the hands of thy sons and daughters, and through thy blessings on their labors the sterile and forbidding desert is yielding in its strength, and the barren wilderness is blossoming as the rose. (“Psalm” 57)

Snow concludes the psalm by expressing faith that, despite the persecution that drove the saints to Utah and continues to plague them, God will support his people. Snow’s narrative of persecution, exile, and promised land provides a spiritual parallel to the biblical narrative of Israel, and reinforces her audience’s spiritual identity as heirs of Israel and chosen people of God.

This spiritual connection between nineteenth-century Mormons and biblical Israelites was widely recognized by Snow and her contemporaries, many of whom saw this relationship reflected in the material landscape of Utah. Both Mormons and non-Mormons drew extensive parallels between Utah and the Holy Land, emphasizing the similarities between the Great Salt Lake and the Dead Sea, both of which were highly saline bodies of water fed by a river from a freshwater lake (Hafen, R. Jackson, Mitchell). Not coincidentally, Mormon settlers named this river the Jordan River.40 One traveler, F.H. Ludlow, described some of the parallels between the “Gentiles” and “God’s chosen people” in the Old and New World:

They have founded their Jerusalem in a Holy Land much like the original. Like Gennesaret, Lake Utah is a body of fresh water emptying by a river Jordan into a Dead Sea. . . . The Saints find their Edomites and Philistines in the Indians of the

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40 This practice of naming American landscapes after Biblical places is part of a well-established practice by various Christian groups in America. Gershon Greenberg argues that early Puritan settlers projected the Holy Land onto America by naming places and regions after Biblical sites.
desert . . . and the Gentile troops of Uncle Sam. The climate is a photographic copy of Judman; the thirsty fields must be irrigated through the long rainless seasons, cloudless heat, while the ridges of Lebanon, here called the Wahsatch, are covered with snow. The timberless plains, the wooded mountain gorges of Judman are here, and have summer-shrunken streams, the dry beds or wadies which mark the path of the Syrian traveller. (qtd. in Mitchell 339)

Ironically enough, these parallels were first promoted not by Mormon settlers (who were not looking to encourage other settlers to the region), but by railroad promoters who encouraged tourism to the region by stressing the spiritual experience to be had in Utah, by virtue of its similarities to the Holy Land (Hafen).

However, these geographic characteristics also had powerful associations for Mormons; these parallels reinforced a kindred feeling that Mormons had for the biblical Jews, and strengthened Mormon belief that they were the spiritual heirs of the Jews, God’s new chosen people.41 Like the biblical Jews, the Mormons too had been exiled from their homes but were ultimately led to a divinely instituted “promised land.”42 As historian Jan Shipps notes, this perception of Utah as an American Israel profoundly influenced the way that Mormons thought about themselves. By extension, this perception also influenced the way they spoke and wrote about themselves; in other words, it influenced the rhetorical choices they made to describe and constitute

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41 However, it should be noted that Mormons did not see themselves as replacing the Jews as God’s chosen people—rather, they were another of God’s chosen people. Mormon beliefs about the second coming of Christ also involved the restoration of the Jewish people in Jerusalem (Greenberg). Mormons did, however, see themselves as distinct from American Protestants who similarly saw themselves as God’s chosen people. Mormons tended to see themselves as direct spiritual heirs of the biblical people, rather than inheriting this role from any other Protestant group. In other words, they believed that they had received a new covenant from God.

42 Although this belief in their chosen status is not unique to Mormons (the Puritans, among others, expressed similar sentiments), it was significant to their self-identification.
themselves as a group. Although Snow seldom refers explicitly to the physical landscape parallels between Utah and the Holy Land, she does draw on this spiritual parallel to help her listeners understand their own spiritual identity as Mormon women.

The identity invoked by the narrative of the desert redeemed is not only one of faith and divine providence. In Snow’s rhetorical addresses it also serves as an occasion to claim American citizenship. At a mass meeting of women convened in Salt Lake City in 1878 to protest anti-polygamy legislation, Snow alludes to the reclamation of the desert to encourage her sisters to fight for their rights (and by implication, their identity), not only as Mormons but as Americans. As president of the assembly, Snow argues that the object of the meeting is to “claim the privilege, today, of representing ourselves. As true and loyal American citizens, we claim the right of protection by that government under which we live, and the free exercise of our religious rights” (Woman’s Mass Meeting 97). As justification for the right of women to represent themselves, she points out that they are “saints of the living God, who have been persecuted and driven from our homes from place to place, and now located in the valleys of these mountains, having been misrepresented from time to time.” In other words, these women should represent themselves not only because they have been misrepresented in the outside press, but because they are chosen people of God who have been led specifically to Utah. Moreover, as women of Utah, they have a claim to their rights as Americans because of the labor they have devoted to improving American land. Snow continues:

43 According to Henry Nash Smith, The Homestead Act of 1862 was established in part to spread the agrarian utopian ideal of small family farms throughout the West. Jeffersonian democracy posited that private ownership of land was a primary qualifier for citizenship; thus, the logic of the homestead act suggested that anyone who could live on their own land and make suitable improvements to the land had a right to that land. Snow may have been referencing such ideas about land improvement when she makes this argument. Rochelle Zuck also notes that this is a common argument made by minority groups in support of their claims to land and citizenship (personal note to author).
It is for the sake of our religion that we are located here; and inasmuch as we, the veritable women of Utah, those who came here when this land and soil belonged to Mexico, and who, through our faith, prayers and indefatigable labors, have assisted in reclaiming it—making it habitable and beautiful—we claim that we have, under God and under the glorious constitution of our country, . . . the sacred right to believe as we please. (97)

This passage is significant not only because Snow translates the narrative of the desert redeemed into political and religious rights, but because, in invoking this narrative, she explicitly writes women into it. The redemption of the desert, although divinely aided, was ultimately achieved through the “faith, prayers and indefatigable labors” of Mormon women. Thus, Snow gives her hearers (and later, her readers in the Woman’s Exponent) stake in their identities as faithful Mormon women and Americans.

Although I have here suggested some specific identities that the narrative of desert redemption invokes for Mormon women—faithful, hard-working, chosen of God, and American—I would like to analyze in a little more depth how this particular narrative works to interpellate Mormon women into a shared identity. According to Charland, narratives that assert the existence of a collective subject act, in fact, to constitute a collective subject.44 In other words, by asserting the existence of a collective Mormon subject who endured persecution and transformed a desert through divine aid, Snow constitutes her audience as part of that collective. Charland additionally explains that rhetorically constitutive narratives claim the existence of a transhistorical subject by linking the present group to their historic predecessors.45 Such rhetoric often relies on a

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44 In Charland’s terms, this is the first ideological effect of constitutive rhetoric.
45 This is the second ideological effect.
tautological argument that seeks to prove the existence of a people by appealing to their a priori existence. Thus for Snow and her hearers, the myth of a desert redeemed provides a compelling narrative that not only informs their group identity as chosen people but also confirms their existence as a group (even though the historic group of Mormons was undoubtedly different in composition and, conceivably, in values, from the group as presently constituted). In addition, this trope of a desert redeemed may be seen to function metonymically as a symbol of the redemption of the Mormons who inhabit that desert.

Building up Zion: Women’s Roles in the Kingdom

“My sisters, when we received the fullness of the Everlasting Gospel, and went into the waters of baptism, we became, symbolically at least, dead to the world, having ’put on Christ.’ We obeyed the call ‘Come out of her (Babylon), my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues’—gathered to the places appointed—for what purpose? Not to build ourselves up after the manner of the Gentiles, by assimilating ourselves into their likeness, but we gathered that we might become ‘a peculiar people—zealous of good works,’ and build up the Zion of God, and His kingdom.” –Eliza R. Snow, “To Every Branch of the Relief Society in Zion,” p. 164

Like many of the more radical Christian sects of the nineteenth-century, Mormon converts saw their baptism as a rejection of worldly values, particularly increasing materialism and secularism. For Snow, conversion to Mormonism required three important spiritual movements: separating oneself from the world, gathering together with the saints, and building up Zion. These movements signify the process of conversion—what Kenneth Burke would call a radical movement from one dominant orientation (and identification) to another (Permanence and Change). Significantly, each

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46 Catherine Brekus describes the desire of many of these sects to create “islands of holiness”—a separatist culture hearkening back to primitive Christianity and countering the increasingly material and secular values of society.
of these inward spiritual movements could be symbolized by outward movement in the material world. Thus, by drawing on spatial tropes of exodus to Utah (and the associated metaphor of Utah’s isolation), gathering, and literally establishing a community in “Zion” (Utah), Snow provides orientation to her audience that helps them understand their own place and identity in Mormon society. Of all the identifications she assigns to Mormon women, perhaps the most important is the identity she grounds in the material and conceptual space of Zion.

*Themes of Exodus and Isolation*

Just as comparisons between Utah and the Holy Land offered Mormons a spatial metaphor through which to understand their relationship to God as a covenant people, so also Utah’s isolation provided a symbolic parallel to the spiritual separation required by their conversion. And as with the previous tropes of Utah as Israel and the desert redeemed, this particular aspect of Utah’s geography was remarked by both Mormons and non-Mormons, although they attributed different significance to that fact. One traveler through Salt Lake City commented, “What a strange religion or fanaticism has led this people to seek out this wild and secluded spot, surrounded by savages and wild beasts” (qtd. in Mitchell 338). Mormons, however, found this isolation an advantage because it made Utah “a safe place to gather” (Arrington and Bitton 113). Although the completion of the trans-continental railroad in 1869 also made Utah more accessible for tourists, who came to satisfy a prurient curiosity about Mormon’s “deviant” lifestyle, Mormons—including Snow—continued to see their settlements as set apart not only physically, but spiritually.
Snow draws on the saints’ shared understanding of Utah’s isolation to symbolize the rarefied identity she wants each woman to assume, an identity established by their conversion and symbolic separation from the world. Ultimately, she sought to constitute these women as a community of holy women: “It is the duty of each one of us to be a holy woman. . . . There is no sister so isolated, and her sphere so narrow but what she can do a great deal towards establishing the Kingdom of God upon the earth” (“An Address” 62). For Snow, holiness rests partially in the ability of women to set themselves apart from the world, even while remaining united with one another. In this same address, given shortly after she returned from an extended tour of the Holy Land, Snow explains,

I thought when I was abroad, I thought before I went, and I have thought much since I returned, how necessary for the Saints of the living God to be more of a distinct people than what they are, to be the saints of God in very deed—and to be as different from the rest of the world as our privileges are more exalted—we should be a shining light to the nations of the earth. But I often say to myself, are we what we should be?”

This theme—the need for Mormon women to separate themselves from the world and yet remain an example—crops up repeatedly in her writing and speaking. This rhetoric of exclusion functions implicitly as a call to action for Mormon women.

Thus, the identification Snow establishes for her audience is inevitably enacted on terms of exclusion, both of Mormons by non-Mormons and of non-Mormons by Mormons. As Burke explains in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, identification is often predicated

47 According to Snow, religious conversion requires divesting oneself of “traditional cast. . . . and like a plain proof-sheet hold ourselves subject to correction in all things” (“Simplicity” 6).

48 This theme also speaks to tensions that others have noticed in separatist religious communities: the need to separate from the world coupled with the need to save that world from corruption (see Arrington and Bitton, as well as Brekus).
upon disidentification and division—we can identify with something (or someone) only to the extent that we identify against something (or someone) else. Snow figures Mormon women’s exclusion in terms of their exile from mainstream America (both physically and culturally) and their status as a “peculiar people—zealous of good works” (“To Every Branch” 164). Although she uses rhetorics of exclusion and exile in multiple speeches, this rhetoric is particularly apparent in a speech, “To Every Branch of the Relief Society in Zion,” given in April 1875. Snow reminds her audience that at their baptism they symbolically withdrew from the world and connects this symbolic withdrawal to their physical withdrawal to Utah Territory. In addition, she defines the “Saints of God” in opposition to the people of the world: they came to Utah to “build up the Zion of God,” not “to build ourselves up after the manner of the Gentiles” (“To Every Branch” 164). As is typical in conversion, individuals are asked to both identify with a new identity and to disidentify with an old one; in this case, Snow exhorts Mormon women to assume their spiritual identity and discard a worldly one. Such renunciations of outside values, reflected in isolationist rhetorics about gathering, Zion, distinctiveness and self-sufficiency function as important “commitment mechanisms” for utopian groups (Shepherd and Shepherd). By drawing on rhetorics of exclusion, Snow helps her audience of Mormon women to understand themselves as spiritually distinct from outside groups, an important precursor to embracing their identity as Mormon women.

49 The term “peculiar people” is a Biblical phrase used to describe the people of God—see KJV Deut. 14.2, Titus 2.14, 1 Pet. 2.9. Injunctions to be a “peculiar people” not only helped constitute group identification, but they echoed similar themes of church leaders; as long as the polemical issue of polygamy was prominent in the church, “then isolation, exclusiveness, and conflict with outside groups were the common fare” (Shepherd and Shepherd 33).

50 Perhaps significantly, in their study of common themes in the speeches by Mormon church leaders, Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd found that themes of renunciation were the most common during the period from 1860-1889 (Indeed, they found that all commitment themes increased during this period, suggesting the need leaders felt to recommit members to their faith).
Themes of Gathering

In addition to rhetorics of exclusion, Snow drew on a rhetoric of gathering to encourage her audience to view themselves as members of a unified spiritual community. Like other religious communities who self-identified as spiritual heirs of the children of Israel and exemplars to the world, nineteenth-century Mormons saw themselves as divinely mandated to build up the Kingdom of God—Zion—on earth. For Mormons, this Zion was both a material and spiritual community. Wherever Mormons built communities—Kirtland, Ohio; Jackson Co., Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois—other saints were encouraged to congregate. This gathering of Zion was essential to nineteenth-century Mormon eschatology, which held that this gathering was a crucial prelude to the second coming of Christ. The original site designated for a Mormon Zion was in Jackson County, Missouri. However, following the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri, this site was temporarily abandoned in favor of establishing a Zion community in Utah (Henrie, Greenberg). Saints living outside Utah, as well as new converts, were encouraged to gather to Utah. As Mormon historians Leonard Arrington and Davis

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51 Early Puritan settlers similarly believed they had a divine imperative to establish Zion in America and serve as an example—a “City on a Hill”—to the world. See Gershon Greenberg’s study, The Holy Land in American Religious Thought, 1620-1948, for more details concerning the ways various religious groups in the nineteenth-century conceptualized Zion in America (either as a physical or spiritual manifestation). Although Americans have long viewed America as a new Zion, Mormon views of Zion were unique, in part because Mormons believed in a dual Zion that would be built in America and rebuilt in Jerusalem.

52 According to a revelation Smith received in 1831, the Saints were commanded to gather together to Zion: “Wherefore I the Lord, have said, gather ye out from the eastern lands, assemble ye yourselves together ye elders of my church; go ye forth into the western countries . . . And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; . . . And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy” (Doctrine & Covenants 45: 64-71).

53 Joseph Smith designated this site as the American Zion in revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.

54 Because of the importance of building Zion (materially as well as spiritually), church leaders placed tremendous emphasis on the need for new converts to immigrate to Zion/Utah. A Perpetual Emigration Fund was established by Brigham Young in 1848 to help the poorer members make the long trek across the plains to Utah. In theory, members who benefited from the Perpetual Emigration Fund were to pay back the money that had enabled their emigration as soon as they were financially stable. In reality, this did not
Bitton have noted, this gathering had both a religious basis and a practical one: Mormons saw themselves as modern Children of Israel, coming together to build the city of God, and this gathering out of the world would provide protection against persecution and enable Mormons (in theory) to better resist the lures of the world.\(^{55}\)

Gathering to Zion also required becoming a unified spiritual community. According to revelation received by Joseph Smith, the inhabitants of Zion needed to be united: “I [God] say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27). Because Zion had a spiritual as well as material dimension, even the most mundane tasks took on spiritual significance for nineteenth-century Mormons.\(^{56}\)

Snow draws on discourses of gathering (in particular, the imperative of unity in Zion) to help Mormon women understand their relationship to other Mormon women and to Mormon men, particularly those in leadership positions. Because Snow’s rhetoric is addressed primarily to those who had already gathered, she is less concerned with encouraging physical gathering than with fostering a kind of spiritual gathering among Mormon women and between men and women.\(^{57}\) Although shared religious identity went a long way towards the harmonious integration demanded of Zion (Arrington and Bitton), the fact remains that many new converts came from different cultural, economic, and

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\(^{55}\) This notion of gathering also carries with it connotations of harvest—i.e., the idea of gathering the fruits of the harvest into a safe place before winter comes.

\(^{56}\) Roger Henrie argues that the principle of gathering contributed to the perception of Utah territory as sacred space.

\(^{57}\) This is true primarily of her later poems and speeches published in local Utah papers, rather than her earlier published works. In her *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political* (1856), Snow includes several poems that explicitly encourage physical gathering, particularly poems addressed to Mormons in Europe (“To the Saints in Europe,” “To the Saints in Denmark”).
linguistic backgrounds. Thus, as a leader of Mormon women, Snow’s rhetoric helps constitute her Mormon sisterhood as a religious community, gathering them together in unity.

Although Snow often directly exhorts women to act in unity with one another, she also uses more subtle rhetorical strategies, such as emphasizing the similarities between different settlements in Utah, to encourage harmony. Between the reestablishment of the Relief Society in 1867 and her death in 1887, Snow traveled extensively among the women in Utah, speaking to various branches of the Relief Society and occasionally to other groups as well. Most of her travels were broadcast in the *Woman’s Exponent*, along with her remarks (sometimes verbatim, sometimes summarized briefly). To many of these groups, Snow gave similar counsel, and, on occasion, remarked on the spiritual similarities between different settlements.

We thank the good people of Sanpete and Juab for their pleasing attentions . . . It is very gratifying to visit the people in the different settlements and learn how they have toiled and persevered under various difficulties to build up the country and extend the borders of Zion . . . It is a remarkable feature of this Latter-day work that go where you will among the Saints, there is the same genuine spirit and influence which is intensely Mormon, and is always perceptible to the initiated. It is this strong cord of union which strengthens and binds together the people of God. (*Exponent*, 15 Sep. 1873: 58)

The sum effect of such comments is not simply to promote a uniform spiritual identification among the women—this “spirit and influence which is intensely

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58 Between 1847 and 1887, some eighty-five thousand converts emigrated to Utah from Europe, predominantly from England and Scandinavia (Arrington and Bitton).
Mormon”—but her accounts of travel between different settlements functions literally to bind those settlements together. Not only do her own movements link these settlements, but written accounts in the *Woman’s Exponent* and church sponsored *Deseret News* of these various meetings help women of different regions in Utah become better acquainted with one another, and envision one another not as strangers but as sisters. Thus, such discourses themselves help the women become “knit together in the bonds of that beautiful love which will eventually bring peace and good will to all” (*Exponent*, 15 Sep. 1873: 58).

Snow also fosters spiritual gathering by encouraging sisters directly to act in unison with their male priesthood leaders. She is particularly careful to stipulate women’s roles in relation to male priesthood holders, explaining that women are to contribute equally to Zion, and, although they are to be obedient to church leaders, they are not subservient. As Mormon historian Jill Derr suggests, Snow struggled particularly during the 1850s to define her own role and that of other women, particularly in relation to the national women’s movement (“Significance”). Following the 1850s, Derr suggests Snow increasingly “reshaped her own rhetoric to elevate women by emphasizing their

59 Although the position of women in the church was determined largely by male priesthood leaders, the women themselves “distinguished subjugation to man’s ‘absolute tyranny’ from submission to the priesthood” (Derr, “Woman Question” 251). For Snow and for other women in the Mormon church, the priesthood, as the power of God, transcended the power or role of any individual male—thus, in following the priesthood, they were following God, not man, despite the frailties of individual men who might bear the generative power of the priesthood (Derr, “The Lion and the Lioness”). Derr argues that the accomplishments of Snow and other Mormon women should not be diminished because of their submission to male authority: “They did not consider themselves slaves; they were stewards” (“Woman Question” 263). In addition, these women believed that their obedience to their leaders would help secure their eternal reward (Derr, Cannon, Beecher).

60 In “Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question,” Derr explores Snow’s relationship to the movement for women’s rights. Although Snow approved of women’s suffrage in Utah (which was granted in 1870, but was later revoked by anti-polygamy measures), she did not approve of the women’s movement in general, as she believed it would bring about disharmony between the sexes.
eternal worth and destiny rather than speak of the superiority of men”
(“Significance”103).

Because Snow believed firmly in the importance of women and their contributions to the church, she argued repeatedly that both men and women were indispensable to the project of kingdom building in Zion.61 Thus, spiritual gathering in Zion required that men and women see their interests united in their spiritual purpose. As she writes to readers of the *Exponent*, “[w]ith the Saints the interests of man and woman are one in every sense of the word, and this mutual interest is productive of mutual effort; and in many directions, a combination of labors” (“Position and Duties,” p. 28).62 In the identity Snow offers to Mormon women, men and women were equal in the sight of God and equally yoked in their labor for His kingdom.63 The community she envisions, and invites Mormon women to take part in, is a community bound together not only by physical location, but by spiritual communion.

*Themes of Building up Zion*

For Snow, physical and spiritual gathering is an essential precursor to the important and all-consuming labor of building Zion. In Snow’s rhetorical discourse, the building of Zion becomes a vehicle through which she can elaborate the specific roles she

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61 Like other female converts to the church in the mid nineteenth-century, Snow was more concerned with building up the kingdom of God than with claiming her individual rights—she was more interested in establishing a new order than reforming the existing one: “We are here to perform duties, and to do our part to establishing God’s kingdom. We, my sisters, have as much to do as our brethren have. We are to work in union with them. Every woman who fills her position as a wife, honorably, stands as a counselor to her husband. Not a dictator, a counselor” (Snow, “An Address” 62).

62 On another occasion, she argued that “There is nothing that appertains to the welfare of Zion, in which the interests of man and woman are not equal, and in which their efforts should not be mutual” (To Every Branch”).

63 Although some of this rhetoric sounds much like the “separate but equal” philosophy of the nineteenth-century notion of separate spheres, it is not exactly the same. Although Snow does envision women’s roles as primarily domestic, as stipulated by separate spheres, she also sees much of men and women’s spiritual work in identical terms: both men and women were to spiritually purify their hearts, attain as much knowledge as they could, and seek to serve one another.
expects Mormon women to assume. As she explains to the women of the Relief Society in 1875, “My Beloved Sisters:—God has called us to an important and highly responsible position; and, let me ask, for what purpose? Is it not that we may efficiently assist in the establishing and building up of His kingdom?” (“To Every Branch,” 164). Because the concept of Zion could function as a powerful orientation device for Mormon women—a symbol that explained not only their physical location, but their place in a spiritual community, including their relationships with one another and with God—Snow invokes the concept frequently. But in order for this particular spatial trope to fulfill its identifying function, Snow has to first remind her audience of its significance. Thus for Snow, perhaps the most important question is one she raises a little later in the same speech: “what has woman to do in bringing about these grand results?” For Snow, the answer lies in woman’s material and spiritual responsibilities.

As the kingdom Snow envisions is material as well as spiritual, she often spends considerable time enumerating the material contributions women could make. During the 1870s, following the completion of the transcontinental railroad, Brigham Young and other church leaders became concerned about the dependence of Mormons on outside good and resources; not only did they fear the potential weakness implied by this dependence, they feared the potential contamination by “Gentile” values (Arrington and Bitton). In accordance with Young’s request, Snow organized Retrenchment societies among the young women and within the Relief Societies. These societies encouraged women to refrain from extravagance in dress and domestic economy, to establish various home industries (such as wheat growing and silk manufacture), and to work “in union for mutual improvement to the benefit of Zion, not only retrenching table extravagance, and
what is ludicrous and disgusting in the fashion of dress, but, also retrenching ignorance, the spirit of the world, and everything else that is opposed to noble womanhood, and progress in the path to perfection” (“To the Young Sisters in Provo” 170). The material work of Retrenchment was meant to provide what Utah’s decreasing physical isolation no longer could: separation from the outside world. The retrenchment rhetoric Snow employs furthers the work of building Zion materially and spiritually by encouraging local economic development and discouraging excessive materialism. In addition, such rhetoric helps women to perceive themselves as capable, independent women who are not dependent upon the vagaries of worldly fashion and approval for self-worth.

Although material and economic separation from the world are important to Snow’s conception of Mormon womanhood and their role in building Zion, she is also keenly interested in the expansion of woman’s domestic duties. Although she frequently reiterates that woman’s first business was “to perform [her] duties at home,” she believed that women’s roles were much more expansive than this. She advises women to develop socially and intellectually: “inasmuch as you are wise stewards, you will find time for social duties, because these are incumbent upon us as daughters and mothers in Zion. By seeking to perform every duty you will find that your capacity will increase, and you will be astonished at what you can accomplish” (“An Address” 63). She also encourages them to become educated, even asking the sisters if anyone was willing to study medicine, “for Zion’s sake,” and indicating that the Relief Society would help defray their expenses, if necessary (“An Address”). Snow repeatedly affirms that “No where on the earth has woman so broad a sphere of labor and duty, of responsibility and action, as in Utah” (“An Address” 62). Perhaps to counter outside impressions of the restrictive lives led by
Mormon women, Snow is careful to describe instead the expansive roles Mormon women can occupy.

In the community Snow presents to readers through her speeches, Mormon women who have separated themselves from the world and become fully converted (i.e., fully identify as Mormons) will have a spiritual influence that will spread like leaven not only through their community, but throughout the world. She believed (as did many of her Victorian contemporaries), that the quality of women could serve as a moral barometer to society (“Position and Duties”). She explains, “The exaltation of the human family could not be effected without the aid of woman. . . . In those departments where her presence and her labors are not required, her influence . . . may be productive of many good results” (“To Every Branch”). This influence enables woman to do much “in purifying, refining, and elevating society” (“Position and Duties”). Because one of the tasks of building Zion was to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ, this leavening influence is a crucial part of the role Snow wants Mormon women to assume.

Naturally, some of this influence comes through woman’s role as a mother:

“How in this great Work, woman has much to do—not only in giving birth to, and training those who shall be the mothers of future generations, the ‘polished stones’ in Zion, prophetesses and holy women—those who shall be the future apostles, prophets, patriarchs and rulers of nations. . . .” (“Position and Duties”). But for Snow, woman’s spiritual work was not simply an extension of her domestic routine, for

outside the boundary of her domestic routine, woman has many sacred, important duties to perform, and a holy, purifying influence to wield—an influence which,

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It should be noted that, while the belief in women’s moralizing influence was upheld by Mormon religious beliefs, it was also influenced by nineteenth-century cultural beliefs in the “cult of domesticity,” which held that women were to be the spiritual purveyors of the private sphere.
although imperfectly exercised, is potent in its effects. How necessary, then, that the Latter-day Saint women—being called to act in a wider sphere, and with higher and more responsible duties devolving upon them, than all others—should be well informed on all subjects affecting the interests of humanity—should possess all the expansion of mind that can be acquired and the attainment of all useful intelligence and true knowledge. (Position and Duties)

Rather than constricting women’s roles, Snow seeks to expand them, encouraging women to obtain “all useful intelligence and true knowledge.” These accounts of Mormon women’s roles and identity run counter to common Gentile perceptions, such as Horace Greeley’s belief that the Mormon “degradation . . . of woman to the single office of childbearing and its accessories, is an inevitable consequence of the system here paramount. I have not observed a sign in the streets, an advertisement in the journals, of this Mormon metropolis, whereby a woman proposes to do anything whatever” (qtd. in Mulder and Mortenson 327)

In addition to helping women understand their role in Zion, the spatial trope of Zion functions to constitute Mormon women’s identity. Like the earlier trope of a desert redeemed, it offers a narrative for understanding Mormon women’s place in the world. As a chosen people of God, women are expected to work in tandem with Mormon men to build up the material and spiritual kingdom of God. Significantly, by establishing the scene for such narratives, spatial tropes work to illuminate roles by fleshing out the surrounding narrative. Burke’s pentad, developed in his Grammar of Motives as a way for understanding our attribution of motive in any given situation, helps explain the significance of particular narratives; the way we define any aspect of the pentad (act,
agent, agency, scene, and purpose) impinges on the way we understand the remaining features of the situation. Of these five elements, scene is arguably one of the most significant. If we apply Burke’s pentad to Snow’s account of Zion, we can understand how, by invoking the scene of an action, Snow reminds her readers about the other terms at work in this particular situation. If Zion constitutes the scene of the action, there are two potential narratives that flesh out the remainder of the pentad, both of which are significant to Mormon women. In one narrative, the act is the bringing of the Saints to Zion, the agent is God himself, the agency is the power of God, and the purpose is the establishment of God’s kingdom. In the second narrative, Mormon women are themselves the agents, meant to establish God’s kingdom prior to His second coming through their own spiritual and physical labor. Thus, by invoking the place itself (Zion), Snow gestures to both of these narratives, which serve to underscore Mormon women’s sense of importance and their self-identity as beneficiaries of and agents in a divine plan.

Significantly, these narratives, like any good constitutive rhetoric, position “the reader towards political, social, and economic action in the material world” (Charland 141). This positioning requires the successful interpellation of audiences (i.e., audiences need to accept the position offered them) and a need for action in the material world in order to confirm one’s subject position. Given Snow’s prominence in the community and the positive acclaim given her writings in the Exponent, it seems likely that her audiences would have responded to the subject positioning in Snow’s addresses. Moreover, Snow’s addresses were inevitably connected with women’s responsibilities to not only accept the proffered identity, but to act on the motivation and roles inherent in that identity. In order

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65 Clark suggests that, in practice, “Burke tended to treat the second term, ‘scene,’ as primary, to the extent that it encompasses as well as shapes and constrains each of the others” (33).
to truly be agents of God, women had to not only believe that they were, but they had to confirm that belief through their actions. Emily S. Richards, speaking to the First International Council of Women in Washington D.C., in 1888, enumerates some of the numerous contributions of the Relief Society:

They own many of the halls in which they meet, and such property is valued at $95,000. They have laid up wheat in granaries to the amount of 32,000 bushels, for seed or relief in case of scarcity. They assist in caring for the distressed, help to wait upon the sick and prepare the deceased for burial. They have a bi-weekly paper called the *Woman’s Exponent*, with a woman editor, women writers, women business agents and women compositors. . . . The Deseret Hospital, with a lady M.D. as Principal, and skilled nurses and attendants, is under their direction. They have fostered the silk industry, producing the raw material and manufacturing it into various articles. Some of their Relief Societies have stores for the sale of merchandise, particularly home manufactures, as they encourage industry as well as intellectual culture. The entire organization is a live, active and growing institution, and its benefits are felt in every place where it extends, all its tendencies being to make women useful, progressive, independent and happy.

(qtd. in Arrington and Bitton 227)

Although not all of this effort can be attributed solely to Snow’s spatial rhetorics, the identity she offered to Mormon women clearly contributed successfully to their actions in the material world.
“Our Mountain Home”: Domesticating the West

“It is impossible for me to express the joy and gratitude of my heart, in being once more in your midst; in the gathering place of the honest of heart. While absent, I have ever felt a degree of pride and thankfulness, that my home was in Utah—in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains of America. Whatever others, in their ignorance might imagine, we ‘know,’ that in Utah, are associated the best and noblest spirits that are tabernacled in the flesh—that here, the highest order of intelligence is obtained, and society organized in a purer and more perfect form than anywhere else on earth.”—Eliza R. Snow, “Salutation to the ladies of Utah,” p. 36.

For Snow and her Mormon contemporaries, their vision of Zion was rooted in a particular place, “the valleys of the Rocky Mountains of America.” This place was understood not only as a divinely mandated “promised land,” and spiritual refuge/retreat from the outside world, but it was, particularly for the women, a “mountain home.” Understanding the mountain landscape of Utah as a desert redeemed and site of Zion did not necessarily make that same landscape inviting and habitable. The landscape was made habitable not only by the physical efforts of the saints to build comfortable homes and cultivate fields, but by the rhetorical figuration by Snow and others of that landscape as a “mountain home.” Moreover, this domestication of the landscape made it a particularly suitable place for women, and highlighted the importance of their work.

In figuring Utah as a “mountain home,” both the “mountains” and the “home” were important aspects of Mormon women’s spatial understanding. The enclosed spaces of the mountain valleys promised safety and refuge.66 In addition, the mountains were understood as a sacred site that fulfilled biblical prophesy: Isaiah prophesied that “in the last days . . . the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isaiah

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66 Valleys as enclosed spaces have traditionally been read as more feminine than open spaces (Comer); conceivably, this feminized aspect of the landscape may have seemed more home-like to women.
2:2). Nineteenth-century apostle Orson Pratt was perhaps the first to apply this aspect of Zion to Utah, taking biblical references to Mount Zion to refer not to the hills outside Jerusalem, but to the mountains of Deseret (Henrie). Thus, for many Mormons, the mountains, like the trope of the desert redeemed, became another visual symbol of their group identity as a chosen people of God. As individuals living in a sacred space, Mormons saw their lives as consecrated.

Understood purely as a sublime and sacred space, these mountains were not necessarily inviting or habitable for women. Despite a long religious and literary tradition depicting prophets and visionary men at home in the wilderness, the rugged nature of the mountain West has often been seen as inimical to women (Comer). For men, this sublime landscape becomes a site for communion with God and/or nature—but for women, parallel divine communion most often comes in domesticated and enclosed spaces. Annette Kolodny’s study of women’s literary representations of the West demonstrates time and again the way women found their place in strange landscapes by figuring the landscape in domestic terms, most often as a garden. For Mormon women to inhabit their own spiritually endowed landscape, they had to first domesticate it.

67 Mormons originally petitioned for Utah territory to be known as the state of Deseret, a Book of Mormon word meaning “honey-bee.” (Hence comes Utah’s current nickname of the Beehive State). Mormons often referred to the territory as “Deseret.”
68 The mountain aspect also struck some visitors as a manifestation of sacred space. In one of the most widely-read travel narratives about Utah and other western regions, Sir Richard Burton described his entrance into the Salt Lake Valley: “The sublime and the beautiful were in present contrast. Switzerland and Italy lay side by side. The magnificent scenery of the past mountains and ravines still floated before the retina, as emerging from the gloomy depths of the Golden Pass [Emigration Canyon] . . . we came suddenly in view of the Holy Valley of the West” (qtd. in Mulder and Mortenson 329).
69 In both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, prophets experience divine communion in the wilderness, particularly the mountains: Moses went up Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments; John the Baptist and Christ both preached in the wilderness. In a similar vein, Annette Kolodny describes how much early American literature, like James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking Tales, depicts a kind of American Adam, a solitary visionary man at home in the wilderness. Unlike his religious predecessor, however, this American Adam generally does not have a woman at his side.
70 Think, for instance, of the spiritual visitations to Hannah, Elizabeth, and Mary in the Bible: in each of these cases her divine visitation or vision occurred when she was indoors.
Although Snow did not originate the discourse of a mountain home (it was widely used among Mormon women), her prominent position among Mormon women would have lent a parallel importance to her use of this discourse. In a poem, “Hymn of Praise,” written for an 1876 Pioneer Day celebration,71 Snow draws together many of the powerful symbolic associations of Utah’s landscape:

We know thy Voice—we own Thy hand,

We recognize Thy power:

Thy finger pointed to this land,

In persecution’s hour. . .

Thy blessing crown’d our earnest toil,

And made the desert bloom;

And drew the products from the soil,

In this, our mountain home. (35)

Thus here, Utah figures as a divinely appointed refuge and promised land, a redeemed desert, and, finally, a home. In this short passage, Snow reminds Mormon women of their founding narrative of persecution followed by redemption, a narrative rooted in (and manifested by) the landscape itself. In a rhetorical move common to other women’s narratives about the West (Kolodny), Snow suggests a garden-like fruition of the desert that helps render the landscape more home-like. By thus domesticating the landscape, Snow (and others) helped render it habitable by Mormons, particularly the women.

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71 This celebration was in remembrance of the entrance of the first company of Mormon pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley in July, 1847. This celebration, incidentally, is still conducted yearly on the 24th of July and is a state holiday in Utah.
This concept of Utah as a “mountain home” appears as a common refrain, particularly in the poetry and writing of women in the *Women’s Exponent*. For example, Lucinda “Lu” Dalton, published her poem “Our Mountain Home” in 1874:

We came into the mountain land all travel-stained and worn
But thankful to our fathers’ God who gave us thus a home;
And here we dwelt, contented well, from all the world apart,
In a land once thought a barren wild, completely desolate.
But Labor has a potent charm to make the desert smile,
Change desolation into bloom and barrenness beguile.
Neat little villages spring up beneath its magic sway,
Contentment and prosperity attend its happy way.

(CHORUS): Then cheer again for Utah! the land we love so well;
Thanksgiving for our Mountain Home in truthful numbers swell;
It is the home our God has given where we in peace may dwell. (58)

Like Snow’s poem, Dalton also figures the Land of Utah as a refuge, a redeemed desert, and, ultimately, a home. These striking similarities between the two poems suggest, not that Snow was borrowing from Dalton, but that this particular narrative was central to the Mormon mythology of settlement, and thus, central to the identity to which Snow repeatedly exhorted her female listeners to adhere. Although this is not a major theme in Snow’s rhetoric, it is an important one because it allows women to understand the

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72 Emmeline Wells, long-time editor for the *Exponent*, also published her own hymn of praise to the “mountain home” of Utah. Her hymn, “Our Mountain Home so Dear,” describes the ways in which the natural landscape of Utah witnesses God’s existence. This hymn is in the current LDS hymnal and continues to be sung (albeit rarely) in Mormon congregations.
landscape, with all its spiritual significance, in domestic terms that renders it an appropriate habitation for women.

    The discourse of a “mountain home” unites the spiritual significance of the mountains with the domestic terrain that formed the distinct purview of nineteenth-century women. More importantly, discourses of home underscore the importance of women to the project of Kingdom building. Just as Snow used discourses of spiritual gathering and unity to suggest that both Mormon men and women were necessary to building Zion, so discourses of home allow her to suggest that women are crucial to this project. As literary scholar Amy Kaplan (among others) has noted, nineteenth-century discourses of domesticity paralleled nationalist discourses of Manifest Destiny to suggest the important role of women in civilizing and domesticating not just their home, but the nation. Westward expansion was largely justified because it would enable men and women to settle new regions and bring with them civilized and Christianized values. While men were crucial to the physical conquest of these regions, it was women who were to enact the moral and spiritual conquest. Similarly, the domestic refrains of a “mountain home” suggest that women’s unique spiritual gifts can contribute to the building of a spiritual kingdom. Ironically, although discourses of “home” might initially seem to temper the perceived threat of an aggressive Mormon state with national ambitions, such discourses may actually serve to complement nationalist undertones that many outsiders seemed to hear in Mormon theology and discourse.73

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73 I should clarify that I am not trying to suggest that Mormons in Utah had ambitions of becoming a nation—most Mormons were content to remain part of the United States, so long as the United States respected their freedom to worship as they please. Rather, what I am trying to suggest here is that, although domestic discourses may initially appear removed from the idea of a nation, they are, in fact, for most nineteenth-century Americans, closely linked.
Utah as a Shorthand for Mormon Identity

“The experience of place—particularly a place that has been made a public symbol—is saturated with prompts to identify the self with a group.”—Gregory Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes*, p. 34

Each of the spatial tropes I have described above—the desert redeemed, Zion (with its attendant discourses of exclusion, gathering, and kingdom building), and a mountain home—had significant implications for the ways that Mormon women understood their identity. By invoking these tropes, Snow was able to use these shared symbols as a shorthand for the identity she hoped her readers would identify with. Here, I would like to examine in more detail how, precisely, this identity shorthand works. Ernest Bormann’s “Symbolic Convergence Theory” offers a useful method for understanding this process. Bormann, like Burke, sees groups as identifying around shared symbols that are charged with meaning. These symbols, or “shared fantasy themes,” represent “the creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfills a group psychological or rhetorical need” (“Symbolic Convergence Theory” 130). Moreover, such fantasies “provide group members with comprehensible forms for explaining their past and thinking about their future—a basis for communication and group consciousness” (128).

In this sense, shared fantasy themes—like the symbolic trope of a desert redeemed—work to help individuals understand the identity (in terms of shared history and individual roles within the community) with which individuals are asked to identify.74 Thus, this image (or shared fantasy theme) becomes a shorthand for a particular constellation of symbols and values that constitute identity (Clark). Sharing group fantasies “brings about a convergence of appropriate feeling among the participants” (Bormann13) that motivates

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74 This shared fantasy theme functions like Burke’s “representative anecdotes,” which present “publicly a particular image of shared values enacted with which those addressed are invited to identify” (Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes*, 21).
listeners to particular actions. Precisely because these fantasies are shared, they function as “common reference points that enable people to understand themselves as sharing situation and scene” (Clark 39). In short, these shared fantasy themes are value-laden symbols that help individuals in a particular group identify with one another and provide appropriate motivations for group-identified behavior. Once a fantasy theme is established, even a cryptic reference to that theme, like the phrase, “a desert blossoming as a rose,” is enough to evoke the full set of meanings and emotional responses embedded in the theme.

When several of these fantasy themes combine, they form a rhetorical vision that functions as a world-view for a particular group (Bormann). According to Sonja Foss, a group with a shared rhetorical vision constitutes a rhetorical community. Just as individual fantasy themes can be invoked by a key word or phrase, these rhetorical visions can also be invoked by a select phrase. Thus, each of the spatial tropes described here functions as part of a broader group vision, in some ways strikingly similar to the group vision Bormann outlines for the early Puritans: “They participated in a rhetorical vision that saw the migration to the new world as a holy exodus of God’s chosen people” (“Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision” 402). Like the Puritans, the spatial tropes that Snow invokes of a desert redeemed, Zion, and a mountain home function in tandem to outline for Mormon women a rhetorical vision that places even their most mundane actions (child-rearing, housekeeping, etc.) as part and parcel of a vast spiritual enterprise of Kingdom building. Such invocations of space not only remind listeners of

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75 Bormann gives the following examples of key words for rhetorical visions: New Deal, Black Power, Moral Majority.
76 It is probably not entirely coincidental that, after a visit to Salt Lake City, Ralph Waldo Emerson reputedly commented to a traveling companion that Mormonism seemed like an “after-clap of Puritanism” (Mulder and Mortenson).
their shared past, they orient listeners toward their future identity and behavior. These
tropes remind Mormon women that, as they have separated from the material world in the
past, so they are to keep themselves separate in the future, in order to maintain their
identity as holy women of God.

Each of these spatial tropes, moreover, becomes subsumed within the concept of
Utah territory itself. For many nineteenth-century individuals—Mormon and Gentile—
the term “Utah” conflated both the physical landscape and the spiritual practices of
Mormons. Thus “Utah” can in many ways function as the key word (Burke’s entelechial
“god-term”)77 for the combined power of the spatial narratives that inform Mormon
identity. Accordingly, in her “Salutation to the Women of Utah,” Snow can write,
“Whatever others, in their ignorance might imagine, we ‘know,’ that in Utah, are
associated the best and noblest spirits that are tabernacled in the flesh—that here, the
highest order of intelligence is obtained, and society organized in a purer and more
perfect form than anywhere else on earth” (36). Because of the various fantasy themes
conflated in the notion of Utah, Snow does not need to elaborate further for her readers to
understand that Utah, in this instance, refers to Mormon society—specifically, to its
divinely appointed role as the harbinger of God’s kingdom. From this understanding of
Utah, it follows logically that such a chosen people would comprise a purer and more
noble society. The territory thus becomes a shorthand/metonym for their spiritual
identity.

The identity of Mormons in Utah is informed not only by landscape tropes, but by
the landscape itself. The very tropes that draw from the physical land to articulate an

77 For Burke, a “god-term” is a term that stands in for a whole series of related terms, ideas, ideologies, and
motivations.
identity for Mormons also serve a reciprocal function in endowing the land with meaning; in essence, transforming that land to landscape (see Clark’s definition, cited above). As Clark argues in *Rhetorical Landscapes*, once public discourses about a place establish a particular frame through which individuals view and experience that landscape, the landscape itself takes on a rhetorical function to constitute a particular identity in that individual. Thus, Snow’s use of shared fantasy themes derived from the landscape functions to reinvest the landscape with significance. Subsequent to exposure to these fantasy themes, Mormon women (and Mormons in general) experience the landscape in ways that also reinforce their shared identity. As Clark explains, “The experience of place—particularly a place that has been made a public symbol—is saturated with prompts to identify the self with a group” (34). Just as “words signify shared concepts to those who use them, places signify shared situations, aspirations, and identities to those who inhabit them” (34). For instance, the constant view of the mountains, with the Salt Lake temple in the foreground, might serve to remind women of both their “mountain home” and “Zion” in the tops of the mountains, along with the attendant significance of these symbols. Thus Utah ultimately becomes what Clark terms a “representative place,” (borrowing from Burke’s representative anecdote): a place “where people experience themselves as identified with the particular characteristics of the community that the place has come to symbolize” (39).

**Conclusion**

This chapter helps me flesh out a rhetoric of space by probing some of the effects of space on rhetorical performance. In this particular instance, Snow’s experience of
space—her repeated dislocation from place as her people were increasingly driven to the fringes of American civilization; her sense of Utah as a spiritual refuge and promised land—all had significant impact on how she understood her religion (God’s chosen people with unique spiritual obligations) and her own role within that religion (to use her spiritual gifts to bring women together). Perhaps more significantly, Snow used this shared history/experience of place to offer a spatially-rooted identity to Mormon women. Thus, place provided Snow with a rich source of invention. As an ideologically laden symbol, place then functioned as a powerful vehicle for group identification. Not only does this symbol help Mormon women understand their place within the broader Mormon culture, but it, in turn, endows the physical space from which it was derived with significance. Once Snow (and others) established these place-based identifying myths, women had only to experience the landscape around them to be reminded of those myths. In a mutually constitutive turn, Mormon faith and landscape ground one another: while the faith endows the landscape with particular significance, the landscape, in turn, becomes a site for the enactment of faith and an identifying symbol for that faith.78

Although in some instances geographical place and location can serve as an impediment for rhetors, limiting the audience that they are able to reach and creating potentially debilitating stereotypes with which the rhetor has to contend, for Snow, place ultimately enabled her rhetorical practices. Not only did a regionally located audience make it

78 It seems to be stating the obvious to observe that most of the world’s religions are strongly linked to place: Christians, Jews, and Muslims are drawn to Jerusalem. Roger Henrie’s study of perception of sacred sites among Mormons identifies Salt Lake City; Palmyra, New York (where Joseph Smith claims to have discovered the Book of Mormon); Nauvoo, Illinois (the site of one of the first Mormon temples); and Israel as among the most sacred sites for Mormons. The analysis of spatial rhetorics in this chapter helps illustrate the ways in which discourse and material space come together to establish the spiritual significance of a site.
feasible for her to reach that audience, but place itself figured prominently in the
metaphors Snow used to constitute group identity among Mormon women.

Although Snow’s rhetorical texts were addressed primarily to Mormon women,
they also functioned indirectly to rearticulate a sense of Western space. For many
Americans, the West represented a potentially threatening space, whose openness and
uncultivated spaces could disrupt (perhaps fatally) the conventions of civilized life. As
John Gonzalez has noted, popular anthropological theories of the day believed in a
teleological (and racialized) progression from savage to civilized citizen. However, this
progression could also be reversed—savage impulses could overcome civilized
influences under the right conditions, and such conditions were widely held to prevail in
the American West. Anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan connected this kind of atavism
specifically to Mormons: “some of the excrescences of modern civilization, such as
Mormonism, are seen to be relics of the old savagism not yet eradicated from the human
brain” (qtd Gonzalez 451). Anti-polygamy authors were similarly fearful of the role of
the West, because they believed the unsettled territories posed a threat to marriage and
social stability (Gordon, “Our National Hearthstone”).

In contrast to beliefs about the atavistic possibilities of the West, Snow repeatedly
saw the region, particularly Utah, as an arena of unbounded opportunity for women.79 At
a Mass Meeting of Women, held in 1870 just before the passage of a bill for woman’s
suffrage in Utah, Snow explained scornfully that,

Our enemies pretend that, in Utah, women is held in a state of vassalage—that she
does not act from choice, but by coercion—that we would even prefer life

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79 Snow’s sense of opportunity in the West parallels Turner’s later frontier thesis, which similarly saw the
West as an arena for cultural expansion and development.
elsewhere, were it possible for us to make our escape. What nonsense! We all
know that if we wished we could leave at any time—either to go single, or to rise
*en masse*, and there is no power here that could, or would wish to, prevent us.

(qtd. in Tullidge 392)

She continues, “I will now ask this assemblage of intelligent ladies, do you know of any
place on the face of the earth where woman has more liberty, and where she enjoys such
high and glorious privileges as she does here, as a latter-day saint?” For Snow, Utah, as
the setting for a spiritual kingdom of God, had little in common with the untamed and
potentially degrading spaces of the West. Instead, this was a profoundly spiritual site that
shaped and informed the powerful bonds of community unfolding within it.
“Oh, for shame! You who are educated by a Christian government in the art of war; the practice of whose profession makes you natural enemies of the savages, so called by you. Yes, you, who call yourselves the great civilization; you who have knelt upon Plymouth Rock, covenanting with God to make this land the home of the free and the brave. Ah, then you rise from your bended knees and seizing the welcoming hands of those who are the owners of this land, which you are not, your carbines rise upon the bleak shore, and your so-called civilization sweeps inland from the ocean wave; but, oh, my God! Leaving its pathway marked by crimson lines of blood and strewed by the bones of two races, the inheritor and the invader; and I am crying out to you for justice,—yes, pleading for the far-off plains of the West.” —Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes*, p. 207

“If it was in my power I would be too happy to [intervene] for you, but I am powerless, being a woman.” —Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes*, p. 139.

Sarah Winnemucca had never seen white people before their mass arrivals in the late 1840s as they passed through Nevada Territory on their way to California. However, within only a few years, white settlements in her region had destabilized the fragile desert ecosystem and relegated her Paiute people to a marginalized place in their own lands. As a native woman with unusual mobility—she was never confined to the reservation, as were many of her people, and her fluency in English allowed her to move back and forth between native and white communities—Winnemucca often sought for ways to extend a similar kind of mobility for her people. For much of her adult life, Winnemucca focused her rhetorical energies on improving the status of her people—performing theatrically to raise money for food and supplies, lecturing to raise awareness about Paiute culture and

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1 Winnemucca belonged to the Northern Paiute tribe (quite distinct from Southern Paiutes, with whom they did not even share a common language), but for simplicity’s sake I have adopted the common scholarly convention of referring to her people simply as Paiutes. In Winnemucca’s lifetime, her people were called (by whites) “Pah-utes,” “Pi-Utes,” and (her own—or perhaps her editor, Mary Mann’s—choice), “Piute.” Current scholars and historians use the spelling “Paiute.” However, as Linda Bolton and others have noted, the term “Paiute” is in any case a misnomer, as the Paiutes referred to themselves generally as the “Numa,” meaning simply “the people.”
her people’s unjust treatment at the hands of reservation officials, and serving as an interpreter on various reservations and military posts. Much of her lecture material was the substance of her 1883 autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes*, which became the first autobiography in English by a Native American woman. Yet despite her keen awareness of the injustices done to the Paiutes and her own eloquence, she often found herself positioned culturally and materially in ways that circumscribed her potential effectiveness. As a native woman who was critical of Anglo-American settlement practices, Winnemucca sometimes found herself dismissed on the basis of both her race and her sex; her critical approach to the dominant culture and outspokenness also brought her many critics, some of whom were quick to publicly tarnish her reputation. Moreover, her location in the “far-off plains of the West,” limited her access to Eastern audiences, because of both the physical and cultural distance implied.

Given Winnemucca’s location in a contact zone characterized by the conflicts between native values and white culture, it is not surprising that most scholars studying her life and work focus on her strategies for negotiating this complex cultural situation,

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2 A note on terminology in this chapter: for the most part, I use the term Native American to refer to the native tribes, as I think this term best reflects the aboriginal status of the people and allows for more diversity than “Indian.” I am also cognizant of the way the term “Indian” has been problematized by scholars like Gerald Vizenor, who argues that the term is used to signify the absence of Native identity and to deflect attention from the reality of Native experiences. However, when talking about the views of nineteenth-century individuals toward native people, I often use the term “Indian,” as I believe this term is most reflective of how nineteenth-century contemporaries wrote and thought about native people.

3 The term “contact zone” is most often attributed to Mary Louise Pratt, who uses this term in preference to a “frontier” (which privileges the colonizer’s perspective) to describe the cultural contact between different groups brought in close proximity, most often by military invasion or colonial expansion (or a combination of both). She defines contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (4). As she makes clear, the relationships between these different groups are often unequal: “the space of colonial encounters . . . usually involv[es] conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (6). Pratt’s terminology, however, does not admit the possibility of cooperation or accommodation.

4 Sarah Winnemucca has drawn the attention of scholars from a wide range of disciplines: historians (Canfield, Georgi-Findlay, West, Zanjani), anthropologists (Fowler), literary critics (Carpenter, Bataille and Sands, Brumble, Ruoff), and scholars interested in Winnemucca’s rhetorical strategies (Powell, Lape, Lukens, Senier).
although they ascribe different meanings to these strategies.\(^5\) Kathleen Sands and Gretchen Bataille somewhat dismissively argue that Winnemucca’s adoption of white dress and discourse signifies her assimilation and accommodation to white culture. More recently, scholars like Malea Powell, Catherine Fowler, Linda Bolton, Andrew McClure, Rosemary Stremlau, and Siobhan Senier, have sought to reclaim the value of Winnemucca’s work by arguing that Winnemucca’s use of white dress and discourse actually represents a means of “survivance”—Gerald Vizenor’s term for tactics of survival and resistance in a hostile dominant culture. Still other scholars, like Elliot West, Cari Carpenter, Noreen Groover Lape, and Margo Lukens argue that the truth is somewhere in the middle of these extremes: faced with a series of untenable choices, Winnemucca may have compromised some of her values in the interest of survival, and in an attempt to bridge the cultural gap between her people and Euro-Americans.

Although these studies of Winnemucca have enriched scholarly understanding of many of her rhetorical and literary strategies,\(^6\) they tend to focus on understanding her work in the context of her cultural and social position, without considering her particular physical and geographical location at the time of a given rhetorical performance. In

\(^5\) Others, particularly literary scholars, approach Winnemucca’s writings through the lens of genre or the question of authenticity. Some scholars suggest that Winnemucca’s narrative is a largely western-style autobiography (Sands), with roots in a distinctive western literary traditions, such as captivity narratives (Ruoff). Others argue that Winnemucca’s *Life*, like many native autobiographies (particularly those with white editors), is a bicultural composite composition (Krupat) that represents a dialogue between two or more cultures (Senier). Thus, the resulting generic format incorporates elements of oral culture, such as coup tales (Brumble) and extensive dialogue (Brumble, Georgi-Findlay). Some scholars who see distinctive Western influences in her writings question whether her literary voice is an “authentic” Native American voice; more recently, however, scholars such as Malea Powell, Andrew McClure and Siobhan Senier have challenged this preoccupation with authenticity, arguing that this preoccupation implies a static definition of culture and that Winnemucca’s narrative offers a compelling look at culture in transition.

\(^6\) Although many Winnemucca scholars are not rhetoricians, their analyses take on a distinctly rhetorical cast. Some of these scholars focus almost exclusively on the Euro-American discursive strategies Winnemucca uses, such as presenting women in conventional terms of moral respectability (Carpenter, Georgi-Findlay, Lukens), while other scholars address how Winnemucca simultaneously promotes tribal values and embeds critiques of dominant cultural practices in discourses meant to appeal to white culture (Powell, Wunder, McClure, Senier, Bolton).
addition, most literary and rhetorical scholars tend to focus primarily on her published narrative, rather than drawing on newspaper accounts of her speeches and performances, or her publicly circulated letters to military officials.

In this chapter, I argue that it is important to understand Winnemucca’s rhetorical practices in terms of her physical location as well as her socio-cultural context. Drawing on a wide variety of sources (her published narrative, letters, and written accounts of her performances), I analyze how Winnemucca’s rhetorical strategies evolve not just as an accommodation to or compromise with white cultural values, as previous scholars have argued, but are shaped by the socio-cultural expectations attendant on particular places. In particular, I look at two kinds of sites: the disciplinary spaces of the Indian reservation and the military fort, and the performative (and sometimes pedagogical) environment of the stage or lecture hall. For each kind of space, I explore how the nature of that space both constrains and enables Winnemucca’s rhetorical choices.

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7 A word about my evidence seems called for here. In general, I am using three kinds of primary source material: Winnemucca’s autobiography, letters Winnemucca wrote to military officials (transcripts of which are provided in Canfield and Zanjani’s biography, as well as in the index to Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Century of Dishonor*), and newspaper accounts of her performance. Some of these sources are a little problematic to work with. For instance, scholars are unsure of the extent of Mary Mann’s editorial manipulation of Winnemucca’s autobiography. However, because Mann herself maintains in the editorial note that she limited her editorial interference to cleaning up grammar and spelling, I have chosen to assume that the majority of the text is Winnemucca’s. In addition, there are no first-hand accounts by Winnemucca of her own performances, so I am obliged to use witnesses of those performances published in contemporary (usually local) newspapers. I touch on the problematic aspect of these sources later in the chapter. However, I still find them to be valuable sources: Scholars have, after all, conducted effective rhetorical analyses of work by rhetors of whom we only have second-hand reports, such as Cheryl Glenn’s work on Aspasia, and studies of Sojourner Truth by scholars like Shirley Wilson Logan, Jackie Jones Royster, and others. As with Aspasia and Sojourner Truth, Winnemucca was subject to description by individuals whose gendered, raced, and classed perspective may have differed significantly from her own.

8 I have chosen these spaces because they seem most representative of the kind of spaces Winnemucca lived and worked in. Additionally, although her performances and lectures have been widely studied by scholars, few scholars (aside from historians) have looked at Winnemucca’s rhetorical practices on the reservation and military fort. Intriguing studies of Winnemucca’s rhetorical practices in another significant space—the visual arena of the photo studio—have been conducted by Linda Bolton and Joanna Scherer.
Understanding Sarah Winnemucca’s Place

“I was a very small child when the first white people came into our country. They came like a lion, yes, like a roaring lion, and have continued so ever since, and I have never forgotten their first coming.”—Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes*, p. 5

Before I turn to my analysis of Winnemucca’s performances, let me provide a brief survey of the different geographical and rhetorical spaces that Winnemucca inhabited. Winnemucca, as the opening lines of her narrative inform us, was born around 1844 somewhere near the Humboldt Lake area of central-western Nevada, just prior to the dramatic influx of Anglo-Americans enroute to California in 1849. Thus, her life marks a period of dramatic transition for her tribe from pre-contact to colonial society. Although her father, Chief Winnemucca, was leery of the white settlers, her maternal grandfather, Truckee, had earlier helped explorers like John Frémont through the region and welcomed the newcomers as his “white brothers.” In any event, Chief Winnemucca was right to be wary of incoming settlers—they brought with them diseases that killed many tribal members; and they took control of many of the basic resources in the area, seriously jeopardizing the Paiutes’ means of survival in the region: whites settled the richest areas, fished the Paiutes’ lakes, cut down pinion pines (a major Paiute food

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9 Although Nevada Territory was not made a state until 1864, for the sake of clarity (since this date falls in the middle of my narrative here), I will refer to the region as Nevada throughout this chapter.

10 The Northern Paiute people were not a tribe in the sense we currently understand, but historians have accorded them tribal status; rather, they were a loosely knit group of bands whose most important unit was an extended family—the scarcity of resources in the region made traveling in large groups difficult (Senier). For this reason, they also did not have tribal chiefs who spoke for the group as a whole, but rather would appoint individuals for leadership roles in particular activities. Winnemucca’s father was actually an antelope shaman rather than a tribal chief (Canfield), and early historians suggested that Winnemucca’s claim that her father was a chief was a means of self-aggrandizement rather than the literal truth (see Fowler for a description of these early historical views). However, Sally Zanjani has pointed out that Winnemucca’s father was recognized by white settlers as a leader among the Paiute people long before Winnemucca herself was old enough to have promoted him as such. This recognition of a “chief” was also one of the ways that contact with white culture changed Paiute lifeways—because whites expected and demanded to treat with Indians through a leader figures, Paiute tribes were forced, in effect, to meet this demand with the creation of an office that did not previously exist (Knack and Stewart).
source) for wood, and grazed their cattle on the grasslands that the Paiutes relied on for collection of seeds and roots (West, Knack and Stewart).¹¹

Fig. 3. Map of Sarah Winnemucca’s region. From Gae Canfield’s *Sarah Winnemucca of the Northern Paiutes* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1983), p. 2. Reproduced with permission.

¹¹ This conflict is characteristic of a broader European-Indian conflict over land; as historian Daniel Richter notes, Europeans and Indians often perceived land ownership differently: Native Americans often perceived the land as a resource—what one “owned” was the right to use a resource for a particular purpose, not the land itself. Europeans, on the contrary, perceived ownership in terms of the land itself. Because European concepts of ownership depended on fixity, rather than flexible land-use, Anglo-European settlers’ imposed “ownership” of land in the Pyramid Lakes region in southwestern Nevada seriously disrupted Paiute life ways.
Some Paiutes, like Winnemucca’s father, responded to this invasion by retreating further into the mountains away from white contact. Others, like Winnemucca herself, sought for ways to live within this emergent culture. As a child, she went to California with her mother and grandfather; presumably it was there that she learned to speak Spanish (Canfield). She spent some of her teen years working as a domestic in Stockton and probably learned English and acquired her Christian name during this time (Canfield). 12

In the early 1860s, Winnemucca and her family were assigned to the Pyramid Lake reservation in Nevada, but she was not to remain there for long. In the late 1860s, Winnemucca moved to Camp McDermit in eastern Oregon, where she had been offered a position as an interpreter to the U.S. military. 13 In 1875, Winnemucca accepted an interpreting job at the nearby Malheur River Indian reservation, first for Agent S. B. Parrish, and subsequently for Agent W. V. Rinehart.

In the spring of 1878, Winnemucca served as a messenger, scout, and interpreter for General O. O. Howard during the Bannock War. As a result of her military service, she enjoyed considerable popularity among the whites for the next few years, although this same service made her suspect among some of her own people and among other native tribes (Canfield, Zanjani). However, though the war resulted in Winnemucca’s increased popularity, it also had tragic consequences for her people. Following the war, military commanders decided to send the Paiutes (who had been largely neutral during

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12 Sarah Winnemucca was born “Thocmetony,” the Paiute name for “shell flower.”
13 Winnemucca filled this position faithfully for several years, until her discharge following a public confrontation with local Indian agents. In local papers, she accused several agents of corruption and incapacity; in response, they charged that she was a liar and a troublemaker (Canfield).
the war) with the defeated Bannocks to the Yakima Reservation in Washington Territory—a move that essentially exiled them from their homeland.

Over the next several years, Winnemucca lectured frequently, both in San Francisco (in 1879 and 1885) and across New England (1883-4), to raise money and awareness for the plight of these exiled Paiutes and generally to speak out against the abuses of the reservation system. After the mid 1880s, she abandoned lecturing to focus her energies on a school for Paiute children. The school, which she operated for several years, successfully taught children not only to read and write in English, but also provided them with some training in marketable skills.

In each place Sarah Winnemucca found herself, she sought to create a rhetorical space that would allow her to use whatever available means she had to achieve a better position for herself and her people. Her available means included, at various times, the resources and constraints of the disciplinary space of reservations and military culture, as well as the resources and constraints of performative spaces and their attendant expectations of “Indian” performances. In each of the rhetorical analyses that follow, I begin with a site analysis of the particular space, in terms of its physical layout (where

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14 Winnemucca’s school began with 26 Paiute children in the summer of 1885 and operated intermittently over the next several years. However, the passage of the Dawes Act in February of 1887 complicated Winnemucca’s educational plans—in addition to provisions for general allotment, the act mandated that Indian children be educated in white-run, English-speaking schools. Undaunted, Winnemucca made plans to turn the school into an industrial school. A subsequent trip East failed to raise sufficient funds, however, and the plan was abandoned (Canfield). By February of 1889 the school had more or less closed (Zanjani).

15 Unlike the government established Indian schools, Winnemucca’s school made no attempt to cut students off from tribal culture in order to “civilize” them, but instead sought to bridge Paiute culture with white culture. Although Winnemucca wanted the children to learn English and other skills that would allow them to function in a white-dominated society, she also, as she explained in early 1885 to the Christian Register, “wanted to help the children to take pride in the old attitude of concern and caring for one another and to respect the sacredness of life around them” (qtd. in Canfield 228). Winnemucca taught the students English, arithmetic, exercise drills, ranch work, sewing, and gospel hymns (Canfield, Zanjani). Although the subject of Winnemucca’s school is fascinating, it is not included in this chapter as a rhetorical site, in part because there is already a rich body of work examining Indian schools (both by white and Native educators), and in part because including pedagogical sites would have extended the chapter beyond a reasonable length.
known and applicable), its framing ideology and spatial function. I then analyze the ways that Winnemucca negotiates these spatial parameters in her rhetorical practices. Finally, I assess how her strategies in each space represent a search for shared rhetorical space—physical or cultural ground that provides the basis for identification with her audience—that would enable rhetorical exchange on behalf of her people.

**Rhetorical Responses in Disciplinary Spaces: The Reservation**

“In the first instance, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space.”—Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 141

“I pray of you, I implore of you, I beseech of you, hear our pitiful cry to you, sweep away the agency [reservation] system; give us homes to live in, for God’s sake and for humanity’s sake.”—Sarah Winnemucca, *Life among the Paiutes*, p. 242-3

The physical and socio-cultural spaces of Indian reservations—specifically the Pyramid Lake Reservation in Nevada, the Malheur Reservation in western Oregon, and the Yakima Reservation in southeastern Washington Territory—would come to have a profound effect on Sarah Winnemucca’s life and rhetorical practices. Not only did the creation of reservations further the disruption of her people’s traditional lifestyle, but the mishandling of reservations by agents provided Winnemucca with one of her most enduring exigences for public speech. Reservation land was never considered sacrosanct, so it was often difficult to protect the meager resources afforded by the land, particularly in the case of the Pyramid Lake reservation in Nevada.16 In addition, a succession of

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16 In the fall of 1859, Frederick Dodge, who had been appointed Indian agent for the western territories, petitioned the federal government to have land set aside for the Paiute tribe in the Pyramid Lake region. He noted that much of the best land had already been seized by white settlers, and that, in part because of increasing settlements, Paiute lifestyles were of necessity changing (Canfield). The actual foundation of the reservation was somewhat ambiguous, however. Although the general region around Pyramid Lake was
inept or downright dishonest Indian agents meant that the Paiutes were often insufficiently provided for;\textsuperscript{17} Winnemucca explains that the only issue of rations she saw at the Pyramid Lake reservation was in its first year of existence, in 1860. Repeatedly, throughout her narrative, she emphasizes the way the agents get rich at the expense of the Indians they are meant to benefit.\textsuperscript{18} Unlike many of her people, Winnemucca never seemed bound to a particular reservation, lodging as she chose on reservations, in settled urban areas, and in military camps. In part, her fluency in English provided her with a flexibility (and on occasion, a fixed income) that gave her greater freedom than many of her Paiute contemporaries. Most of the time, her settlement on reservations was due to a paid position as interpreter or a desire to be near family (or a combination of both).

Paradoxically, despite the central status accorded her as an interpreter on the reservation, reservations also constituted sites where she had little access to real rhetorical power.

\textit{Reservation Site Analysis}\textsuperscript{19}

The creation of reservations as places specifically set aside for Indian occupancy speaks tellingly to the white victory in the struggle for control of land and resources in any given area in the United States. Georgi-Findlay explains that during much of the nineteenth century, federal Indian policy had three aims: protection of whites, annexation of Indian land desired by whites, and integration of Indians into America. Although "viewed as an Indian reserve beginning in 1859, the land was not surveyed until 1865, and the executive order from the government establishing the reservation was not given until 1874 (Knack and Stewart). As a result of this ambiguity, prospective settlers were quick to challenge the existence of the reservation and rapidly settled the best land."

\textsuperscript{17} A contemporary agent calculated that about half of the Paiutes died of starvation between 1859 and 1865 (Zanjani).

\textsuperscript{18} In all her years of observation, there were only two agents—Sam Parrish (agent at Malheur when Winnemucca and her family first arrived in 1875, after Sarah had been given a post as interpreter) and Captain Smith of the Warm Spring Reservation—“who [had] been kind to [her]” (\textit{Life} 136).

\textsuperscript{19} There is surprisingly little critical analysis of reservation space in nineteenth-century America and the disciplinary processes used to maintain that space. Thus, this particular site analysis is longer than that provided for military forts and performative spaces because it, in itself, represents a significant contribution to research on reservation space.
treaties were initially the main method of achieving these goals, by the 1850s, reservations were becoming common (Trennert). Reservation land was often selected for a variety of reasons: in some instances, it incorporated at least part of the tribe’s homeland; it often included land that was considered less desirable for white settlers; and in some cases it was selected solely for expediency—it was the only remaining land available. The Pyramid Lake reservation, a stretch of land approximately sixty miles long and fifteen miles wide around Pyramid Lake, was chosen because it incorporated traditional tribal grounds.

In contrast to earlier policies of Indian removal, which moved Indian tribes beyond the boundaries of white settlement, the creation of reservations aimed at eventually incorporating native tribes into white society. Where removal was believed to “retard the progress of [Indian civilization’s] decay” but not stop Indians’ ultimate disappearance (A. Jackson 26), reservations were viewed by many reformers as an alternative to extinction (Trennert, Findlay, Dippie). While many whites approved of the reservation system as a means of sequestering and containing Indian threat (except in cases where reservation land was subsequently found to be valuable), many Native Americans actively resisted the reservation system.20

The Indian agents who ran the reservations and disbursed rations were federal appointees who had little or no authority under state law over non-Indians in the region.

20 Winnemucca’s own narrative includes the protest of sub-chief Egan to agent Rinehart of the Malheur reservation: “Did the government tell you to come here and drive us off this reservation? . . . We want to know how the government came by this land. Is the government mightier than our Spirit-Father, or is he our Spirit Father? . . . His white children have come and taken all our mountains, and all our valleys, and all our rivers; and now, because he has given us this little place without our asking for it, he sends you here to tell us to go away. Do you see that high mountain away off there? . . . Is that where the big Father wants me to go? . . . I know you will come and say: here Indians, go away; I want these rocks to make me a beautiful home with!” (133-4).
In the case of the reservation at Pyramid Lake, agents had little power to prevent white encroachment on the best reservation land (Canfield; Winnemucca, *Life*). While early agents were often political appointees or former military officers, after 1870 all agents were appointed by Christian agencies, under the belief that Christian agents would be less susceptible to corruption (Dippie, Knack and Stewart). If the agent had little power outside the reservation, he often had considerable power within the reservation, supported by the disciplinary power structure undergirding the reservation’s legal and ideological construction. As disciplinary spaces, reservations relied on a goal-directed activities (like farming), power processes (sequestration, surveillance, rewards and punishments), and communication (orders, exhortation, and interpretation) to assimilate Native Americans into broader American culture. However, in practice, reservation space functioned less to integrate Native Americans into American society than to separate them from that society.

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21 Although Indian agents could arrest whites for crimes committed on reservations, most whites were turned over to local law agencies for trial and punishment, which meant that punishment was often irregularly enforced (Knack and Stewart). The agent could call on the U.S. Marshal or nearby military forces for outside aid, but such aid might be slow in coming, so the agent was often on his own to deal with problems on the reservation.

22 The job of an Indian agent was often a thankless one—he was expected to maintain federal policy in the face of opposition from local settlers who both wanted reservation land and resented the potential competition of Indian farms, and he was paid very little for his pains. The difficulty of the job combined with the isolated position meant that many Indian agents succumbed to some form of corruption, withholding rations and selling them for profit, etc. (Dippie, Knack and Stewart). In 1870, President Grant granted control of Indian agencies to religious denominations, who would then select the agents. Thus, all non-Christian agents were replaced in the 1870s. In part of his second inaugural address, in December 1870, Grant justified his actions. “Indian agencies being civil offices, I determined to give all the agencies to such religious denominations as had heretofore established missionaries among the Indians, and perhaps to some other denominations who would undertake to work on the same terms—i.e., as a missionary work. The societies selected are allowed to name their own agents, subject to the approval of the Executive, and are expected to watch over them and aid them as missionaries, to Christianize and civilize the Indian, and to train him in the arts of peace” (135). Grant hoped that this policy would “in a few years bring all the Indians upon reservations, where they will live in houses, and have schoolhouses and churches, and will be pursuing peaceful and self-sustaining avocations, and where they may be visited by the law-abiding white man with the same impunity that he now visits the civilized white settlements” (Prucha, *Documents*, 135).

23 This emphasis on activity, power, and communication comes from Michel Foucault, who argues that disciplinary spaces are maintained—and characterized by—this kind of combination of goal-directed activities, power processes, and discursive events (“The Subject and Power”).
The proponents of the reservation system envisioned that a characteristically Anglo-American activity—namely, agricultural cultivation of land—would create Anglo-American habits of mind in Native Americans through training Anglo-American habits of body. In other words, the routinized actions of farming would break up tribal habits of communal land ownership and would teach Native Americans to value the land as potential United States citizens. Moreover, the activity itself would teach Indians the value of work and cure them of idleness; at the same time, the products of their labor would help them integrate into capitalist American society. Thus, agent S. B. Parrish could tell the Paiute chiefs, with apparent sincerity, to encourage their people to come to the reservation because “This is the best place for you all” (Winnemucca, Life, 107).

In addition to regulated activity, reservation agents relied on particular regulatory mechanisms like sequestration, surveillance, and rewards to assimilate Indians and establish power relations within the reservation. One of the most important power processes for establishing social hierarchy among reservation Indians (both within the reservation and in relation to outside white society) was the placement of individuals in space. The importance of the agent in reservation hierarchy was often indicated by his

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24 As native historian Philip Deloria explains, “[Reservations] represented a colonial dream of fixity, control, visibility, productivity, and, most importantly, docility” (27).

25 However, like many ideals, the belief in the rehabilitative power of farming was short sighted. As the spectacular failure of the Dawes Act (stipulating individual allotment of land) demonstrated in the last decades of the nineteenth century, economic habits alone, without other supports, are not enough to train habits of mind. (For more detail on the failure of the Dawes Act, see D.S. Otis, The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands.)

26 In arid regions like western Nevada, where the Pyramid Lake reservation was founded, this particular policy was maladapted to environmental concerns. As Pyramid Lake historians Martha Knack and Omer Stewart explain, after seventy years of attempting to farm the land, agents finally conceded that farming was not going to work—although they blamed Paiutes for being “the wrong kind of Indians,” rather than acknowledging climatic incompatibility.

27 Significantly, Foucault claims that “discipline [first] proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space” (Discipline and Punish 141).
location on the best reservation land, or the most centralized location. Additionally, the very act of sequestration on a reservation served to emphasize the separation of Native Americans from outside white culture, primarily in ways that underscored their lower social position. As I explain in more detail in chapter five, mobility is often a key indicator of social position—those who have the most access to a wide variety of spaces (whether that access is bought through wealth, physical strength, or political power) tend to be the most important individuals. Nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans were particularly concerned with regulating the mobility of Native Americans, most likely as a means of keeping them in their “place.” For instance, one of the objections raised to federal policies of Indian removal was that this constant removal was “unsettling” to Native Americans, and therefore disruptive of their potential for civilization. Similarly, Indian agents complained strenuously about the Central Pacific railroad policy which granted Paiutes free rides on any of their freight cars through the region, particularly since Paiutes took liberal advantage of this policy to find work, visit relatives, and gather food (Knack and Stewart). Agents protested this policy largely because it prevented the containment of Paiutes on the reservation (thereby complicating the relegation of Paiutes to a specific place in the social hierarchy).

28 In cases where the agent’s house was not a central location, it quickly became one. As Deloria points out, the agent’s power to dispense critical rations often meant that reservation spaces became reorganized around his location.

29 Deloria also explains how, in the wake of the reservation system, threats of Indian violence were referred to as “outbreaks,” suggesting unauthorized Indian mobility outside the bounds of their confined location. In addition, most of the Indian activities that reservation agents protested—like family camps and reunions, hunting trips, tribal dances, etc.—evoked this protest because they represented both Indian mobility and attempts to maintain Indian culture.

30 Foucault explains further in *Discipline and Punish* that not only was enclosure used to enforce discipline, but a specific location was often allocated to each individual in a given disciplinary site. “One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distribution, the uncontrolled disappearance, their diffuse circulation, their unusable and dangerous coagulation” (143). It was precisely this kind of uncontained movement that Indian agents resisted. Rather, they sought to establish the position of every Indian on the reservation.
Other power processes like surveillance, and a system of rewards and punishment, functioned to emphasize the dependent status of the Native American people. First, agency records (including tribal rolls, church records, and ration records) allowed agency officials to locate each individual Indian in reservation space (Deloria). Additionally, although reservation life was (in theory at least) “voluntary” (Findlay, Dippie), in practice, however, most Indian agents used some degree of coercion to induce Indians to remain, whether this meant offering rations of food and clothing only to those who lived and worked on the reservation, or enlistment of local military to round up run-away Indians (Findlay). For many of Winnemucca’s contemporary Paiutes, reservation life presented a viable alternative to starvation, particularly following the depletion of natural resources following Anglo-American settlement. However, this dependence on government rations underscored the positioning of Indians as dependents or wards of the U.S. government, rather than an independent sovereignty. Many Indian agents—including Parrish, Winnemucca’s model agent—encouraged this perception of dependency, by referring to themselves as “father” to the Indians under their supervision (Winnemucca, Life).

The relative position of Indians was further solidified by selective discursive acts on the reservation. Under reservation policy, the traditional tribal councils were no longer used to decide major tribal issues; instead, the Indian agent settled disputes in his own

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31 In a few cases (particularly where a treaty with a defeated group included removal to a reservation), Indians were compelled to remain on the reservation, but this tended to be the exception rather than the rule (Findlay).

32 For most of the nineteenth-century, Indians were viewed as wards of the government. In the Supreme Court ruling on Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, in 1832 Chief Justice John Marshall explained that because the Cherokee nation acknowledged themselves to be “under the protection of the United States, subject to many of those restraints which are imposed upon our own citizens” (qtd. in O’Neill 23), they should be “denominated domestic dependent nations. . . . They are in a state of pupilage. Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian” (qtd. in O’Neill 23-4). In 1871, the United States finalized the dependent standing of Indian nations by refusing further treaty rights to Indian tribes.
way. Some agents (including most of the agents Winnemucca knew personally) relied on their own authoritative orders. Others used various forms of democratically elected councils (Benson). In any case, as the representative of the U.S. government, the agent usually retained the deciding vote, and his voice was the most “officially” authoritative. Preaching and exhortation were also used, especially in Sunday sermons (sometimes conducted by the agent himself, particularly after the 1870 transfer of agency control to religious groups), to encourage Native Americans to adopt white habits of mind and behavior, including conversion to Christianity. The final significant discursive act on the reservation (and the one of most significance to Winnemucca personally) was that of interpretation. Because few agents spoke native tongues, many reservations required the use of an interpreter to speak for the agent to the people. However, as Winnemucca’s own narrative suggests, interpreting was often a fraught position: although interpreters were often expected to represent native positions to the Indian agent—acting, in essence, as a mediator between the two parties—their paid position on the agency often meant that they were required to put agency interests first. Moreover, the very existence of an interpreter points to the inability of most Native Americans to speak for themselves.

Rhetorical Practices in Reservation Spaces

The purported isolation of Indian reservations as well as the elaborate disciplinary mechanism supporting reservation life thus positioned Indians physically, socially, and rhetorically as individuals separate (and inferior) from white culture with limited access to white culture through discursive means. As an Indian woman who spent

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33 Todd Benson describes one Indian agent, who went so far as to create a democratically elected House of Representatives and Senate among the Indians on his reservation—with himself as president.
34 Many native tribes preserved some of their tribal governance within the reservation. Winnemucca describes the way her own people listened to the traditional tribal leaders and tended to follow their judgment. However, these individuals had little say in official matters concerning reservation life.
much of her life in and around the reservations at Pyramid Lake, Malheur, and Yakima, Winnemucca was positioned in ways similar to other members of her tribe. But her fluency in English, her frequent paid work as an interpreter, and her familiarity with white culture provided her with rhetorical resources unavailable to the Paiutes for whom she often spoke. As an interpreter, Winnemucca often sought to serve as an advocate for her people, but the rhetorical constraints of interpreting in a reservation—where she was both a disciplined and disciplining subject—were such that her voice often went unheard by the Indian agents, and was often misunderstood by her people. Ironically enough, for one paid to speak to and for others, Winnemucca often found herself effectively silenced within reservation space.

Evidence about Winnemucca’s experience as an interpreter—taken primarily from her autobiographical narrative—reveals three rhetorical situations to which she responds: First, the mistreatment of Paiutes on the reservations (at the hands of agents and white settlers) compels her to speak to the agent on behalf of her people. Second, the need for her people to understand the federal government’s dictates and agency policies (as well as her paid contract) requires her to speak to her people on behalf of the reservation agency. Finally, in communicating all of this to a white readership before whom she wishes to appear sympathetic, Winnemucca speaks on her own behalf, detailing the very real constraints that prevented her from being heard on the reservation.

35 Although her narrative includes extensive passages of dialogue that were written down several years after they took place, several scholars (including Ruoff, Fowler, and Brumble) have suggested that these dialogues are likely reasonably accurate, as this “quotative style” (Fowler) was characteristic of Northern Paiute culture, and the children of tribal leaders, in particular, would have been trained to memorize extensive dialogue. Fowler also argues that Winnemucca’s remarkable accuracy for names and dates elsewhere in the narrative is further evidence that her quotations are for the most part reliable.
As an interpreter, Winnemucca was severely constrained in terms of what she could effectively say to the Indian agents who employed her. Her first position as an interpreter, for Sam Parrish at the Malheur reservation in 1875, was a relatively productive one, as she trusted and respected Agent Parrish. Because she perceived little need for correction in his treatment of her people, she had little to say to him on their behalf—but if she had, she would likely have felt comfortable enough to speak openly.\(^36\) However, because Parrish was not a practicing Christian, he was soon replaced by “Christian” agent Major Rinehart,\(^37\) a hard, often unyielding man. As an interpreter to Rinehart, Winnemucca found herself in a difficult and ambiguous position, bound by duty to convey the agent’s words to her people without comment (and vice versa) but morally appalled by some of what she was asked to convey, and often blamed by her people for repeating what were later seen to be lies. Moreover, Winnemucca found herself limited in her ability to respond to Rinehart’s personal abuses of Indians. At one point, she observed Agent Rinehart savagely kick a little boy because the boy laughed at him. Rinehart must have had some twinge of conscience, because he attempted to exculpate himself: “Sarah, that little devil laughed at me. . . . I won’t have any of the Indians laughing at me. I want you to tell them that they must jump at my first word to go. I don’t want them to ask why or what for” (128). This abuse placed Winnemucca in a difficult position: although she abhorred the abuse, she could not criticize Rinehart to his face without jeopardizing her job. Moreover, her job bound her to convey to her people Rinehart’s demands for abject obedience. Reluctant to let the situation go without

\(^{36}\) Winnemucca’s glowing descriptions of Parrish suggest her comfort with him. Moreover, later in life she was married at the home of his sister, which suggests that she remained on reasonably good terms with him and his family (Canfield).

\(^{37}\) Winnemucca spelled Rinehart’s name as “Reinhard,” but since almost all current scholars adopt the correct spelling of Rinehart’s name, I have done so as well.
comment, Winnemucca responds mildly, “Mr. Reinhard, that little boy never meant to laugh at you. He thought you were saying something nice to him, and another thing, he cannot understand the English language.” Without explicitly telling him he was wrong to kick the boy, she still manages to convey the child’s perspective on the situation. However, acknowledging her precarious position as interpreter, she continues: “I am your interpreter. Whatever you say to me I am always ready to do my duty as far as it goes” (128). When Winnemucca finally does stand up to Rinehart, by going to Camp Harney to report some of the Paiute complaints about their treatment on the reservation to the military officers at the camp, she was fired and exiled from the Malheur reservation.38

At the Yakima reservation in Washington Territory, as at Malheur, when Winnemucca did speak out it was often at personal cost. Father Wilbur, the resident Indian agent, warned Winnemucca not to encourage her people to return to Malheur:39 “I am sorry you are putting the devil into your people’s heads; they were doing so well while you were away, and I was so pleased with them. You are talking against me all the time, and if you don’t look out I will have you put in irons and in prison” (Life 239). In her own words, Winnemucca responded to this threat by “jump[ing] on [her] war-horse”:

Mr. Wilbur, you forget that you are a Christian when you talk so to me. You have not got the first part of a Christian principle about you, or you would leave everything and see that my poor, broken-hearted people get home. You know how

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38 Rinehart would later prove one of Winnemucca’s most embittered adversaries, seriously undermining her credibility within the Bureau of Indian Affairs by submitting to the bureau a series of affidavits (written almost entirely by his associates) testifying to Winnemucca’s low moral character (Canfield, Zanjani). In 1879, he wrote that Winnemucca was “a low, unprincipled Indian woman of questionable virtue and veracity as well, who was formerly Interpreter at the Agency and who was discharged for untruthfulness, gambling and other bad conduct” (qtd. in Canfield 163). Winnemucca’s own account, however, suggests that she was discharged for having the temerity to critique Rinehart’s actions to his face (Life).

39 As described earlier, many of Winnemucca’s fellow Paiutes had been essentially exiled to Yakima after the Bannock war, along with many of the vanquished Bannocks, despite the fact that the Paiutes had been innocent of wrongdoing during the war.
they are treated by your Christian Indians. You are welcome to put me in prison. You are starving my people here, and you are selling the clothes which were sent to them, and it is my money in your pocket; that is why you want to keep us here, not because you love us. I say, Mr. Wilbur, everybody in Yakima City knows what you are doing, and hell is full of just such Christians as you are. (Life 239)

Although Father Wilbur did not follow through on his threat to have Winnemucca imprisoned, she did leave the reservation subsequent to this confrontation. Moreover, her brave words seem to made little impression on Father Wilbur, as the Paiutes were not allowed to leave Yakima until he was replaced by a more lenient agent and Congress legislated on the Paiutes’ behalf (Canfield). Indirectly, however, Winnemucca’s appeal to Father Wilbur’s Christian virtues (and her underlying charges of hypocrisy) would have resonated powerfully with the white audiences reading this account in her autobiography.

Winnemucca’s frequent position as an interpreter also constrained her ability to speak to her own people. Her position meant that she was often forced to be circumspect in her comments about reservation issues. For instance, when Rinehart first arrived at Malheur, he told the Paiutes that the reservation land was not their land, but the government’s land (Parrish had told them it was their land), and if they didn’t like his style they could leave the reservation. Later that night, some of the Paiute leaders sent for Winnemucca and asked her what she thought of their new agent. She responded “I don’t know. . . . I have nothing to say. I am only here to talk for you all” (126), a clear recognition that her position in the agency did not accord her any extra influence.

40 Technically, this was a matter of interpretation. Legally, reservation land belonged to the tribe, but was held in trust by the U.S. government on behalf of the tribe (Knack and Stewart). So both Parrish and Rinehart might be justified in claiming that the land belonged respectively to the tribe and to the government.
Moreover, Winnemucca’s interpretive position negatively affected her ethos among her people. Perhaps because of her general reserve about agency affairs, as well as her role in speaking for the agents, many of the Paiutes began to distrust her, a fact that Winnemucca found personally painful. In 1880, while still stationed at the reservation in Yakima, she went to Washington D.C., along with her father, her brother Natchez, and a few other Paiute leaders to plead for her people to be returned to Malheur. Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz gave her a letter permitting the Paiutes to return. However, when she showed this letter to Agent Wilbur at the Yakima Reservation, he was furious and offered her money, and a permanent position as interpreter, if she would not tell her people about the letter. Winnemucca would not promise, but apparently considered the matter for a few days without speaking to anyone. Finally, several of her people came to her and accused her of betraying them for money. Winnemucca explained to them what Father Wilbur had said to her and showed them Schurz’s letter, saying:

I have said everything I could in your behalf, so did father and brother. I have suffered everything but death to come here with this paper. I don’t know whether it speaks truth or not. You can say what you like about me. You have a right to

41 This invitation may have been instigated by Special Agent J. M. Haworth of the Interior Department, who met with Winnemucca, her father, and brother in December 1879, and said he would write to Washington and suggest that the government make arrangements for them to visit (“The Wrongs of the Red Men,” Daily Silver State, 30 Dec. 1879). Deloria suggests that many government invitations to tribal leaders were issued with the purpose of showing those leaders the power structures in Washington D.C., thereby quelling potential rebellion. Despite their high hopes, the Paiute delegation soon realized that their mission was not likely to yield much; their full schedule (most of it sight-seeing arranged by government officials) did not allow much time for meeting with critical government officers, and they (particularly Sarah) were not allowed to lecture publicly.

42 Schurz apparently did little to enforce this letter; he even failed to notify Father Wilbur personally.

43 In fact, Father Wilbur, after being confronted with Schurz’s letter, wrote to Washington that the Paiutes were happy at Yakima and most of them did not wish to return to Malheur; he was told to keep the Paiutes in Yakima (Canfield).

44 They had heard rumors of the letter, and believed that she “has sold us to Father Wilbur. . . . we are all told that she has a paper, which has been given to her by the mighty Big Father in Washington, and she has burnt it or hid it, so we won’t know it. That way she has made her money, by selling us. She first sold us to the soldiers and had us brought here, and now she has sold us to this bad man to starve us” (Life 235).
say I have sold you. It looks so. I have told you many things which are not my own words, but the words of the agents and the soldiers. . . . I tell you, my dear children, I have never told you my own words; they were the words of the white people, not mine. (*Life* 236)

Outside the reservation, as part of an official envoy for her people, Winnemucca was able to say “everything I could” to the handful of government officials she met with. But within the reservation, as both a dependent of the agency and its employee, Winnemucca was bound by her interpreting position to simply translate the words she was given.

Winnemucca’s experience of reservations as a rhetorical space was that of a constraining, silencing space. In many ways, she was caught in a catch-22: if she spoke out on behalf of her people, she either violated (and then sacrificed) her role as interpreter, or she was marked as a troublemaker to whom agents refused to listen, either of which cost her the possibility of a shared rhetorical space. Near the end of her narrative, she addresses her readers directly, explaining the costs of her public advocacy: “my work at Vancouver [as a teacher of Shoshone children] for the military government may be my last work, as I am talking against the government officials; and I am assured I never shall get an appointment as interpreter” (*Life* 242). On the other hand, if she stayed silent, she risked violating her moral integrity and, without speech, she closed down any possibility of rhetorical exchange.

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45These same officials clearly feared her persuasive ability outside their offices, as Secretary Schurz explicitly forbade her to lecture publicly while she was in Washington D.C. By Winnemucca’s account, Secretary Schurz told her, “I don’t think it will be right for you to lecture here after the government has sent for you, and your father and brother, and paid your way here. The government is going to do right by your people now. Don’t lecture now; go home and get your people on the reservation—get them located properly; and then, if you want to come back, write to us and tell us you want to come back and lecture, and we will pay your way here and back again” (*Life* 221).
If Winnemucca was silenced (or chose to be silent) during her time on the reservation, she found ample occasion to speak about the reservations outside of the constraints of reservation space, both during her public lectures and in her autobiography. In controlling her presentation of reservation space to white audiences and illustrating the ways she was constrained to speak both to agents and to her people, she both defends herself and condemns Indian agents. Moreover, the high cost of her advocacy work testifies to her selflessness and her devotion to her people. However, if she could not speak directly to agents, she could, and did, speak about the agents in ways that influenced public opinion to see agents as corrupt, hypocritical individuals who were interested only in benefiting themselves, rather than helping their native charges adapt to white culture. In an ironic reflection on the “Christian” values most agents profess, Winnemucca writes “Well, I am afraid this book [the Bible] is true, as your agents say; and I am sure they will never see heaven, for I am sure there is hardly an agent but what steals a little, and they all know that if there is a God above us, they can’t deny it before Him who is called God” (*Life* 214).

Rhetorical Responses in Disciplinary Spaces: The Military Fort

“Have not the Indians good reason to like soldiers? . . . If the Indians were protected, as they call it, instead of the whites, there would be no Indian wars. Is there not good reason for wishing the army to have the care of the Indians, instead of the Indian Commissioner and his men? The army has no temptation to make money out of them, and the Indians understand law and discipline as the army has them; but there is no law with agents.”—Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Paiutes*, p. 179
Outside of the Indian reservations, Winnemucca spent considerable time in close contact with the United States military: she worked as an interpreter at Camp McDermit[^46] in southeast Oregon from 1868 until the early 1870s[^47] and she stayed on at the camp for another year or so working as a hospital matron (Canfield). In 1878, she served as a military scout in and around Camp Harney during the Bannock war[^48]. Her resultant familiarity with military culture armed her with unique resources for her own ethos and arguments on behalf of her people. In a series of letters written in the early 1870s to military officials, Winnemucca leveraged her position in Camp McDermit as an Indian employed by the military to enhance her personal credibility, and used her knowledge about military culture to create logical appeals arguing for her people’s fair treatment. Later, in writing her autobiography for white audiences, Winnemucca drew on military virtues of womanhood to create common rhetorical ground for her audiences to understand and admire her actions as a military scout.

*Military Fort Site Analysis*

During the mid-nineteenth century, military forts were a crucial part of the frontier military strategy: forts were established along the frontier line of settlement to

[^46]: Military nomenclature varied widely during the nineteenth century. Generally speaking, a “camp” referred to a temporary site, while a “fort” referred to a more permanent settlement; this terminology was made official in 1878 (Frazer). While Winnemucca stayed at the fort, McDermit was still designated a camp; it became a fort in 1879 (Frazer). Historians seem to vacillate between the two. Because Winnemucca tends to refer to the site as “Camp McDermit,” I will use her terminology. Camp McDermit was intended “to control the Paiute Indians, to protect the routes of travel in the area, and, later, to protect the Indian agency established nearby” (Frazer 93).

[^47]: In July of 1868, her father and nearly 500 followers came to the camp, where the military officers allowed the Paiutes to hunt so that they wouldn’t be too dependent (Canfield). Winnemucca was fired from her position in 1871 or 72, in part because she wrote a letter to General Ord in San Francisco, complaining about the behavior of local Indian agents. When the agents were called to account, they accused Winnemucca of lying (Canfield).

[^48]: Winnemucca also visited Fort Harney several times during her years on the Malheur reservation, as it was the nearest military camp to the reservation. Robert Frazer claims that Fort Harney was established in 1867, during the Bannock uprising, but the dates must be somewhat confused as the Bannock uprising was in 1878.
protect white settlers from Indian depredations, protect work on railroad and telegraph lines, and, in theory at least, to protect Native Americans from white exploitation (Wooster). The military was also responsible for separating friendly and hostile Indian tribes and sought to keep native tribes on reservations. Because military forts in the West were designed primarily to contain threatening Indian activity through offensive action, forts tended to be smaller and more numerous than Eastern forts, which were designed primarily for defense. Unlike the fortress-like military structures in the East, Western forts were often an open collection of buildings arranged around a green (resembling to some degree a New England village). This open arrangement reflects the primarily offensive nature of these forts—because Western forts were actively involved in managing Indian activity, forts served more as a base for supplies than a site to be defended (Hoagland).

Like reservations, the spatial arrangement of military forts served a disciplinary function and underscored the ideological nature of the space. The disciplinary space of the military fort was similarly maintained by a combination of goal-directed activity, power processes, and communication. In addition to the explicit aims outlined above (of protecting white settlers and containing Indian activity), the military discipline was concerned with maintaining white-Indian hierarchies as well as internal hierarchies.

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49 Robert Wooster notes that the U.S. military struggled throughout the nineteenth century to establish a uniform military policy relating to Indians on the frontier; this struggle was exacerbated in 1849, when the Office of Indian Affairs moved from the War Department to the Department of the Interior, thus creating a divided line of authority (agents were meant to govern Indians on the reservation, but they still relied on the military to help police tribes in the region and to force tribes to move onto—and stay on—reservations). Furthermore, in 1869, Ulysses S. Grant’s “Quaker Peace Policy” further divided military influence by giving control of reservation agencies to religious groups.

50 Historical geographer Alison Hoagland suggests that this layout accounts for the common practice of describing military forts as “villages,” and underscores the importance of these military forts as model communities and sources of civilized life in the West.
Internal hierarchies were constructed and maintained through placement in space, surveillance, rank advancement (reward) or demotion (punishment).

As Alison Hoagland notes, the hierarchical nature of the military is evident in the layout of most forts, which provided a distinct place for every individual. Officers’ homes were typically situated across the green from the military barracks, not only indicating the clear separation in rank, but allowing for the constant surveillance of enlisted men by the officers (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*). Communication within military hierarchies was often unidirectional: superior officers issued orders that subordinates obeyed without question. When subordinates were called on to make reports back to superior officers, they were expected to do so with appropriate respect.
Military units maintained external hierarchies through several means: the direction of surveillance, which focused on Indians rather than whites; efforts to contain Indians on reservations or in the vicinity of the military forts; as well as the threat of military force. Like reservations, the military forts on occasion encouraged Indian dependency, as military officials sometimes supplied Indians with rations in place of agents. Also like reservations, military forts provided limited rhetorical space for Indians: communication was often limited to issues of trade, translation, and some negotiation.

Winnemucca’s position in the military fort was thus an ambiguous one: as a translator, her work was crucial to efforts of military personnel to work with Native American tribes; but as a Northern Paiute, she was also part of the very cultures that the military sought to contain. Moreover, as a woman, Winnemucca occupied a further nebulous position within the military fort: official military regulations made very little place for women in military circles (Myers, Nacy). As Sandra Myers explains, although military regulations stipulated the position and payment of laundresses, military wives were not officially recognized by these regulations, but were commonly designated as “camp followers” (“Romance and Reality”). Moreover, there was no physical space allotted to women—although officers’ wives might share their husbands’ quarters, there

51 Winnemucca and her brother Natchez were told by military officials at Camp McDermitt to encourage Paiutes to come to camps at Harney, Smith, and McDermitt in 1868 for protection during escalating Indian-white conflict. After the Bannock war in 1878, Paiutes were again encouraged to come to Camp Harney. Robert Wooster explains that in the 1860s and 1870s, the army sought control of reservations so that they might have greater latitude in punishing those Indians who left the reservation.

52 For instance, in Life Among the Piutes, Winnemucca describes the efficiency with which Camp McDermitt personnel distributed supplies and rations to the Native Americans in residence. She explains, “It is this generosity and this kind care and order and discipline that make me like the care of the army for my people” (92).

53 Moreover, there was some disagreement among military officials about the appropriateness of Indians in military forts in the first place. According to Hoagland, Brigadier General Philip St. George Crooke ordered post commanders in 1866 not to allow Indians to live in the forts—although this order was not always followed.
was no place for the wives of enlisted men (Hoagland). This spatial construction helped maintain gender as well as class hierarchies. Although informally the position of most women in military circles corresponded with their husband’s rank (Nacy), Winnemucua could not draw on such status, as she was not (at least this early in her career) married to an officer. Nor did her position as an interpreter match any of the prescribed social positions for women in military circles. However, unlike her position on reservations, Winnemucua managed to create for herself an effective rhetorical space from which to speak by presenting her ambiguous position as an Indian woman in the military fort in ways that made sense to her respective audiences.

*Rhetorical Practices in Military Spaces*

However ambiguous Winnemucua’s actual position in the military forts may have been, she presents herself decisively in a series of letters written to military leaders, from her position inside these military circles. During the spring and summer of 1870, she wrote two significant letters to military and government officials requesting that her people (many of whom were living near Camp McDermit) be put under military protection, rather than being forced back to the Pyramid Lake reservation.\(^{54}\)

\(^{54}\) In response to these letters, some local papers attempted to “put her in her place.” The *Humboldt Register* (28 May 1870) reprinted a slanderous piece from the *Boise City News*: “We made a slather at Miss Sarah’s age by the number of scales of greasy dirt which naturally accumulated on the ridge of her comely countenance during the lapse of years. . . Her raven tresses, which had been permitted to coy with the sportive breeze, unbound, unwashed and uncombed, from her earliest childhood, stood out in elegant and awry confusion from her classically shaped *cabesa*, which contributed to her contour an air of romantic splendor. Her style of dress, though primitive, closely assimilated that worn by her more fashionable sisters in Paris and other big towns. It was the fashion of the day, slightly exaggerated, consisting of an elegant scarf about a foot wide, cut from an ancient horse blanket, which was gracefully girded round her delicate waist, the circumference of which, owing to the scarcity of clover and fresh crickets at that season, had materially diminished, over which hung a beautiful set of skeleton hoops. . . . Her feet were encased in moccasins, and showed evident indications of hard service and long walks over the rocky hills and sagebrush plains, the mud of her native heath, crisp and dry, clinging tenaciously to her toes” (qtd. in Zanjani 104-5).
Her first letter, dated April 4, 1870, was written to Major Henry Douglas,\textsuperscript{55} who had been made the superintendent of Indian affairs in Nevada in 1869. Drawing on her knowledge of military culture, Winnemucca frames her letter as a kind of report, an appropriate response from a subordinate to a commanding officer. She opens her letter by explaining that she has heard “from the commanding officer at this post [Camp McDermit]” that Major Douglas “desire[s] full information in regard to the Indians around this place” because he is contemplating “bettering [the Paiutes’] condition by sending them on the Truckee River Reservation” (qtd. in H. Jackson 395).\textsuperscript{56} In essence, then, she implies that her report fulfills a need identified by her superior. The military-esque structure of the letter helps enhance her credibility: she addresses Douglas by his military title “Major H. Douglas” and hails him as “sir,” and closes the letter with her name and location, Camp McDermit,\textsuperscript{57} below her signature.

Winnemucca first responds to the request for information about the Indians in the region, explaining that they are of the “Pah-Ute” tribe. As befits a report addressed to a superior, Winnemucca never directly states her opinion that the Paiutes should not be moved back to the reservation, but instead explains that her father, who “is the head chief of the whole tribe” is “entirely opposed” to the Paiutes returning to the reservation. Not only does this provide expert authority on the issue, it indirectly suggests Winnemucca’s own authority, as the daughter of a chief.\textsuperscript{58} She also conveys the inadvisability of

\textsuperscript{55} Canfield offers his name as Henry Douglass.

\textsuperscript{56} It appears that the Truckee reservation is another name for the Pyramid Lake reservation, as the Truckee River feeds into Pyramid Lake, and the Pyramid Lake and Walker River reservations were the only reservations in the region of Nevada where Winnemucca was originally from.

\textsuperscript{57} Winnemucca spells Camp McDermitt with two “ts” (McDermitt), which was apparently a common contemporary misspelling (Frazer).

\textsuperscript{58} Winnemucca frequently drew on her position as a chieftain’s daughter to establish her credibility. In July 1871, Winnemucca wrote a letter to General E. O. C. Ord (commander of the Pacific division), who was then stationed in San Francisco, asking him to provide resources to her starving people. Ord was likely a
returning Paiutes to the reservation by describing vividly the negative effects of reservation life, based primarily upon personal experience: “If we had stayed there [on the Pyramid Lake reservation], it would be only to starve. . . . It is needless for me to enter into details as to how we were treated on the reservation while there. It is enough to say that we were confined to the reserve, and had to live on what fish we might be able to catch in the river” (qtd. in H. Jackson 395-6). Winnemucca makes it clear, however, that the Paiute failure to thrive on the reservation was not due to laziness on their part, but to the failure of the agents: “So far as [the Paiutes’] knowledge of agriculture extends, they are quite ignorant, as they have never had the opportunity of learning; but I think, if proper pains were taken, that they would willingly make the effort to maintain themselves by their own labor” (qtd. in H. Jackson 395). Winnemucca seals the effect of her negative description with a powerful pathetic appeal: “If this is the kind of civilization awaiting us on the reserves, God grant that we may never be compelled to go on one, as it is much preferable to live in the mountains and drag out an existence in our native manner” (qtd. in H. Jackson 396).

However, if her general humanitarian appeal should leave the Major unmoved, Winnemucca includes a variety of logical reasons why the Major should not move the Paiutes back to the reservation. In each case, she seeks to persuade the Major by “identifying [her] cause with his interest” (Burke, Rhetoric, 24). First, she explains that while the Paiutes risked starvation on the reservation, “the Paiutes at all military posts get sympathetic recipient of this letter, as he had earlier noted that “I think if the Indian Department is powerless to give food to starving Indians, military commanders should be authorized to issue to such in limited quantities, as much less expensive than having to fight them” (qtd. in Canfield 72). As was typical for her, Winnemucca opened with a brief statement of her request and her authority in the matter, writing: “I have visited your City through the persuasion of my Indian Brothers and Sisters, for the purpose of asking if there is not some way by which our Indians can be provided for during the coming winter. . . . I being Chief Winnemuccas daughter they look to me for help” (qtd. in Canfield 73).
enough to eat and considerable cast-off clothing” (qtd. in H. Jackson 396). Not only does this appeal flatter his vanity as a military officer, but it offers a viable alternative location for Native Americans that still allows the military to monitor their actions.\(^59\)

Second, Winnemucca draws attention to the conflict between U.S. federal policy toward Indians and Douglas’s proposed course of action. As explained earlier, contemporary Indian policy aimed to protect whites and integrate Indians into American society. At the time of Winnemucca’s writing, the federal government, at the instigation of President Grant, was making a big push toward permanent peace with Native American tribes. Recognizing the importance of white-Indian peace for this policy, Winnemucca asks pointedly, “What is the object of the Government in regard to Indians? Is it enough that we are at peace?” (qtd. in H. Jackson 396). She goes on to warn that if Douglas forces the Paiutes back to the reservation, he may precipitate the very violence the government has been at pains to avoid: “Remove all the Indians from the military posts and place them on reservations such as the Truckee [Pyramid Lake] and Walker River Reservations (as they were conducted), and it will require a greater military force stationed round to keep them within the limits than it now does to keep them in subjection” (qtd. in Jackson 396).

\(^{59}\) Since the struggle for control of Indian affairs was a sometimes contentious issue between the civilian Department of the Interior (which won control of the Office of Indian Affairs in 1849), and the military Department of War, this suggestion would likely have met with Douglas’s approval. Winnemucca’s negative experience with Indian agents, many of whom seemed primarily interested in lining their own pockets at the expense of the Indians they were meant to serve, led her to believe that control of the reservations ought to be transferred from Indian agents to the military, whom she generally found to be more fair-minded and to provide sufficient provisions. She explains in her narrative that the army “know[s] more about the Indians than any citizens do, and are always friendly. Nobody [implied: agents] really knows Indians who cheat them and treat them badly” (Life 93). However, she resisted outside arguments that she was actually working for the military to promote them. When she began public speaking in New England in 1883, a May editorial in the Council Fire and Advocate (likely written by the editor, Thomas Bland), an Indian reform news organ, accused her of working for the military. She denied this, explaining, as written above, that the army were better friends to the Indians than the current crop of agents.
Her question (“Is it enough that we are at peace?”), however, implies that she (like Douglas) knows that the government desires more than permanent peace: it wants the Indians to become “civilized” in white terms. Winnemucca suggests that this goal, too, will fail to materialize if the Paiutes are moved back to the reservation. She explains that her people could be self-sufficient (a major goal for the national Bureau of Indian affairs, whom Douglas presumably represented) if they could be taught. However, by pointing out that reservation agents have proved incapable of doing so or of adequately providing for the Paiutes, Winnemucca implies that this important aim of federal Indian policy will go unmet if the Paiutes are returned to the Pyramid Lake reservation. She closes her letter by promising a peaceful resolution if the Indians are provided with a suitable alternative:

if the Indians have any guarantee that they can secure a permanent home on their own native soil, and that our white neighbors can be kept from encroaching on our rights, after having a reasonable share of ground allotted to us as our own, and giving us the required advantages of learning, I warrant that the savage (as he is called to-day) will be a thrifty and law-abiding member of the community fifteen or twenty years hence. (qtd. in H. Jackson 396)

Thus, Winnemucca offers him an alternative that clearly appeals to his training as a military commander and his responsibilities as an agent for Indian affairs: since part of his federally mandated responsibility is to preserve the peace and oversee the peaceful integration of Indians into American life, she promises that her people will do just that—provided that Douglas does not follow federal policy of Indian removal to existing reservations. Rather, she seems here to advocate the allotment of reservation land to
Indians, where her people can support themselves, rather than depending on the capricious behavior of a self-interested Indian agent.

While a single letter may not seem to have significant rhetorical impact, this particular letter was widely circulated. According to Canfield, Douglas was so impressed by her letter that he sent it on to E. S. Parker, the commissioner of Indian affairs in Washington. The letter was then handed around in Washington circles. According to Georgi-Findlay, the letter was also published by *Harper’s Weekly* (“Frontiers of Native American Women’s Writing”). In 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson included the letter in *A Century of Dishonor*, which helped revive interest in Winnemucca and her people.

Although her letter to Douglas glossed over her position at the military fort (suggesting only indirectly her experience with military culture), Winnemucca did on occasion emphasize her unique position as an Indian woman employed by the military. Because her initial letter was well received, in August of 1870, Winnemucca wrote directly to E. S. Parker, then commissioner of Indian Affairs, to protest the rumored disbanding of Camp McDermit. She feared that if the camp was abandoned, the Paiute bands in residence would have a hard time finding protection and provisions. As she had earlier done with some success in her letter to Douglas, Winnemucca warned that the disbanding of the fort would have serious costs in military terms: “It will be not only criminal in the authorities to remove the troops now, but it will be far more expensive to the government to restore order and quiet after the Indians have once broken out, and it

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60 Douglas described Sarah thus: “She is by not any means the Goddess, which some of the Eastern people imagine her to be . . . , neither is she a ‘low, dirty, commerce Indian,’ as the papers of this country describe her to be, in order to counter the Eastern romance. She is a plain Indian woman, passably good looking, with some education and possesses much natural shrewdness and intelligence. She converses well and seems select in the use of terms. She conforms readily to civilised customs, and will as readily join in an Indian dance” (qtd. in Canfield 62).
does not require much provocation to make them do so” (qtd. in Canfield 64).

Winnemucca closes her letter by explaining her unique credibility in this situation:

I know more about the feelings and prejudices of these Indians than any other
Person connected with them & therefore I hope this petition will be received with
favor. Sir I am the daughter of the Chief of the Piutes, I am living at Camp
McDermit and have been in this employ of the U.S. government for nearly three
years as interpreter and guide. I have the honor to be sir, your most obedient
servant Sarah Winnemucca. (qtd. in Canfield 64)

Her closing lines here cleverly combine both her authority on behalf of the Paiutes (as the
daughter of a chief she is both prominent among them and intimately connected to them)
and her credibility in military circles (by virtue of her residence in the military camp and
her employment with the U.S. government).

Winnemucca not only used her knowledge of military protocol (culled from her
residency in military camps) to gain a hearing for her people, she also used military
culture to frame her courageous exploits as an Indian scout in her Life among the Piutes
in ways white audiences could understand and appreciate. Because the military, for most
of her white audience, represented an acceptable mediatory force between Indians and
whites, military culture also serves as an appropriate rhetorical ground where she can
meet her audience. Thus, in describing her role during the 1878 Bannock War, where she
served as messenger, scout, and interpreter for General O. O. Howard, Winnemucca
presents herself as a woman whose brave (if unconventional) actions are perfectly suited
to the exigencies of her environment—and, perhaps more importantly, appropriately
feminine in military contexts.
As mentioned above, official military culture had little or no place for women. However, many of the women who followed the drum created their own role within military culture. Studies by Anni Baker, Georgi-Findlay, Myer and Nacy demonstrate that many army officers’ wives saw themselves as “members of the regiment” (Nacy), and sought to adapt nineteenth-century ideologies of womanhood to the exigencies of military culture. While many of these army officers’ wives emphasized the refining power of women in the unsettled West, many also celebrated a less confined model of womanhood, one that appropriated military values of courage, resilience, and resourcefulness. As Baker explains, rather than simply reflecting cult of true womanhood values, military wives often strongly identified with military values: “self-sacrifice, duty and honor, toughness and stoicism, courage, and a love of adventure” (23). Military wife Teresa Veile was characteristic of these women, describing her idea army woman in the following energetic terms:

Mars would have gloried in the wonderful female that my imagination loved to paint. . . . She was a kind of tough, weather-proof, India-rubber woman . . . who could travel over hundreds of miles of prairie on horseback. . . . A strong energy of character sustained her through the direst emergencies, nothing could unstring her dauntless nerves” (qtd. in Baker 28).

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61 Winnemucca experienced this personally when she witnessed an issue of rations to the Queens River Paiutes at Camp McDermit. The Colonel told Sarah that he had given the Paiutes rations of food and clothing exactly like those issued to his own soldiers, but the women and children received no clothing “because the government does not give me anything for them” (101) as women and children were not officially part of the military camp, despite the fact that some of the men and officers were married and their wives (and inevitably, children) were with them in the field.

62 According to Georgi-Findlay, memoirs written by military wives at the turn of the twentieth century often described the domestic aspects of their lives and emphasized the refining power women had over the military units. The presence of these military women in the West was significant, as it implied that the West was safe for families.
Although these women did not actually serve as scouts or messengers in the army as Winnemucca did, they nonetheless helped generate an ideal of military womanhood that embraced masculine virtues like strength, endurance, and courage, while still maintaining an appropriate femininity. Their reframing of these masculine virtues as feminine ones provided common ground for white female readers to understand Winnemucca’s actions as appropriately feminine in terms of white military culture, rather than seeing her actions as evidence of her still “savage” Indian nature. In short, these women offered Winnemucca a model for the kind of military woman who can compel admiration without incurring (too much) censure.

Although many of these army wives’ memoirs were not published until later in the century, their ideals of femininity were likely already in circulation, through letters home, travel diaries, etc. Winnemucca would likely have encountered at least a few of these women, and may have consciously patterned her military persona after traits she saw exhibited in these army wives: her self-depiction in her narrative is almost a literal embodiment of Viele’s ideal of a “tough, weather-proof, India-rubber woman.” In her description of her role in the Bannock war, she emerges as a quick thinking, fearless women with almost miraculous powers of endurance. In one telling example, Captain Bernard asks her (as an interpreter) to request some Paiute men to carry a message to Camp Harney or the Malheur reservation, and find out the location of the hostile Bannocks. The men all refuse, on the grounds that such a mission would be too dangerous. Whereupon Winnemucca responds: “I told the captain I would go, if I had to

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63 One of the character affidavits in the appendix of Winnemucca’s narrative attests to her courage. Aide-de-Camp and Adjutant General of troops, Charles Erskine Scott Wood writes that “it gives me great pleasure to state that during the Bannock campaign of 1878, and also later, you have displayed an unusual intelligence and fearlessness, and loyalty to the whites in your capacities of scout, interpreter, and influential member of the Piute tribe of Indians” (Life 261).
go alone, and he would give me a good horse” (*Life* 153). Of course, in the face of her courage, the men relent and agree to accompany her, even conceding her right to leadership. Although she initially defers decision making to the men who are with her (“You are men, you can decide better than I can” [156]), when they remind her that she knows the country better than they do, she leads them unerringly to where her father and her people are being kept captive by the Bannocks. After leading an escape of most of the captured Paiutes, Winnemucca rides nearly non-stop to report back to the military leaders. She records:

This was the hardest work I ever did for the government in all my life,—the whole round trip, from 10 o’clock June 13 up to June 15, arriving back at 5.30 p.m., having been in the saddle night and day; distance, about two hundred and twenty-three miles. Yes, I went for the government when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money. I, only an Indian woman, went and saved my father and his people. (164)

Despite the humility topos invoked in her self-referent “only an Indian woman,” it is clear that Winnemucca takes pride in her courage and endurance and that these virtues are intended to enhance her credibility in the eyes of her readers.64

Winnemucca further underscores the admirable nature of her courageous behavior by including in her narrative a speech her father made praising her to his people, particularly to those young men who refused to participate in the war:

my child’s name is so far beyond yours; none of you can ever come up to hers.

. . . Oh! how thankful I feel that it is my own child who has saved so many lives,

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64 It does not seem coincidental that most of the character affidavits appended to *Life Among the Paiutes* were written by military leaders, including General O. O. Howard, Adjutant-General C.E.S. Wood, Lieutenant Colonel James W. Forsyth, and others.
not only mine, but a great many, both whites and her own people. Now hereafter we will look on her as our chieftain, for none of us are worthy of being chief but her, and all I can say to you is to send her to the wars and you stay and do women’s work and talk as women do. \((Life\ 193)\)

Sarah Winnemucca’s courage thus becomes a powerful character appeal in her narrative. And this construction of character, because it is one that her white audience (as well as her own people, who often admired military courage) could appreciate, provides a potential shared rhetorical space for Winnemucca to give her message. Because her narrative served a dual purpose—to present the “wrongs and claims” of the Paiutes and also to defend Winnemucca’s reputation against circulating slander—her use of positive military values to frame her narrative allows her to not only defend her name, but through that defense, speak more credibly on behalf of her people. Moreover, her courage implicitly refutes the low position Indian women were generally seen to hold: Winnemucca demonstrates how an Indian woman (by the logic of a race and gender hierarchy the lowest of the low) “saved [her] father and [her] people,” at a time “when the officers could not get an Indian man or a white man to go for love or money” \((164)\).65

Ultimately, although the space of the military fort (and attendant military culture) would seem to position Winnemucca in ways that limit her rhetorical options, Winnemucca found the means to use that culture to her own advantage, drawing on military virtues to fuel her ethos and crafting logical appeals based on her knowledge of

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65 Unlike the narratives of army officers’ wives, which often reinforced hierarchies of race over gender to assert their own superiority—i.e., as white women they may be inferior to white men, but they were superior to men and women of other races (Georgi-Findlay)—Winnemucca here demonstrates instead the superiority of a racial and gender marked individual.
military and federal aims regarding Native Americans. Perhaps ironically, it was the very formality (and transparency) of this disciplinary space—Winnemucca herself claimed that “the Indians understand law and discipline as the army has them” (Life 179)—that allowed Winnemucca to find available means within the conventions of military culture.

Rhetorical Responses in Performative Spaces: The Stage and the Lecture Hall

“I would be the first Indian woman who ever spoke before white people, and they don’t know what the Indians have got to stand sometimes.”—Sarah Winnemucca to a reporter in California, before her 1879 lectures (qtd. in Canfield 162)

“I visited my people once more at Pyramid Lake Reservation, and they urged me again to come to the East and talk for them, and so I have come.”—Sarah Winnemucca, concluding lines of Life Among the Paiutes, p. 246

Most of Winnemucca’s work on behalf of her people occurred as she spoke and wrote publicly. As a public speaker and activist, Sarah Winnemucca performed in a variety of venues, including the theatrical stage, lecture halls, churches, and private parlors, in Nevada, California, and across New England. While these sites varied in their physical arrangement and audience capacity, they shared similar ideological features regarding the position of women and Indians in that space that powerfully influenced Winnemucca’s position as a Native American woman. However, despite the fact that

66 In judging Winnemucca’s military-inflected rhetoric successful, I am drawing on Karlyn Campbell’s criteria for effective rhetoric. In the introduction to Man Cannot Speak for Her, Campbell argues that, particularly in judging nineteenth-century women’s rhetoric, it is important to assess whether the response was an appropriate one for the situation, not whether the changes a given speaker urged were enacted. In Winnemucca’s case, I judge her rhetorical choices appropriate, although her petition to keep the Paiutes from being sent back to Pyramid Lake was not ultimately successful, as that is where her people were sent after being released from Yakima (as the Malheur reservation had been disbanded).

67 Although Winnemucca was one of the first Indian women who appeared publicly before white audiences, she was not the first; Suzette LaFleshe (“Bright Eyes”) of the Omaha tribe, appeared on the lecture circuit with Standing Bear before white audiences in Boston in 1879, a few months before Winnemucca’s lectures, to raise awareness of the mistreatment of the Ponca tribe. (It was a lecture by Standing Bear that galvanized Helen Hunt Jackson into working for Indian reform).
these spaces predetermined much of the content and form of her public presentations (and
the way audiences would receive them), Winnemucca was able to use these public spaces
to reach a potential rhetorical audiences that could respond constructively to
Winnemucca’s careful rhetorical strategies, including appeals to white cultural values,
her use of humor and irony, and personal anecdotes.

Stage and Lecture Hall Site Analysis

In theory, the theatrical stage and lecture hall appear to be fairly distinct: the
nineteenth-century theater, particularly in Western regions like Nevada, was viewed
primarily as a source of entertainment (Margaret Watson); the lyceum circuit, which
arranged for lecturers to speak for a fee on a variety of topics, focused primarily on
education and self-improvement (Ray). In addition, theaters were often constructed and
lit so that audience attention focused on the stage. In contrast, one of the things that was
considered so shocking for female lecturers in the nineteenth-century was the nature of
the lecture hall, which turned the direction of the feminine gaze (in theory modestly
averted) back on the audience itself (Ray). In practice, however, the division was not
nearly so neat: theatrical performances might be performed in local halls and private
parlors, and lecturers might use a stage as the setting for their lecture. Moreover,
Winnemucca’s own early public appearances combined elements from both theatrical
performances and lectures. My interest in discussing the two sites together is not so much
to distinguish between them, but to look at the shared expectations that shaped the

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68 Elizabeth Peabody, one of Winnemucca’s staunchest New England supporters, maintained that
Winnemucca never asked for money in her appearances, although contributions were often made to her
cause. This suggests that Winnemucca was not part of the formal lyceum structure, although her speeches
were undoubtedly influenced by the lyceum culture, which shaped cultural conceptions of the ideal lecturer
as someone who was both amusing and inspirational, spoke from personal experience, roused the emotions,
and stimulated the intellect (Ray).
performances of both women and Native Americans—and Native American women in particular—in those spaces.  

The options available for women public speakers in the mid to late nineteenth-century were limited. As Nan Johnson observes, public speaking for women in post-bellum America was limited to entertainment and roles meant to move individuals emotionally. Serious public speaking was generally reserved for men. Women’s “public” performances were also linked to sites that were marginally private and appropriate venues for women: parlors, churches, and (increasingly) lecture halls. Public arenas like government, law, and business were still barred to most women. In addition, women who were not strict to observe certain norms of femininity in dress, behavior, and speech risked charges of promiscuity and immorality (Buchanan).

Women’s performances were shaped by expectations attendant on their public place and social position. Because women’s bodies marked them as distinct from the white, educated Protestant male who was often the default nineteenth-century orator, women rhetors faced an unusual emphasis on dress, which could identify them to audiences as reassuringly feminine, as was the case with Frances Willard and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, or radical, unfeminine, and untrustworthy, as was the case with radical reformer Fanny Wright (Mattingly). For women speakers, sincerity and warmth were more important than trained eloquence—women who spoke “from the heart” were considered to be more natural, and therefore more eloquent in their sphere (Johnson). Expectations attendant on place also influenced the content of women’s speeches: particularly in the nineteenth-century lyceum circuit, which emphasized self-

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69 Deloria usefully defines these kinds of expectations as “a shorthand for the dense economies of meaning, representation, and act that have inflected both American culture writ large and individuals, both Indian and non-Indian” (11).
improvement (and avoided polemical political or religious issues), women reformers
could not openly call for changes in the status quo. Instead, they had to frame their
discussion in genres that were less overtly political, such as instruction, practical advice
for living, philosophical musings, or travel narratives (Ray).

If women who would speak in public were constrained by social ideologies, then
the task facing Native Americans was even more complex. Many scholars have written
critically about the way public performances (and performance venues) negatively
positioned Native Americans relative to their (white) audiences. Most nineteenth-century
performances were overdetermined by white expectations about what constituted an
“authentic”70 Indian performance—upright and noble posture (Clements), use of
figurative language and rhythmic cadences (Clements), recognizable costuming
(Scherer), and tragic tone (Guthrie). Indians were believed to be naturally eloquent
because of their closeness to nature, and like women, their more “emotional” effusions
were seen to be the most eloquent. These “natural” speeches were seen by contemporary
white audiences as a transparent conduit to an essential Indian nature that allowed

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70 Issues of authenticity are complicated ones for scholars. While Winnemucca’s contemporaries viewed
Indian performances that corresponded with their stereotypical expectations as “authentic,” current scholars
are often much more concerned with authenticity in terms of the cultural “truth” in Winnemucca’s
performances—in other words, the extent to which her public presentations of Paiute cultural life conform
to what is actually known. Thus, Lape argues that we can’t take Winnemucca’s narrative to be authentic, as
it is the product of two cultures. On the other hand, scholars like Brumble take great pains to establish
evidence of Paiute traditions in Winnemucca’s autobiography. Powell suggests that concerns with
authenticity imply that Winnemucca is a kind of transparent conduit for cultural expressions, rather than an
intentional rhetorical practitioner. (This scholarly assumption of transparency, ironically enough, has a kind
of inverse parallel in nineteenth-century Anglo-American views that Indians speech was transparent,
creating a direct conduit to the individual speaker’s heart.) Senier argues that these concerns with
authenticity also tend to assume that culture is monolithic and unchanging—she suggests instead that
Winnemucca’s narrative is a genuine record of a culture in transition. Ultimately, I find it useful to set aside
concerns with the “authenticity” of Winnemucca’s narrative—borrowing from Senier and Powell, I would
suggest that Winnemucca’s narrative is a consciously crafted text designed to reveal some elements of her
culture, but not all. Moreover, borrowing from Royster’s wonderful essay, “When the First Voice You Hear
is Not Your Own,” it seems clear that successful rhetors adopt a variety of voices for a variety of settings
without compromising their personal sense of honesty to self.
listeners to know the Indian speaker (Guthrie). Also like women, Native Americans’
physical appearance (both physique and dress) drew considerable attention from listeners,
often more than the substance of their speeches. As McClure explains, audiences were
often less focused on what was said than how it was said.\(^{71}\) Thomas Guthrie suggests that
Anglo-American perceptions of Indian speech “produced and reproduced for them an
Indian subject or character that fit perfectly within a larger narrative framework, that is,
an epic of civilization and conflict in the West” (514). The tragic tone of many native
speeches was taken as evidence of the decline of Indian culture, which both appealed to a
nineteenth-century romantic melancholia and helped assuage white’s guilt about their
culpability in this decline (Guthrie, Clements).

However, an overly negative view of native performances fails to acknowledge
the fact that most performances were, in fact, rhetorical productions. Michael McNally
explains, for instance, that performances of Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* by
Anishinaabeg Indians allowed them to preserve and transmit important cultural texts.
Moreover, by adopting recognizable markers of authenticity, many native performers
garnered the cultural authority that allowed them to broadcast their message to a wider
audience (McNally). Philip Deloria argues that Native Americans often “mimed”
Indianness back at whites in order to “nudge notions of Indianness in directions they
[Native Americans] found useful” (qtd. in McNally 130). Thus, native speakers like
Winnemucca often drew on white cultural discourses in order to manipulate them to their
own ends (Powell).

\(^{71}\) Senier argues, tellingly, that “to tell the story of Indians speaking to whites in the nineteenth century is
necessarily to tell a story of failure, the failure of audience” (104).
For a speaker like Winnemucca, who faced the multiplied constraints of being an Indian and a woman, the stakes of speaking publicly were dramatically increased. Public stereotypes saw Indian women as either a “squaw” of questionable moral character, or a “princess” who served as a mediator between her people and whites (Green). For most of her public appearances, Winnemucca drew on the princess motif to enhance her authority. However, because speaking publicly as a woman carried with it perceived risks of sexual promiscuity, Winnemucca had to tread carefully to avoid being tarred with the immoral associations of the squaw stereotype.  

Before I begin my analysis, I want to touch briefly on the nature of my sources for this section. Newspaper accounts are the predominant source for information on Winnemucca’s public performances and lectures. As with any secondary account, these are not necessarily complete; worse, because Winnemucca is Indian and her speech is therefore often predetermined by her audience, the resulting account may be biased and fragmentary, focusing more on aspects of her dress than details of her speech. Moreover, the written text can never be the equivalent to the actual speech event—details about audience composition and temperament; speaker’s tone, gestures, and inflection;  

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72 Even then, Winnemucca was not always successful in preserving her reputation. Some local papers were disdainful of her: the Daily Silver State, which also published highly complimentary reviews of Winnemucca’s activities, published on 5 Jan. 1880 a less-than-complimentary review of a speech the previous night, concluding that her lecture was “quite interesting” but would have been more so “if she would not jump from one subject to another.” The effect of the lecture was quite overshadowed for this reviewer by Winnemucca’s subsequent actions: “After the lecture, however, she slopped over and, it is said, got gloriously drunk” (“The Princess Sarah”). In addition, her first public appearance in the East was met with a charge from the Council Fire and Advocate, an Indian reform newspaper, of her dishonesty and loose morals: “she is so notorious for her truthfulness as to be wholly unreliable.” The editorial goes on to claim that she was known to have been “an inmate of a house of ill-fame in the town of Winnemucca, Nevada, and to have been a common camp follower, consorting with common soldiers” (Bland? 69).

73 Many of the concerns I raise here are similar to concerns raised (more generally about Native oratory) by Thomas Guthrie and William Clements.

74 Even assuming that texts are relatively accurate (which is impossible to determine without the existence of multiple transcripts of the same performance), the very act of transcription by a white writer functions to displace the native speaker (Guthrie).
physical arrangement of space, and so forth, have to be constructed as thoroughly as possible based on limited evidence. However, as William Clements argues, these limitations should not discourage scholars from learning as much as possible about Native speeches, but rather make scholars cautious about the claims they make. Despite the potentially problematic nature of these sources, I believe that reports of Winnemucca’s speeches are useful both for conveying a sense of her topics (particularly when the same themes show up repeatedly) and for illustrating how audiences may have perceived her.

*Rhetorical Practices in Theatrical Spaces*

Winnemucca first appeared in public as part of an ensemble performance with her father, her brother Natchez, her sister (probably her younger sister Elma), and other members of the Paiute tribe. In a series of performances in 1864 at Sutcliffe’s Music Hall in Virginia City, NV, and the Metropolitan Theater in San Francisco, the Winnemucca family sought to raise money to alleviate the impoverished conditions of their people, by performing a series of tableaux vivants designed to present the “Indian” experience to local white audiences. Despite their good intentions, these initial performances in Winnemucca’s career seem strongly determined by white expectations,

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75 Margaret Watson, in her history of the early Nevada theater, gives the theater’s name as I have here: Sutcliffe. However, Canfield gives the name as Sutcliffe. Since Watson’s sources for background on the theater seem to be more extensive, I have opted for her spelling.

76 According to a family acquaintance who wrote an anonymous letter to the editor, Chief Winnemucca explained to her that “his people’s poverty, their suffering for food, and the cause of the distress now upon them,” were the reason that “he had condescended to make a show of their habits, their pastimes, and among them, their time honored dances: and his object in so doing is to raise money to buy food and blankets for his people” (qtd. in Canfield 42).

77 It’s not entirely clear whether the idea to perform was originally the Winnemuccas’, or whether it was suggested to them by an outside source. Although contemporary Nevada journalist Sam Davis suggested that the Winnemuccas’ stage appearance was due to theater manager Max Walter (cited in Zanjani), Zanjani has suggested that Sarah herself may have been the one to originate the idea of public performances, as she was more familiar with the white world than her father would have been.
playing to white audiences’ taste for exotic native drama and stereotypes of the “noble savage,” as well as (perhaps inadvertently) invoking echoes of the “vanishing Indian.”

The site of these early performances undoubtedly influenced some of the choice of subject matter. Given that the purpose of stage performances was to make money, not only for the performers but also for the theater owner, prospective venues were unlikely to allow any show to appear that did not have the potential for profit. To attract a profitable audience, particularly in frontier Nevada, the Winnemuccas would need to provide a show that promised drama and excitement (Watson). In addition to general audience expectations, the Winnemuccas were likely influenced by the specific advice of the theater manager; Canfield claims that Max Walter, the manager of the Virginia City theater, “gave his seasoned advice to the inexperienced performers” (36), implying that perhaps he offered not only advice but directives for the performance.

The performances, both in Virginia City and San Francisco, clearly appealed to a white audience taste for drama. Prior to the performances in Virginia City, the family, all in native dress (or what passed for it), rode into town with Sarah beside her father, her sister behind him on his horse, followed by her brother Natchez and a party of warriors holding a decorated crescent above Old Winnemucca’s head (Canfield, Zanjani). Although the performances themselves varied a little, they generally began with a short

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78 I should note, however, that because most of what we know about these performances stems from accounts of white audience members, it is impossible to tell whether these overdetermined characteristics of the performance seem so because they were in fact strongly influenced by white expectations, or because white expectations read these elements more strongly into the performance. As far as I am aware, there are no extant accounts of these performances by the performers themselves—thus, all accounts of the performances are filtered through the eyes of sometimes clearly biased observers, as is the case in the unknown reviewer for the *Daily Alta California*, who, while admiring the Indians’ ability to remain motionless during the tableaux, nonetheless mocked their dress, their names, and their speech.

79 Winnemucca’s father was often called “Old Winnemucca” to distinguish him from “Young Winnemucca,” one of Sarah’s cousins and another respected tribal leader.
lecture or minstrel show (Zanjani, Watson, *Daily Alta California* 23 Oct. 1864), followed by a series of dramatic tableaux vivants, including scenes of an Indian camp, a council of war, a war dance, and a scalping dance, a wounded warrior, and a coyote dance—all scenes that the typical white audience member would expect from a “noble savage” (Watson, Canfield, *Daily Alta California*). In the climax of the performance, the chief and his band captured a Copperhead (Bannock) and scalped him (Watson). In San Francisco, the Paiute performers expanded their show, adding lectures about Indians and scenes of Pocahontas. As Zanjani notes, this last may have represented an attempt to cash in on the popularity of “Po-ca-hon-tas; or Ye Gentle Savage,” a stage performance which had recently had a successful run in Nevada mining towns. The performances seem to have been fairly popular in both Virginia City and San Francisco—they were popular enough in Nevada to justify a run in San Francisco, where they played in the Metropolitan Theatre, the most well known theater of the time, and at least one newspaper reviewer records that the audience (mostly women and children in an afternoon performance) responded enthusiastically to the performance (*Daily Alta California* 23 Oct. 1864).

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80 Sarah Winnemucca apparently experienced a degree of stage fright in her first appearance, sitting on the stage and, with hands over her face, exclaiming, “I’m so ashamed! I can’t tell you what Winnemucca is saying.” However, her embarrassment did her no disservice in the eyes of her audience, who applauded heartily (Zanjani, from contemporary account of journalist Sam Davis).

81 As Zanjani notes, if the scalp dance was authentically portrayed, it would have been harrowing, as it involved “warriors waving branches of brush danced in a circle around a scalp placed atop a pole, and the one who had taken the scalp pantomimed biting motions at the spot where the victim’s neck would have been while chanting ‘so that is how your blood tastes’” (75).

82 James Miller, an audience member in Virginia City, made arrangements for the Winnemuccas to take their show to San Francisco.

83 The reporter himself was less enthused about the performance, mocking the Winnemuccas as the “Royal Family” and making fun of Winnemucca’s speech, which the author translated as “Rub-a-dub, dub! Ho-daddy, hi-daddy; wo-hup, gee-haw. Fetch water, fetch water, Manayunk!” (*Daily Alta California* 23 Oct. 1864, p.1). He concluded his review with the somewhat jaded comment: “People like novelty, let them have it. Opera and minstrelsy will pall after a season or two, and if we do go now and then to see an aboriginal entertainment or a Chinese theatrical troupe, whose business is it? we would like to know.”
Audiences may have responded not only to the drama of the performance, but to implicit gestures to the widespread cultural belief in the “Vanishing Indian.” Guthrie explains that white audiences were likely to see the body of the Indian orator as a figure in a historical tableau, not a contemporary individual with real needs. If this was true of oration, the effect must have been intensified by the performance of tableaux, which figure the images of Indian culture as something passive, to be admired and perhaps nostalgically regretted, but not to be actively engaged with. The anonymous reviewer for the *Daily Alta California*, who generally wrote slightingly of the performance, was nonetheless impressed by the tableaux, precisely because of the performers’ remarkable

Zanjani contrasts this disrespectful review with the more positive review in Nevada, where the family was well known: the *Virginia Daily Union*, a local Nevada paper, called Old Winnemucca the “formidable aborigine” (Zanjani).
immobility: “Some of the tableaux were very good, the Indians seeming to possess the power to maintain an inanimate position as if carved of bronze—as, for example, the ‘Wounded Warrior,’ than which the ‘Dying Gladiator’ is not more effective” (23 Oct. 1864, 1). Significantly, the image the reviewer signals out for comment is one that speaks directly to the fetish of the “Vanishing Indian.”84 Images of death, dying, and surrender were particularly powerful for white audiences, as they signified the passing of an Indian culture that could be admired without being feared (Dippie, Clements).

The “native” dress of the performers also seems to have been a direct response to white expectations about Indians, rather than an actual presentation of Paiute lifestyles. As several scholars have noted, the clothing and tableaux were modeled more after the Plains Indians than those of the Paiutes themselves (Canfield, Zanjani, Scherer)—the Winnemuccas appeared on stage in buckskin, rather than rabbit skin tunics or grass skirts that were more common for Paiute women (Zanjani). Before the first performance in San Francisco, the Winnemuccas rode in carriages to the theater, and the men wore feather headdresses which were more characteristic of California Indians than the Paiutes (Canfield). As with many native performers, their dress was frequently an object of comment for reviewers.85 Although this dress seems to simply bow to white expectations,

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84 See Dippie for an extensive review of similar images of dying or wounded Indians and their appeal to American viewers.
85 The reviewer for the Daily Alta California described the performers in the following terms: “The old Chief was dressed in a suit of what might have been brown cloth, or well-worn buckskin, with some odd kind of stage sword-belt, studded with tin buttons, thrown over his shoulder, and a head-dress more nearly resembling an enormous mop than anything else we can compare it to—in fact, he would have created quite a sensation in a torch-light procession of Broom Rangers. The young ladies, or ‘squaws,’ so to speak in the vernacular, were attired in yellow buckskin hunting shirts and leggings of the time-honored stage style, the only difference in their ‘get up’ being in the height of the rainbow-hued feathers of their a la Montezuma head-gear. The dress, although not at all resembling what they wear “at home,” from our own experience of the desert, was well calculated to display their native charms and graces to best advantage. To the right and left, ranged four deep, with their arms at rest upon tables placed there for that purpose, were the eight ‘braves.’ . . . These warriors were all rigged out in a curious uniform costume, as far as red shirts and head dresses resembling feather dusters went, but the nether extremities disclosed a varied
it may have actually been a necessary move for the Winnemuccas to establish their “authenticity” as Indians—a move that would have been essential if they wished to be taken in any way seriously as spokespeople for the Paiutes.86

But if theatrical spaces like the Sutcliffe Music Hall and the Metropolitan Theater were largely constraining in terms of the Winnemucca family’s rhetorical options, the theater also offered a few resources. As Bolton explains, theaters can also create spaces of possibility that do not always exist in real life.87 Thus, despite the overdetermined nature of much of the performance, Winnemucca and her family were able to use their performance for some of their own ends. First of all, by appealing to white expectations, they were able to entice audiences to pay money for the performances, a positive assertion of financial independence and agency (even if the money they raised was

makeup of buckskin leggings, cotton tights, cassimere pants, moccasins, high-lows, and brogans, that would doubtless be worn by ‘Injuns,’ whether Pi-Utes or Diggers—if nothing better offered” (23 Oct. 1864, 1).

86 The Winnemuccas’ perceived need to appear in particular ways to “authenticate” themselves as Indians in the eyes of their white audiences was likely influenced not only by expectations about theatrical performances, but by circulating photographs documenting Indian life. The photo studio, like the theatrical stage, was often a site where images of native people were appropriated and used for purposes outside their control. As Vizenor argues, the “fugitive poses of the native” in photographs reflected the agendas of white, Anglo-European culture rather than native agendas. In a sense, such photographs were the final evidence of conquest; by turning agents and subjects into photographic objects (even museum objects), “photographic representations became the evidence of a vanishing race, the assurance of dominance and victimry” (Vizenor 155). Given these pre-set interpretive frameworks, it is not surprising that Winnemucca chose, in the majority of the half-dozen photographs taken of her during her public career, to appear in a variation of her “Princess Sarah” pose—i.e., in something that passes for native dress, often with loose hair and a crown or flowers in her hair. Scherer suggests that although the poses themselves were probably dictated by the photographer, the clothes and accessories were likely Winnemucca’s own creations, which she assumed to enhance her credibility with her white audiences. Winnemucca could, in fact, have chosen to appear in conventional white dress, as she did in an 1880 photograph taken of the Paiute delegation to Washington. The fact that she did not do so in the majority of her portraits suggests that, to some extent, she consciously constructed her own image.

87 Michael McNally, in his descriptions of Anishinaabeg performances of the Song of Hiawatha, similarly argues that theatrical spaces are not wholly deterministic, but native performers are able to use those spaces for their own ends—the theatrical performance that emerges is thus partially determined by outside expectations, and partially by the performer’s intentions. In the case of the Anishinaabeg, the performances allowed them to perform and transmit significant cultural songs and dances.
ultimately insufficient to meet Paiute needs for the coming winter). In addition, the performances provided a vehicle for the Paiutes to reassure white audiences that they were not a hostile Indian threat: before the first performance in Virginia City, Winnemucca translated a speech for her father in front of the International Hotel in Virginia City in which Old Winnemucca explained that he and his people were friendly to tribes and, as evidence, he noted that he had resisted overtures from “plains tribes” (presumably Bannocks) who asked him to join with them against the whites (Zanjani). The tableaux themselves may have reinforced the message of Paiute civility by opposing the Paiutes to the Bannocks. In addition to the capture and scalping of a Bannock spy, the tableaux also included a scene entitled “Scalping of an Emigrant Girl by a Bannock Scout” (Canfield 40). Thus, where the Bannocks demonstrated their savagery by attacking a young white girl, the Paiutes demonstrated civility by reserving such violence for seasoned enemy warriors.

These performances provided Winnemucca with a clearer sense of what white audiences look for from native performers, an awareness that she would use later in her life. As Carpenter argues, Winnemucca learned “how to perform the Indian of the ethnographic tradition—the primitive ‘other’—to her advantage” (73), beginning with her public performances in Virginia City and San Francisco. Additionally, as the principle translator of her father’s speeches, Sarah gained valuable experience in translation during these performances, a skill that she would later use to make a living and to advocate for

88 The Winnemuccas played to full houses for nearly a week in California, but their expenses ate up most of their profits. In addition, their agent abandoned them to make their own way home to Nevada.
89 Although Senier suggests that the idea of Indian attacks would have been “laughable” to settlers in the Paiute region in 1864, I believe that stories of Indian attacks were so widespread among white settlers that even those who did not foresee an immediate Paiute or Bannock uprising would have at least been on alert for hostilities (particularly if the swiftness with which whites retaliated for any kind of Indian violence is any indicator).
her people. Finally, newspaper responses to these performances provided Sarah with the “princess” label that she would eventually embrace as it gained her a measure of credibility (Zanjani), both because it suggested an elevated social position and because of the positive connotations of the “Indian princess.” Since the “Indian princess” stereotype carried with it the implication of a high-minded young woman who served as a bridge between cultures, Sarah was also able to leverage these associations in her public persona.90 As McClure explains, Winnemucca’s persuasive ability depended in part on creating a persona that fit white expectations.

Ultimately, the physical and ideological space of the theater had a mixed effect on Winnemucca’s (and her family’s) rhetorical strategies. If Anglo-American audience expectations of theatrical spaces predetermined the kind of content that was acceptable for them to present, Winnemucca and her family were still able to use those conventions to limited advantages for themselves. By adapting these conventions, they were granted access to an audience that they might otherwise have been unable to reach. And the theater proved an important rhetorical training ground for Winnemucca herself.

Rhetorical Practices in Other Performative Spaces

After her first, short-lived theatrical appearance in 1864, Winnemucca did not approach public speaking venues again until the late 1870s. In 1879, the Paiutes at Yakima again asked her to intercede for them. This time, armed with the profits from her participation in the Bannock war, she was financially able to do so. She visited General Howard in Vancouver, WA, who gave her a letter of introduction that would facilitate her proposed trip to Washington D.C. In late fall of 1879, She traveled to San Francisco,

90 As scholars like Robert Tilton and Rayna Greene have demonstrated, Pocohontas began the American public’s fascination with Indian princesses, who were often regarded highly as women willing to sacrifice themselves in behalf of harmonious Indian-white relationships, and who generally accepted Christianity.
where she had planned a series of lectures to raise funds for her trip. While there, she
delivered several lectures in Platte’s Hall, often to full houses (Canfield). In 1880, as
mentioned previously, Winnemucca was part of a delegation of Paiutes (including her
father, her brother Natchez, and other tribal leaders) invited to Washington D.C.
However, the government officials who arranged for the trip forbade Winnemucca to
lecture publicly, so her public appearances in the East were delayed until the spring of
1883, when she arrived in Boston.91

In New England Winnemucca found an audience primed for her arrival
(Canfield)—not only was the question of Indian reform currently in its ascendancy, but
audiences were interested in Winnemucca herself, in part because of the 1881 publication
of Jackson’s *A Century of Dishonor*, which included Winnemucca’s letter to Major
Douglass, and in part because of an article Winnemucca published on the Paiutes in *The
Californian* in September of 1882. Over the next year, Winnemucca spoke numerous
times throughout New England, in Boston, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore,
and New York, among other places. In late 1884, she returned home to Nevada, where
she spoke a few more times before deciding that her public advocacy work was not as
successful as she had hoped and turning her energy toward the establishment of an Indian
school on her brother Natchez’s ranch. As with her earlier performance, Winnemucca’s
public appearances were shaped by expectations of the physically impressive, eloquent,
and tragic figure of the native (woman) orator. Within this constraining space, however,

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91 During Winnemucca’s 1879 San Francisco lectures, a group of Eastern women invited Winnemucca to
come east to lecture. However, due to personal issues (specifically, her 1881 marriage to Lewis Hopkins
and his subsequent gambling away of her trip funds), Winnemucca was unable to pay for the trip until
1883. According to Zanjani, it’s not entirely clear whether this trip was in response to the 1879 invitation,
or whether the lecture bureau that had earlier engaged Bright Eyes and Standing Bear were responsible for
her trip.
Winnemucca used appeals to white virtues, irony, humor, personal experiences, and demonstrations of white hypocrisy to create a rhetorical space where her audience could understand and respond to her appeals.

Reactions to her appearances, in both San Francisco and New England, focused, not surprisingly, on the physical and aural aspects of her performance that marked her as “Indian.” One San Francisco columnist used extensive descriptions of Winnemucca’s physical appearance, her eloquence, and her natural gestures to suggest that exotic presence of a native woman:

San Francisco was treated to the most novel entertainment it has ever known, last evening, in the shape of the address by Sarah, daughter of Chief Winnemucca, delivered in Platt’s Hall. The Princess wore a short buckskin dress, the skirt bordered with fringe and embroidery, short sleeves, disclosing beautifully rounded brown arms, and scarlet leggings, with trimmings of fringe. On her head she wore a proud head dress of eagle’s feathers, set in a scarlet crown, contrasting well with her flowing black locks. (“The Piute Princess,” *Daily Silver State*, 28 Nov. 1879)\(^{92}\)

As with Winnemucca’s costume in 1864, this seems to have been a costume of Winnemucca’s own design (it corresponds to the dress she wears in several of her photographs), meant to convey a kind of “authentic” Indianness rather than a reflection of contemporary Paiute costumes (Scherer). Moreover, since the style at the time for Paiute women was to wear their hair in braids, Winnemucca’s free flowing locks and crown seem to be another concession to white expectations of the “Indian Princess” (Scherer).

\(^{92}\) This article was originally published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, but was reprinted in Winnemucca’s local paper, the *Daily Silver State* (later renamed *The Silver State*).
The reviewer was also visibly impressed with the aural aspects of the performance, claiming that:

The lecture was unlike anything ever before heard in the civilized world—eloquent, pathetic, tragical at times; at others her quaint anecdotes, sarcasms and wonderful mimicry surprised the audience again and again into bursts of laughter and rounds of applause. There was no set lecture from written manuscript, but a spontaneous flow of eloquence. Nature’s child spoke in natural, unconstrained language, accompanied by gestures that were scarcely ever surpassed by any actress on the stage. The constraint which as naturally expected by the audience in one unused to facing [sic] the public, was nowhere visible as the Indian girl

walked upon the stage in an easy, unembarrassed manner, and entered at once
upon the story of her race. (Daily Silver State, 28 Nov 1879)

For this reviewer, Winnemucca fit the script of the ideal Indian orator—her perfect poise,
naturalness of expression, and tragic tone mark her as a native woman whose very
elocuence suggests her closeness to Nature. The presumed transparency of her speech,
the “spontaneous flow of eloquence” and “unconstrained language,” similarly suggest a
lack of artifice that allows her white audience to “read” her physical presence. The very
ubiquitousness of this description—it might have been any Indian woman, not
specifically Sarah Winnemucca—points to the ways in which the image of the Indian
(woman) automatically signaled a cultural narrative opposing Indian naturalness with
white civilization, and the ultimate triumph of civilized culture. Ironically, although
Winnemucca’s entire physical presence here signifies (her body, her voice, her gestures),
it is her eloquent speaking voice that ultimately seals her status as an authentic Indian.95
The reviewer does go on to describe the content of Winnemucca’s speech—her people’s
encounter with whites, the causes of the Indian-white conflict in 1861, agent Rinehart’s
mistreatment of the Paiutes, and the causes of the Bannock war—but it seems clear that
the reviewer was most impressed by Winnemucca’s physical appearance.

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93 Another reviewer, learning of her proposed trip East, similarly focused on her appearance, gestures, and
rhythmic language: “[In the East, where people are not used] to English lectures by an Indian woman, her
appearance will be likely to draw, from sheer novelty, and please by the picturesqueness of her costume,
and a certain gracefulness and dramatic effect of her gestures as well as her sententious sentences, which
frequently bear a striking similarity [to] the poetry of Holy Writ” (qtd. in Canfield 166-7, Daily Alta
California, 24 Dec 1879).
94 Senier argues that such performances allow white audiences to legitimate itself through consumption of
the spectacle of a racially inferior other.
95 See Guthrie for a fuller explanation of how eloquent speech was often seen as one of the most important
characteristics of the Indian, particularly as it allowed whites to place the Indian within a narrative of
cultural decline that matched perfectly with Western narratives of the advance of civilization.
96 Much of this same material shows up in Winnemucca’s autobiography, corroborating scholarly belief
that she used much of her lecture material in writing her autobiography.
Despite the apparent limitations of this heavily weighted appearance, Winnemucca appears to have consciously chosen this look, particularly since, in her last lectures in San Francisco in 1885, she eschewed native dress in favor of conventional woman’s attire (Zanjani). For her Eastern lectures, Winnemucca adopted the same formal native costume she had worn in San Francisco in 1879. The Silver State, reprinting copy from the New York Mail and Express, reports that Winnemucca appeared before an audience in Dr. Sabine’s church wearing “a picturesque Indian costume—a deerskin dress with bead trimming, read leather leggings, moccasins, and a handsomely embroidered pouch at her waist” (“The Piute Princess,” 5 Dec. 1883). It seems likely that, given her early experience with public performances, Winnemucca recognized the extent to which dress could enhance audiences’ enjoyment of a performance (and therefore their favorable response). Apparently, her dress was effective: Canfield records that after a lecture in Christ Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, audiences crowded around her, “wanting to touch the hand of this resplendent Indian woman wearing a gold crown and intricately beaded dress” (208-9). Additionally, Winnemucca likely understood from her experience in Nevada as the “Princess Sarah,” that the pseudo-nobility such an appearance bestowed on her was a valuable asset to her authority as an “authentic” Indian. Not only did her appearance help audiences recognize her authenticity, but white familiarity with various princess legends allowed audiences to immediately recognize her role as a good-willed mediator between white and native cultures; the January 22, 1885, edition of the San Francisco Morning Call, reported, “In the history of the Indians she and Pocahontas will be the principle female characters, and her singular devotion to her
race will no doubt be chronicled as an illustration of the better traits of the Indian character” (qtd. in Canfield 222).

Winnemucca then used this “authentic” appearance as a springboard for her critiques of white culture. Because audiences recognized her as a mediator between cultures, they would have expected appeals on behalf of her people. For her primarily Western audience in San Francisco, Winnemucca combined appeals to white generosity as well irony and humor to ultimately critique the failings of white culture in regards to Native Americans. In the following speech, delivered in early December 1879, Winnemucca commends whites for their good hearts and generosity to most races, but uses this seeming compliment to draw attention to their poor treatment of Indians:

You take all the natives of the earth in your bosom but the poor Indian, who is born of the soil of your land and who has lived for generations on the land which the good God has given to them, and you say he must be exterminated. (Thrice repeated, with deep passion, and received with tremendous applause).

The proverb says the big fish eat up the little fishes and we Indians are the little fish and you eat us all up and drive us from home. (The audience reacted with sympathetic cheers to this statement.)

Where can we poor Indians go, if the government will not help us? If your people will help us, and you have good hearts, and can if you will, I will promise to educate my people and make them law-abiding citizens of the United States. (Loud applause.) It can be done—it can be done. (Cheers.) (qtd in Canfield 167, Daily Alta California, 4 Dec. 1879)
Winnemucca begins by noting the ironic inconsistency of white culture: whites generously embrace all cultures but the one culture which (she implies) they should be most concerned with—those people who are “born of the soil of your land.” In keeping with audience expectations for Native oratory, Winnemucca also draws on figurative language (the proverb of the fish) to underscore how her people are being devoured by whites. But she concludes her lecture on a positive note, by once more appealing to white generosity and reminding them of their “good hearts.” She promises her white audience that, if they will help her people, she will in turn help them, by making her people “law-abiding citizens of the United States.” In this short excerpt, Winnemucca’s use of irony allows her to both entertain her audience while also delivering a sharp critique. At the same time, her gesture to white generosity allows her to build common ground with her audience, as this is a value that they both share. In addition, this gesture helps Winnemucca to put her audience in a receptive frame of mind for her appeal for aid.

Throughout her speeches on both coasts, Winnemucca was sharply critical of white hypocrisy, drawing attention to the disparity between white’s purported Christian virtues and their actual behaviors. In her final 1879 lecture in San Francisco (on Christmas Eve, no less), Winnemucca closed her speech with a stirring appeal for her people’s education and a denouncement of white hypocrisy:

I am appealing to you to help my people, to send teachers and books among us. Educate us. Every one shuns me, and turns a back on me with contempt. Some say I am a half breed. My father and mother were pure Indians. I would be ashamed to acknowledge there was white blood in me. . . . I want homes for my people but no one will help us. I call upon white people in their private houses.
They will not touch my fingers for fear of getting soiled. That’s the Christianity of white people. (qtd. in Canfield 167; *Daily Alta California*, Dec. 24, 1879)

Winnemucca gestures ironically to white cultural values of racial purity, while simultaneously inverting those standards which maintain that any non-white blood degrades one’s status. Instead, Winnemucca asserts her own pure blood, arguing that it is white blood, not *Indian* blood, that she would be ashamed of possessing. Winnemucca’s use of irony and the attention she draws to white hypocrisy seem designed to shame whites into changing their treatment of native people, particularly the Paiutes. Significantly, she couches her lecture in these terms on Christmas Eve, during a season when most purported Christians should be alive to their responsibilities to serve others.

Winnemucca also on occasion used humor to critique the Indian agents who were, in her view, even more culpable for the impoverished situation of her people than local whites. For instance, in one of her San Francisco speeches, she described Agent Rinehart as having “a right arm longer than his left, and while he was beckoning them to be kind and good and honest with the one hand, the other was busy grabbing behind their backs” (“The Paiute Princess,” *Daily Silver State*, 28 Nov. 1879). This kind of humor was clearly popular with audiences; in this case, it “brought down the house” (*Daily Silver State*, 28 Nov. 1879). The vivid image appealed to audience expectations for figurative language, while the anecdote entertained audiences while driving home her point about self-serving agents.

In her San Francisco speeches, Winnemucca also includes arguments for white culpability in Indian-white conflicts that seem tailored particularly for her Western audience. Western and Eastern audiences were often sharply divided on the Indian issue:
Westerners, who came in contact with native tribes on a regular basis and who were perpetually in fear of Indian uprisings, tended to mistrust and actively dislike Indians and favored their extinction; Easterners tended to view the “vanishing” Indian more sympathetically, believing that Native Americans could and should be assimilated into white culture (Dippie). (Westerners, of course, charged that it was easy for Easterners to promote Indian reform, as they had already driven all the Indians out of their midst).

Given this divide—and the persistent Western fear of Indian violence against whites—it hardly seems surprising that Winnemucca would reassure her audience that her people were not bloodthirsty. In a November 1879 lecture in San Francisco, Winnemucca provided a brief history of her people, acknowledging that they were sometimes violent toward whites, but arguing that Paiute violence only occurred in response to white violence: “I do not excuse my people, but I say you cannot hold them from it unless you change your treatment of them” (Daily Silver State, 28 Nov. 1879).

Although Winnemucca spoke sporadically in the West between these 1879 San Francisco lectures and her 1883 Eastern tour, these lectures appear to be isolated engagements. Winnemucca arrived in Boston in the spring of 1883, and immediately found staunch supporters in the Peabody sisters: Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann. Together, the sisters helped plan speaking opportunities for Winnemucca and arranged for the publication of her autobiography, Life Among the Piutes, which came out in 1883.\footnote{Several scholars have noted the generic constraints facing an Indian woman writing an autobiography. First, most Native American narratives were communal rather than individual, and Winnemucca may have been seen to be putting herself forward inappropriately by emphasizing her own story (Sands, Ruoff). (However, as Georgi-Findlay, Ruoff, and McClure argue separately, Winnemucca’s narrative actually subsumes personal detail to emphasize the story of her tribe). Second, personal narratives were problematic for women, as the writing of an autobiography presumes, first of all, that one’s life story is important and that one has something important to say about that life. For most women, whose lives revolved around...} Mann served as the editor for the text, although she claimed in the
preface to the narrative that her editorial interventions were slight.\textsuperscript{98} In all, Winnemucca spoke nearly 300 times throughout New England, and numbered among her new acquaintances such intellectual luminaries as John Greenleaf Whittier, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Senator Dawes (Canfield). Winnemucca also circulated a petition signed by more than 5000 people to give lands in severalty and citizenship rights to Indians (Canfield).

In New England, the hotbed of Indian reform, Winnemucca spoke frequently on the shortcomings of the reservation system, even making accusations about the existence of a federal “Indian ring” that sought to profit itself at the expense of the Indians.\textsuperscript{99} Her critiques of the Indian agents drew largely on her personal experience with agents, which she likely presented in the same straight-forward, impassioned style that she used in her domestic issues, it was automatically assumed that they had nothing of importance to say about their lives (Martha Watson). Winnemucca’s narrative is often classified as a “bicultural composite composition” (Arnold Krupat’s term), meaning that it presents voices from both white and Paiute culture (Lape); scholars of native autobiography like Ruoff and Brumble have argued that features of European autobiography as well as Paiute oral narratives exist in Winnemucca’s autobiography.

\textsuperscript{98} Mann, however, described in a private letter to a friend her difficulties editing Winnemucca’s text (difficulties which may suggest a more heavy-handed intervention than her preface acknowledges): “I don’t think the English language ever got such a treatment before. I have to recur to her sometimes to know what a word is, as spelling is an unknown quantity to her. . . . She often takes syllables off of words & adds them or rather prefixes them to other words, but the story is heart-breaking, and told with a simplicity & eloquence that cannot be described” (qtd. in Canfield 203).

\textsuperscript{99} Although I haven’t been able to find transcripts of Winnemucca’s speeches concerning this “Indian ring,” it seems fairly obvious that she made such accusations: Thomas Bland, publisher of \textit{The Council Fire and Advocate}, a monthly journal for Indian rights, took umbrage at her accusations (he apparently believed she wanted to defend the army and encourage the transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department) and printed Rinehart’s affidavits accusing Winnemucca of low moral character (Canfield, Zanjani, \textit{Council Fire and Advocate} May 1883, also July-Aug. 1883). The 19 June 1883 edition of the \textit{Daily Silver State} (subsequently printed in the July-Aug. 1883 edition of the \textit{Council Fire and Advocate}, as well as in the \textit{Boston Evening Transcript}) records that: “Sarah Winnemucca, the Piute princess, is lecturing in Boston on what she knows about Indian agents. She is throwing hot shots into the camp of the ‘peace policy hypocrites,’ who plunder the red man while professing to be his best, truest, and only friend. She knows by practical experience, acquired at several Indian agencies, that the Indians, with the exception of the head men, are cheated out of their annuities, and not infrequently driven to the war path by the inhuman treatment of those who are paid by the Government to care for their corporal as well as their spiritual needs. . . . She also realizes the fact that the only time the Plutes received what the Government provided for them was when the military at Fort McDermit were entrusted with its distribution. Now, because she states, before an audience in Boston, what the whites in Nevada and on the frontier generally know to be facts, \textit{The Council Fire}, the Washington organ of the Indian Bureau, roundly abuses her and styles her the ‘Amazonian champion of the Army’” (“The Indian Bureau Alarmed”).
autobiography to rehearse the same critiques. The Nevada *Silver State* records that Winnemucca presented to a Philadelphia audience “her plain, unvarnished story, in a way so effective that she at once gained the good-will of the entire audience. She told how her people, the Piutes, were systematically robbed by unscrupulous Indian agents” (“Lecturing to Crowded Houses,” 7 Nov. 1883). On occasion, Winnemucca was also known to dramatize these critiques; Zanjani relates that Winnemucca’s narrative of the Paiute story “captivated the audience. She told how unscrupulous agents calling themselves Christians robbed the Indians and often dramatized their behavior by rapaciously snatching up money cast onto the floor” (245). These dramatic gestures served to not only entertain Winnemucca’s expectant audience, but to vividly drive home her point about the self-serving greed of the Indian agents.

As she had done successfully in her San Francisco lectures, Winnemucca also used humor to emphasize agent greed. In her autobiography, she records,

Now, dear readers, this is the way all the Indian agents get rich. They first thing they do is to start a store; the next thing is to take in cattle men, and cattle men pay the agent one dollar a head. In this way they can get rich very soon, so that they can have their gold-headed canes, with their names engraved on them. The one I am now speaking of is only a sub-agent. . . . The sub-agent was a minister; his name was Balcom. He did not stay very long, because a man named Batemann hired some Indians to go and scare him away from the reservation, that he might

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100 The *Silver State* reports that this copy comes from what “the papers” have to say about Winnemucca, but does not provide further indication as to what papers provided the original material.

101 Most scholars believe that the material in Winnemucca’s autobiography was first practiced and rehearsed for her live audiences (Bolton, McClure, Powell). Thus, it seems reasonable to extrapolate that passages similar to this—if not this exact passage—were used in Winnemucca’s lectures to similar effect.
take his place. . . . So Batemann got the minister away, and then he got rich in the same way. (*Life* 86).

As with her use of irony and dramatic gestures, Winnemucca used humor to both entertain her audience and drive home her point.102

However, although the humor might have entertained audiences, not all Winnemucca’s audiences were enamored of her presentation. As Zanjani points out, Winnemucca’s criticism of religious organizations (particularly her criticisms of Father Wilbur, at the Yakima reservation, who was respected by certain highly placed federal officials) won her several enemies, including the Woman’s Association; Herbert Welsh, a founder of the Indian Rights Association; and Charles Painter, a powerful Washington lobbyist; in addition to Thomas Bland, of the *Council Fire and Advocate* (247).103 Moreover, Winnemucca’s repeated claims that the army should have control of the reservations won her few friends in reformist circles, as most reformers favored Grant’s Peace Policy, which gave control of the reservations to religious organizations (Zanjani, West).

Despite these drawbacks, Winnemucca also lectured successfully on less charged political issues, including ethnographic descriptions of Paiute customs, such as courtship, raising of children, and governance (much of this material has been reproduced in the second chapter of her narrative). Although Winnemucca was not formally part of the lyceum circuit (most of her performances accepted donations, but did not charge entrance fees [Canfield]), her presentations were undoubtedly influenced by some of the conventions adopted by lyceum lecturers. Among other things, lyceum speakers tended to

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102 Rhetorical scholar Angela Ray notes that Frederick Douglass similarly used accessible humor to great effect in his speeches on the lyceum circuit.
103 See footnote 100 for more description of Thomas Bland’s antipathy toward Winnemucca.
focus on instructional topics—ethnographic customs would have been a popular topic—that promoted conventional values. In addition, they also drew extensively from personal experience. One of Winnemucca’s most popular early lectures was a lecture given to an audience of women, which drew extensively on both personal experience and instruction. This lecture appealed strongly to New England values of feminine domesticity and womanly purity by describing how young Paiute women were instructed to value chastity (Canfield). Additionally, this lecture addressed the loving care with which Paiutes raised their young (Zanjani). Mary Mann, in a letter to the editor of the Council Fire and Advocate, energetically defended Winnemucca’s character, in part through a reference to this lecture:104

In regard to her character, there is no point upon which she is stronger than purity of life. The first address I ever head from her was one given to women alone, upon the customs of her people in regard to the education of the women of the tribe in the virtue of chastity, which is the crowning glory of Indian life. . . . Mrs. Hopkins made us all feel ashamed of the disgraceful condition of our civilized society when she told us of the careful training of Indian girls, and the sacred safeguards thrown around them, and the fearful punishments for any lack of womanly virtue. (Council Fire and Advocate, July-Aug. 1883, 98-100).

Winnemucca included elements of this popular lecture in her autobiography, writing that “The grandmothers have the special care of the daughters just before and after they come to womanhood. The girls are not allowed to get married until they have come to womanhood; and that period is recognized as a very sacred thing” (Life 48, emphasis

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104 Mann’s sister, Elizabeth Peabody, was similarly impressed by the same lecture, writing that it was “a lecture which never failed to excite the moral enthusiasm of every woman that heard it and seal their confidence in their own purity of character and purpose” (qtd. in Zanjani 245, see also Canfield 201-3).
Winnemucca goes on to explain how, following marriage and childbirth, both fathers and mothers take an active role in raising children with love and kindness; the father is expected to care for all the household tasks while the mother cares for the newborn. “All this respect shown to the mother and child makes the tie between parents and children very strong” (*Life* 50).

Not only does this emphasis on feminine purity and domesticity establish shared ground between Winnemucca and her audience, but it also forms the basis of a powerful appeal Winnemucca makes on behalf of her people, demonstrating the ways that these core domestic values are threatened by white treatment of Indians.\(^{105}\) She writes, “My people have been so unhappy for a long time they wish now to *disincrease*, instead of multiply. The mothers are afraid to have children, for fear they shall have daughters, who are not safe even in their mother’s presence” (*Life* 48). One of the most dramatic dangers that Winnemucca describes in her autobiography (and doubtless in her lectures as well, particularly to audiences of women) is the threatened rape of native women by white men.\(^{106}\) Her argument that mothers fear to have daughters, because the daughters were not safe “even in their mother’s presence” was one based on personal experience—as a young child in California, her sister was attacked by white men in the camp while her grandfather and the other Paiute men were away working in the mountains: “The men whom my grandpa called his brothers would come into our camp and ask my mother to give our sister to them. They would come in at night, and we would all scream and cry, but that would not stop them” (*Life* 34). By dramatizing this threat to one of the cardinal

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\(^{105}\) Carpenter argues that Winnemucca “uses white women’s language of respectability and domesticity to gain the white reader’s empathy” (75).

\(^{106}\) Stremlau notes that historians have suggested that rape occurs more often at “societal flashpoints, places were [sic] diverging groups struggle over power and status” and that men are more likely to rape women that they consider socially and racially inferior (47).
nineteenth-century feminine virtues (chastity), Winnemucca creates a strong emotional appeal for her reform-minded Eastern audiences.\(^{107}\)

For Winnemucca, this threat of sexual violence by white men also constitutes one of her people’s claims to civilization, because, unlike these whites, Paiutes respect the virtue of chastity. Near the conclusion of her autobiography, she writes stirringly, “Ah, there is one thing you cannot say of the Indian. You call him savage, and everything that is bad but one; but, thanks be to God, I am so proud to say that my people have never outraged your women, or have even insulted them by looks or words” (244). By appealing to a shared value of feminine purity, Winnemucca overturns the typical civilized/white and savage/Indian binary.

Throughout her New England tour, Winnemucca remained concerned for her people’s welfare. In one of her final lectures, Winnemucca appeared before the House of Representatives in April, 1884, to plead that her people be allowed to leave the Yakima reservation and that the land around Fort McDermit be established as an Indian reservation (Zanjani).\(^{108}\) Her pleas seem to have been moderately successful. That spring, a bill granting land to the Paiutes near Camp McDermit, Oregon, passed the House of Representatives; however, the military claimed that they still needed the land at the fort, so a new bill was passed assigning the Paiutes to land around the Pyramid Lake reservation (Canfield). Although this proved to be an untenable solution—Pyramid Lake

\(^{107}\) Lukens argues that Winnemucca’s major rhetorical strategy in her autobiography is to connect individual and group suffering and use this as an emotional appeal. These narratives of abuse included the poor treatment of Indians on the reservation as well as, crucially, narratives of rape or attempted rape, as these threaten the well-being of women and children.

\(^{108}\) She was invited to make this appearance by Robert W. S. Stevens, chair of the House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate a transcript of this speech—Zanjani’s biography is one of the few sources that refers to this speech, and her source seems to have been a document in a private collection. No record of this speech exists in the Congressional Records for April or May of 1884.
was already unable to provide sufficiently for the Paiutes living there—this bill did at least end their enforced exile. In other respects, her New England tour was disappointing—and even embarrassing. Although she was able to win some supporters and received generous donations on behalf of her people, her husband contracted gambling debts in her name and forged checks in the names of some of her benefactors, forcing her to use the savings ear-marked for her people in order to cover their debts.

Winnemucca returned West in 1884 to Pyramid Lake, expecting a position at the reservation school, although this position never materialized (Canfield, Zanjani). Instead, Winnemucca turned to lectures again, speaking a few times in Nevada at Reno and Carson City to raise money to establish a school (Zanjani). In these speeches, she focused less on the dramatic strategies of dress and narrative that she had relied on earlier to win over her Eastern audiences. Instead, she argued for the need for practical education for the Paiutes, using humor (sometimes dark humor) to soften her demands. According to a local newspaper account, her lecture in Reno criticized Indian missionary societies:

She said these zealous societies had only one idea in view—that of administering to the spiritual wants, which they proposed to cater to through missionaries, tracts, books, etc., which were of no avail, for the reason that her people could not read, and that religious training would not go far on an empty stomach. What was wanting was food, clothing, farming implements, practical teaching, their rights to be recognized in courts, and hold the title to lands. (“The Piute Princess,” Silver State, 11 Sept. 1884)

Here, she suggests that spiritual needs should be secondary to temporal needs, and, as a logical extension of this argument, she implies that, because Paiute needs were not
spiritual, they did not require spiritual advisors to provide their needs. Moreover, Winnemucca drew a “severe picture of the clergy who came among her race, who, while ostensibly doing the Lord’s service with one hand, used the other to adroitly pick their pockets.” This humorous account, further underscores her argument about the incapacity of religious agents for their reservation posts. Not only are agents impractical, they are self-serving and hypocritical.

In early 1885, Winnemucca went to San Francisco to lecture, trading her deerskin dress for conventional American clothes, and relying on “black humor,” rather than dress or other accessories, to move her audience:

If she possessed the wealth of several rich ladies whom she mentioned, she would place all the Indians of Nevada on the ships in our harbor, take them to New York and land them there as immigrants, that they might be received with open arms, blessed with the blessings of universal suffrage, and thus placed beyond the necessity of reservation help and out of the reach of Indian agents. (qtd. in Zanjani 261)

As with her earlier uses of humor, this strategy allowed her to entertain audiences while at the same time highlighting the inconsistency of white behavior toward Native Americans and other indigent people. The publicity resulting from her lectures (reviews appeared even in the *New York Times*) led the Indian Department to order Agent Gibson to provide supplies to the tribes on the Humboldt river (Canfield).

Throughout her lectures, Winnemucca used white cultural expectations to create a rhetorical space where she could relay her own message about her people. Her elaborate

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109 Winnemucca had earlier used this two-handed metaphor to great effect in describing Agent Rinehart to appreciative San Francisco audiences in 1879.
Indian costumes helped credential her as an “authentic” native speaker, while her use of figurative language, humor, irony, and appeals to white generosity allowed her to dramatize the failure of Indian agents and the need for general reform of existing Indian policy. However, in June of 1885, increasingly disillusioned by the passivity of her own people, Winnemucca renounced her position as their spokesman (Canfield, Zanjani). She claimed to the Silver State (23 June 1885) that she had fought [Mr. Gibson] and all other agents for the general good of my race, but as recent events have shown that they [the Paiutes] are not disposed to stand by me in the fight, I shall relinquish it. As they will not help themselves, no one can help them. ‘Those that would be free must strike the blow themselves.’

I have not contended for Democrat, Republican, Protestant or Baptist for an agent. I have worked for freedom, I have laboured to give my race a voice in the affairs of the nation, but they prefer to be slaves so let it be. My efforts hereafter shall be for my brother alone, we have plenty of friends east that will help us build a home at Lovelock, where I will teach a school. (qtd. in Canfield 231)

For the next several years, Winnemucca devoted herself to establishing a school on her brother Natchez’s ranch, eschewing the lecture halls that had become so familiar to her.

Conclusion: Finding Rhetorical Space

“Everyone knows what a woman must suffer who undertakes to act against bad men. My reputation has been assailed, and it is done so cunningly that I cannot prove it to be unjust. I can only protest that it is unjust, and say that wherever I have been known, I have been believed and trusted.”—Sarah Winnemucca, Life Among the Piutes, Appendix, p. 258
It seems clear from the analysis above that Winnemucca’s physical location, and the social and cultural expectations attendant on those spaces, had a powerful shaping influence on her rhetorical practices. Disciplinary sites like reservations severely curtailed her options for rhetorical intervention because her role as an interpreter placed her in an ambiguous position relative to her people and the Indian agents who employed her. However, she was able to subsequently leverage her negative personal experiences with these agents into vivid narratives that appealed to her reform-minded Eastern audiences (both during her New England lecture tour and in her autobiography). In terms of military spaces, Winnemucca’s familiarity with military culture allowed her to craft logical and emotional appeals that would have appealed to her audience’s sense of responsibility. Moreover, she was able to use military virtues to craft an appropriately feminine persona for her Eastern audiences that was both brave and womanly. Finally, although performative spaces like theaters and lecture halls were often overdetermined for Native orators, who were expected to appear and speak a particular way, Winnemucca was able to use conventions of Native performance to establish her ethos as an authentic speaker on behalf of her people. Moreover, she was able to use techniques of irony, humor, and appeals to white cultural values to ensure that her audience heard her message, beyond the conventional stereotypes. In each of these instances, although Winnemucca may not have said all that she wished to say, in the ways that she wished to say it (nor with the consequences she wished), she was still able to find rhetorical space—both the physical place from which to present her message and the cultural and rhetorical means in which to couch it—for some variation of her message.
If Winnemucca’s rhetorical practices seem overly constrained by these three types of spaces, it is also important to remember that each of these spaces still provided her with a place from which to speak, even if this place was not ideal. In the absence of some kind of recognizable place, Winnemucca’s rhetorical options were even more severely constrained. According to Sarah Winnemucca’s autobiography, in the winter of 1878 she was “living at the head of John Day’s river [in Oregon] with a lady by the name of Courly” (*Life* 127). (In other words, she was clearly living outside the reservation or military that were the typical “safe” confines for American Indians). While there, a small band of her people who were living on the Malheur reservation came to see her, requesting that she use her considerable English abilities to intervene in their behalf, as she had often done before, to help them get the necessary supplies that the agency failed to provide. Winnemucca responds cautiously to this request, saying, “I will do all I can, but that is very little” (139). She reminds them that she had previously been discharged from her interpreting post at the Malheur reservation, and she had no money to take their plea to Washington. When this same group returns a month later to repeat their request for intervention, she says, “If it was in my power I would be too happy to do so for you, but I am powerless, being a woman” (139). Crucially, both responses suggest Winnemucca’s awareness of the constraints of place: both geographically and socially she was positioned in ways that virtually eliminated her rhetorical options for intervention: she had been kicked off the reservation, so she was unable to intercede personally with the reservation agent; and as a poor Indian woman she had neither the money nor the connections to leverage political influence (this was before her

110 Canfield explains that in 1878, Sarah Winnemucca was working for Mrs. Charles Cooley near Prairie City, OR.
involvement in the Bannock war and subsequent military associations). In other words, in this particular instance, neither her timing (kairos) or placement were suitable for rhetorical action. Without a recognizable place, Winnemucca found herself without rhetorical space as well.
INTERCHAPTER:  
CAPITALIZING ON CALIFORNIA SPACE

As both of the subsequent chapters—chapter four on Helen Hunt Jackson and chapter five on María Amparo Ruiz de Burton—are written about and in the context of Southern California spaces in the mid to late nineteenth century, this interchapter aims to provide an overview of California history with a particular emphasis on land policies. As part of this historical context, I begin with some significant notes on the racial terminology used throughout the history and in the two following chapters.

Some Racial Terminology

Race, as numerous scholars have argued, is a socially constructed category often explained in terms of perceived biological differences (Kaminsky); thus what gets defined as “race” differs across time and across cultures. Not surprisingly, racial categories were often in flux during the volatile history of California, generally defined according to whichever cultural group dominated. As Lisbeth Haas and other historians have pointed out, the initial distinction among people in California following the Spanish conquest was between the Spanish Catholic settlers and the indios (the native inhabitants); the gente de razón (those with civilization and reason) opposed to the gente sin razón (those without). However, following the American conquest of Mexican territory in 1848, racial categories shifted; Anglo-American settlement made racial identity crucial to national identity, with “whiteness” construed as American (a discussion I will return to in chapter five). Moreover, Anglo Americans distinguished

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1 Hierarchies still existed within these two general groups: converted indios, or neophytes, were often ranked above their “heathen” relatives, although their conversion still did not merit their inclusion in the ranks of the racial elite.
themselves not only from the *indios*, but also from the resident Spanish and Mexican settlers. In general, my discussion of California history and my rhetorical analyses of both Jackson and Ruiz de Burton’s work involve three different cultural groups: Native Americans (*indios*), Hispanic settlers (*Californios*), and Anglo-American settlers.²

In discussing the Native American inhabitants of California in chapter four, I occasionally use the term “Mission Indians.” “Mission Indians” is an umbrella term used by the Bureau of Indian affairs (then and now) to designate Native Americans living in Southern California who were part of the Spanish missions.³ Although this term does not necessarily include all the tribal groups in Southern California, as not all tribes were assimilated into the Mission system, I use this term primarily because this is how Jackson herself referred to and understood these individuals.⁴ It should be remembered, however, that this term elides some of the rich inter-tribal diversity of the Native Americans in Southern California and should not necessarily be taken to represent a monolithic culture. Jackson and fellow Indian agent Abbot Kinney’s “Report on the Conditions and Needs of the Indians of California” reports that there were nearly 3000 Mission Indians living in the three southernmost counties of California at the time of the 1880 census.

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² As with any attempt at cultural or racial division, these groups are not rigidly determined or exact; there is often considerable overlap between categories. The important thing, however, is that these were functional categories for those individuals living in and writing about California in the nineteenth century.

³ Carey McWilliams explains that the southernmost tribes spoke a Shoshonean dialect, and consisted of the Serrano (from “Sierras”) in San Bernadino mountains and valley; Gabriulino, occupying part of Los Angeles county, half of Orange county, and two of the Channel islands and associated with Mission San Gabriel; Luiseno, from the Mission San Luis Rey; Juaneo, located between the Gabriulino and Luiseno, from Mission San Juan Capistrano; Cahuilla, between San Bernadino and San Jacineto mountains; Diegueno, from the Mission San Diego. Because the Cahuilla lived the farthest inland, they came less under Mission purview and survived in greater numbers. Additionally, the Diegueno, who resisted Mission influences more than the other Indian tribes, also had higher rates of survival under the Mission system.

⁴ As contemporary terminology, “Mission Indian” is infinitely preferable to the also common but derogatory appellation of “digger Indian” (a term used to describe most of the Indian tribes in Southern Nevada and California, because of the reliance of some tribes on edible roots [McWilliams]). In addition, scholarly convention often prefers this term.
The second racial/cultural group is the Hispanic settlers who began arriving after the establishment of Catholic missions in 1769. Although a few of the settlers were born in Spain and later immigrated to the Mexican colonies (and might therefore legitimately claim “pure” Spanish descent), the majority of the settlers were Mexicano/a and often of a mixed indio-Spanish ancestry. Many of these settlers came in waves; those who initially settled were often recruited from among lower-class Mexicano/as, and, as Douglas Monroy points out, “included much riffraff [i.e., convicts] as well as earnest families” (109). Many of the Mexican settlers intermarried with native populations, in part because there was a scarcity of Mexican women in the settlements and in part because the Spanish government encouraged such intermarriages as a means of colonizing the region (Bost, Hurtado). Gradually, an elite rancho culture began to emerge, beginning with large land grants to select military officers and later to other political favorites (Monroy). In response to pressures of Anglo-American settlers, who tended to conflate all classes of Mexicano/as, the elite settlers and rancho owners began to distinguish themselves from the lower-class Mexican laborers by referring to themselves as Californios and claiming Spanish, rather than mixed, ancestry (McWilliams, Gilbert, McCullough). Most literary critics and historians follow this convention. Literary scholar Kate McCullough offers the following insightful critique of this term:

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5 Douglas Monroy points out that there is considerable ambiguity about the terminology used to refer to these individuals of European descent who conquered the Mission Indian tribes—he prefers the term “Iberian” as more inclusive of the different cultural groups (Castilian, Andalusians, Catalans, Basques, etc.), rejecting the term “Castilian” because only a minority of the priests were from Castile, and rejecting the term “Spaniard” as the nation of Spain was not formed until the late eighteenth century (18).

6 Monroy points out that fewer than twenty grants were given between 1784, when the first military grants were made, until 1821, in part because the government did not want to compromise the prominence of the missions. After secularization, however, the number of grants dramatically increased, particularly in the few years before 1848.
As a term that identifies a people through their relationship to a place (and, implicitly, the land which they owned there), "Californio" resonates with the land issues that were to be so central to the fate of both the Californios and the state of California. At the same time, as a term that was understood as identifying a people implicitly in terms of race/ethnicity (as against the "indios"), the term condenses class and national identity, categories at the heart of the colonial undertaking. (135)

Thus, this terminology reflects both the socio-economic position of the elite Hispanic landowners, as well as their determined rhetorical efforts to distance themselves (linguistically and otherwise) from other classes of Mexicano/as. I use the term "Californio" to refer to upper-class Mexican Americans of both genders; using the term "Californiana" when I am discussing the women exclusively. In context of this dissertation, Mexicano/a refers specifically to Mexican laborers; mestizo/a refers more generally to those of mixed cultural and racial heritage.

The third major cultural group that concerns me here is the Anglo-American settlers that eventually came to economically dominate the region. Albert Hurtado uses "Anglo American" and "American" interchangeably to refer to the settlers from the United States, although he acknowledges that not all "Americans" had Anglo blood. Similarly, I use "Anglo Americans" to refer primarily to the white settlers who moved West from other regions of the United States. Although these settlers represented a

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7 Because "California" refers to the name of the territory and state, I prefer to avoid the more common o/a usage of typical of Chicano/a and Latino/a. In addition, even Chicana feminists (like Mary Pat Brady), often use the term Chicano to refer to a general culture, using Chicano/a to refer to individuals within that culture, and Chicana only in cases that refer specifically to women.
spectrum of social positions, their race gave the Anglo-American men, at least, citizenship status in the region.

**A History of California and Its Landscapes**

Cultural discourses about the West (and California in particular) cannot be divorced from the material shape of those spaces (Lefebvre, others). As Richard Schein argues, cultural landscapes possess “both a material presence and conceptual framing” (662). This means that the cultural discourses circulating around California are produced by external cultural ideologies used to frame and interpret the existing natural spaces; but these discourses are also modified by (and sometimes generated in response to) those spaces themselves. Lisbeth Haas suggests that historical identities are bound up in geographical regions and are “generally structured in relationship to particular readings of geographic areas” (9). Additionally, the relationship between culture and material landscapes is reciprocal: as Douglas Sackman points out in his history of California oranges, different cultures modified the existing landscape of California in various ways. More particularly, Sackman argues that

> Though all places are ultimately natural, the identity of Southern California has been exceptionally entangled with nature. The ecology of the region created abundant possibilities: an inviting climate, varied microclimatic zones, and a rich range of soils in which all manner of plants could be grown. But the ecology did not determine the creation of the garden. In order for the Anglo-American garden to grow, that ecology had to be rearranged—water controlled and channeled, native flora and fauna uprooted, older claims on the land dissolved, new property lines demarcated, and so on. (24)
Because of this interconnectedness of culture, material space, and identity, it is impossible to discuss in any meaningful fashion the impact of material spaces on Jackson and Ruiz de Burton, as well as their engagement with cultural discourses about California space, without providing a history of those spaces.

In both *Ramona* and *The Squatter and the Don*, Jackson and Ruiz de Burton, respectively, object to the misuse of power by the American government and Anglo-American settlers—but to a large extent this play of power was already dictated by the shape of the southern California landscape and by the cultural and legal framework through which this landscape was viewed. As Sackman suggests, the history of California can be read as a succession of landscapes and land occupation. The scarcity of resources in the drier climate meant more intense competition for arable lands (many of which were already occupied by Native American villages). This competition was rendered even more intense by a unique confluence of cultural attitudes toward land prevailing in southern California: Anglo-American, Spanish American, and Native American. These attitudes are further complicated by the history of land occupation in the region, which illustrates the play of power relations that structure the events of Jackson’s *Ramona* and Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don*.

Because the physical terrain of California provided limited resources, many of the Mission Indian tribes had early begun a system of fairly intensive land-cultivation (unlike many other Native American tribes) (Shipek). Thus, their attitude toward the land was more easily assimilated into the European style cultivation favored by the Spanish, who arrived as settlers around 1769. The case of the Mission Indians in Southern California—particularly those tribes whom Jackson surveyed during her stint as an agent for the
Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1883—was also affected by the local geography: the local missions had insufficient natural resources to support a large Indian population, which meant that most of the Indians were only loosely drawn into mission affairs; after a brief introduction to Catholic catechism, many of them returned to their own homes and practices. Thus, they were less assimilated than many of the other Indian tribes in the California mission system (Shipek). However, as Haas points out, even this less intrusive mission system still undermined the pre-existing ordering of space (and with it, the social relations among the Indian tribes), as the Mission Indians had previously owned land in swathes extending from the mountains to the oceans. Moreover, the Spanish mission system proved deadly to many Native Americans: McWilliams points out that during the mission period in California (1769-1834), missionaries baptized 53,600 adults and buried 37,000 (29). As death rates were higher among Native Americans living in the mission, McWilliams attributes these rates to Mission life, rather than Spanish contact.

Beginning in 1834, following the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1825, the Mexican government set about returning some of this land to the Mission Indians through the secularization of the Spanish missions, which converted mission lands into pueblos for all Californians (Christianized and non-Christianized Indians, Californios, and colonists). However, in their report to the federal government, Jackson and Kinney report that, although an 1833 act promised title to the land for all Indians who were

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8 The Mexican government had begun talking about the fate of the missions in the 1820s, but, in part because of shifts in government, actual secularization was not accomplished until a decade later. Significantly, this move drew upon a Lockeian liberal belief in the power of property ownership to facilitate citizenship: in contemplating the fate of the Mission system, Mexican Secretary of State Lucas Alamán in 1823 reported to the Mexican congress that “If the mission system is that best suited to draw savages from barbarism, it can do no more than establish the first principles of society and cannot lead men to its highest perfection. Nothing is better to accomplish this than to bind individuals to society by the powerful bond of property. The government believes, therefore, that the distribution of land to the converted Indians, lending them from the mission fund the means for cultivation, . . . would give a great impulse to that important province” (qtd. in Monroy 121).
“sufficiently civilized,” the actual provisions of the act were imperfectly carried out, in part because the Mexican government was too weak to enforce such provisions and many of the Missions were looted (McWilliams).

Under both Spanish and Mexican governments, large land grants were often given to individuals as marks of favor. As Hurtado points out, secularization had the effect of creating a “private latifundio system and an elite that was land- and cattle-rich but money-poor” (24). In cases where Spanish land grants incorporated pre-existing Indian settlements, the Spanish grantee was required by law to respect those land-rights, and could not evict the Indians from their lands (Haas). Thus, the Mission Indians had somewhat stable, albeit imperfect, settlements under Mexican government, a situation that was destined to change under United States rule.9

Land policies in California became a prime point of contention following the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which marked the end of the Mexican-American war and ceded Alta (upper) California to the United States. Not only were thousands of settlers drawn to California during the 1850s—more than 300,000 people came to California between 1848 and 1860 (Pincetl 3)—but land policies in California were subject to at least two different sets of attitudes regarding possession of the land: Spanish American and Anglo-Saxon. According to the terms of the treaty, the U.S. government was legally obligated to honor the land grants of the Spanish government; however, the new regime also brought with it Anglo-American cultural frameworks and legal systems

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9 McWilliams points out that in terms of survival rates, the hacienda culture imported from Mexico (peonage) was only marginally better than the Mission system; there were 900 dead per year during the mission system and 700 per year during the hacienda period (41). American conquest produced even more severe effects: three times the number of Native Americans died. At the time of Anglo-American conquest, there were 72,000 Native Americans living in the region; by 1865, there were 23,000, and by 1880 there were only 15,000 Native Americans.
that it attempted to impose on existing California spaces, and which were often in conflict with the Spanish land-grant system, not to mention Indian occupation of the lands.

Nineteenth-century Anglo-American attitudes toward land were influenced, among other things, by a Jeffersonian agrarian ideal which linked the possession of land by individuals with the development of a democracy (Pincetl)—thus, many land policies during the nineteenth-century, such as preemption (defined below), were based on the idea that land ought to be accessible to all citizens of a democracy (although citizen was often defined rather narrowly as white men of a particular class). However, because California was not, until 1848, part of U.S. territory, many of the existing land policies were not compatible with this democratic, agrarian ideal. As Stephanie Pincetl notes, the land situation in California in the 1850s was complicated because

Its unusual concentration of land ownership belied Jeffersonian agrarianism and set up a dynamic tension between the ideology of democracy, based on a large number of independent farmers, and the reality of huge latifundos that rapidly passed into the hands of sophisticated corporate-type farmers and land syndicates.

Many of the resulting conflicts over land during the next half century or more were a result (indirect or otherwise) of these conflicting attitudes toward land.10

The U.S. government had long established a fairly rigid policy toward land settlement, surveying and clearly marking boundaries to different properties. In addition, U.S. preemption policies allowed individuals to purchase unclaimed land to which they

10 Paul Gates suggests that these conflicts over land were exacerbated by the U.S. government’s failure to establish a settled government policy for California land until three years after the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. Although this delay would not have mattered in unsettled territories, in California, the legislative delay and corresponding delay in surveying existing land meant that many incoming settlers could not identify public land and instead squatted on the Mexican ranchos.
had made suitable improvements; in cases where seemingly available land proved to have prior claimants, individuals were entitled to recover some of the value of their improvements from the owner of the land. In contrast, Mexican land grants were rather loosely established—land boundaries were often unmarked and the government made little attempt to make sure that the boundaries of land grants did not overlap. Many of these land grants were also much larger than corresponding grants in the United States, a fact that many incoming Anglo-European settlers resented, as they expected that the government would follow the more democratic practice it had established in Missouri and Louisiana, where large claims were whittled down by the government (Gates). However, the terms of the 1848 treaty with Mexico made this impossible. In addition, these large land grants made it difficult for incoming settlers to identify available land (as per preemption), as land owners might only cultivate a small portion of their grant. Nor were preemption policies universally carried through in California—many settlers who assumed that they were safe in claiming land in California, either from ignorance of a prior claim or a belief that the prior claim was fraudulent (or that such a large claim would not be upheld by the government), ultimately found themselves forced to abandon their claims without any reimbursement for improvements (Gates). This is not to say, however, that there were not settlers who abused the system by squatting on land that they knew to be under contestation (a process illustrated in Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don*).

Although the United States government attempted to honor Spanish land grant titles, efforts to prove land ownership did not begin until the California Land Act of 1851 and often involved a lengthy court process, during which time squatters continued to
preempt land already owned by others. Moreover, the promise to honor Spanish grants insufficiently accounted for land owned by the Mission Indians. The 1851 land act required the land commission to investigate the extent of Indian land possession, but did not require Indians to demonstrate their claims—and as the commission often failed to investigate claims and failed to set up safeguards for the protection of Native American lands, these lands were increasingly lost after 1865 (Shipek). In any case, Indians often had no proof (at least, no proof that would be acceptable to U.S. courts) of land ownership: many Native American tribes in California lived on land granted them through verbal agreements with the Mexican land grantees; others lived on Spanish land grants where the owner was required by the terms of the grant to respect their right of occupancy. When Anglo-American law set out to prove Spanish titles to the land, many Indian rights to land were revoked, as the Anglo-American law did not involve the same protection of pre-existing settlements (Haas). Thus, after the Anglo-American conquest in 1848, many native tribes were, as depicted in Ramona, driven from their land by Spanish landowners who recognized that the local government no longer protected their right of occupancy, and by those who purchased Spanish land grants. Some squatters, aware that the government, under preemption rules, would reimburse squatters for improvements made to land where another’s title was eventually upheld, even made claim to Indian settlements and then claimed those “improvements” as their own.\footnote{However, as Gates points out, some well-intentioned (i.e., inadvertent) squatters found themselves without land rights or reimbursement; although Native Americans were the primary victims of land policies, they were not the only ones.} In addition, in 1853, the legislature passed a law opening up all unverified land to settlement, virtually inviting squatters into Indian villages and Mexican ranchos (Haas).
The changing legal system also facilitated the decline of the rancho system, not only because so many land titles were contested in courts.\textsuperscript{12} American law allowed for ranchos to be broken up and sold, a practice that had been restricted under Spanish law (Haas), and which happened more and more frequently as incoming Anglo-America settlers changed the economic balance in the region,\textsuperscript{13} and droughts in the 1860s and 1870s forced many landowners to sell their lands. Gates suggests that the exigencies of war were also responsible for the breaking up of many of the large ranchos, along with improvident living and litigation (much of it inter-family). Thus, in the ten year period between 1860 and 1870, Californio landholders went from owning 62 percent of the total land to only 11 percent; at the same time European landholders increased from 25 percent to 51 percent, and Anglo-American holdings from 6 percent to 36 percent (Haas).

These connections between attitudes toward land, land-use policies, and historical events have clear implications for both Jackson and Ruiz de Burton’s novels: the events of the novels (particularly those with factual basis) resulted from the particular confluence of cultural frameworks and spatial practices peculiar to Southern California. It was against this backdrop that historical events unfolded, and these same events provided both Jackson and Ruiz de Burton with the exigences for their novels. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, both women used the physical landscape of southern California to stage their novels in deliberate ways.

\textsuperscript{12} Legal contestation of land was not solely aimed at Mexican Americans; Gates notes that around 42 percent of total claims before the courts were headed by non-Mexican heads of households (acquired prior to 1851 either by intermarriage or purchase). For instance, John Sutter, of Sutter’s mill fame, lost land because of the Land Act.

\textsuperscript{13} Pincetl notes that many of the Californio families were ill-equipped to deal with the capitalist imperatives of the new culture.
“DREAMING OF THIS FAIR LAND”:
THE RHETORICS OF PLACE IN HELEN HUNT JACKSON’S RAMONA

“You know I have for three or four years longed to write a story that should ‘tell’ on the Indian question. But I knew I could not do it; knew I had no background,—no local color for it. . . . Last spring, in Southern California, I began to feel that I had; that the scene laid there—and the old Mexican life mixed in with just enough Indian to enable me to tell what had happened to them—would be the very perfection of coloring.”—Helen Hunt Jackson, letter to a close friend, 5 February 1884 (Mathes, Letters, 313)

When Helen Hunt Jackson published Ramona in 1884, she hoped it would do what her reform tract, A Century of Dishonor, had failed to do: inform the American public about governmental and societal injustice toward Native Americans and rouse their sympathy. She wrote to a friend that, “If I could write a story that would do for the Indian a thousandth part of what Uncle Tom’s Cabin did for the Negro, I would be thankful the rest of my life” (Mathes, Letters 258).

However, public reaction to the novel was not quite what Jackson anticipated. Although the novel was moderately popular, she was dismayed by the initial response of reviewers, who saw only the idealization of Spanish American culture or the tragic love story between the Indian-Scottish mestiza Ramona and the Indian Alessandro.¹ The most striking response to the novel, however, was one that Jackson, who died in 1885, was not around to witness: a profound interest in the material spaces of the novel. Turn-of-the-century writers like George Wharton James, Charles Fletcher Lummis, and Edwin Clough attempted to authenticate Jackson’s novel by mapping it—quite literally—onto the people and places of southern California, and tourists followed these guides in droves. In 1916, a chronicler of the Ramona phenomenon wrote that a conservative estimate of

¹ She wrote to her friend Charles Dudley Warner, editor of the Hartford Daily Courant, “I am sick of hearing that the flight of Alessandro & Ramona is an ‘exquisite ideal,’ & not even an allusion to the ejectment of the Temecula band from their homes” (Mathes, Letters, 339).
the novel’s worth to southern California was $50,000,000 (Moylan 241). This contemporary response is perhaps best illustrated by James in his 1910 guidebook, *Through Ramona’s Country.* What begins as an exploration of land through the novel ends as a glorification not of *Ramona*’s Indian reform politics, but of the landscape that roots the novel; James rhapsodizes that Jackson “felt the power of this land of sunshine, birds, bees, buds and blossoms. . . . These were the things, and many more, that she wove into the fabric of her story, *Ramona*, and that have led thousands of far away strangers to sit with closed eyes dreaming of this fair land of Southern California” (363).

These reactions to the novel point to one of the key problems scholars have grappled with in reading *Ramona*. How did a novel written specifically to galvanize the public on the “Indian Question” rouse responses so far removed from the author’s intended purpose? What was it about the novel (and the rhetorical strategies Jackson used in writing the novel) that allowed for these misreadings? Despite the rhetorical nature of these questions, they have been addressed primarily by literary scholars and historians, rather than rhetoricians. These scholars suggest that her novel may have failed in its purpose for a variety of reasons: Jackson’s romanticization of the Spanish past, which overshadows her reform agenda and nostalgically places Indian (and Mexican American) culture outside of contemporary concerns (McWilliams, Padget, Wagner, DeLyser); her

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2 According to Carey McWilliams, of the assorted volumes of “Ramonana,” James’s is the “official, classic document” (74). Other guidebooks include D.A. Huford’s *The Real Ramona* (1900), Margaret V. Allen’s *Ramona’s Homeland* (1914), C.C. Davis and W. A. Anderson’s *The True Story of Ramona* (1914).

3 Even José Martí, the prominent nineteenth-century defender of Latino culture in America, responded to the landscape of Jackson’s novel, writing in the introduction to his 1887 translation of *Ramona* that “[Helen Hunt Jackson] paints in an American light landscapes, dramas and personalities” (qtd. in Pita “Engendering Critique” 139, emphasis added).

4 Some literary scholars, however, like Martin Padget, have taken an overtly rhetorical approach to their analysis of the novel. This lack of attention by rhetorical critics may be part of a more wide-spread tendency on the part of rhetorical scholars to overlook the rhetorics of nineteenth-century Indian reformers, despite fairly widespread involvement by white women and an abundance of texts (Powell, “Princess Sarah”).
idealistic portrayal of her Indian characters, which many readers found hard to accept (Mathes, Moylan); an ethnocentric paternalism common in Indian reformers of the day (Padget); and a kind of biological determinism apparent in the novel that leads to the death or removal of all non-Anglo characters from the U.S. and suggests ultimately the inability of Indians (and other mixed-bloods) to assimilate to U.S. culture (Alemán, González). However, most of these arguments overlook the importance of space to the novel. I argue that a significant key to understanding the mixed success of Jackson’s rhetorical strategies lies in Jackson’s decision to set the scene of her novel in southern California, the “very perfection of coloring” that called forth readers’ deep interest in the material spaces of the novel. Jackson’s comments about her novel’s scene, along with early reader reactions to the spatial dimension of the novel, suggest the pivotal role that space plays in shaping her rhetorical strategies, both in terms of how Jackson develops those strategies and how audiences respond to them. Moreover, even the racial and gender issues that preoccupy other scholars ultimately turn on constructions of space; as Mary Pat Brady insightfully demonstrates, novelistic depictions of space construct race and gender discursively and spatially.

In this chapter, I explore the rhetorical functions of space in Jackson’s novel: the ways that Jackson uses particular landscapes to anchor and extend her appeal for Indian reform, and how these landscapes and the cultural discourses surrounding them in turn affect her message. I explain Jackson’s use of domestic, natural, and national spaces as a

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5 The few scholars who address space tend to underestimate its importance. For instance, literary scholar Anne Goldman claims that “The exoticized picture of ‘sunny shores’ Jackson paints in Ramona [presents] a geographically indistinct coastline which could as easily be Hawaiian or Cuban as Californian” (71). The dramatic attention readers paid to the specific places in the novel, however, belies this assertion. Other critics, such as Dydia DeLyser, Kevin Starr, Martin Padget, Michelle Moylan, and Siobhan Senier, examine the impact of Jackson’s novel on Anglo-American perceptions of California space, but fail to acknowledge the way that Jackson herself was influenced by both material and conceptual considerations of space in her construction of the novel.
persuasive strategy tailored to her authorial audience (the idealized audience for whom the text is designed), and then analyze how the very spatial strategies she uses enable her narrative audience (the audience invoked by the text itself) to take away an entirely different message that undercuts Jackson’s reform agenda. In the course of this analysis, I hope to demonstrate two different but related aspects of a rhetoric of space: first, how space can be invoked as a persuasive strategy, and second, how spaces and their attendant discourses function to determine the rhetorical effects of a particular spatial terminology.

Helen Hunt Jackson and Indian Reform

“You have never fully realized how for the last four years my whole heart has been full of the Indian cause—how I have felt, as the Quakers say, ‘a concern’ to work for it. My ‘Century of Dishonor’ and ‘Ramona’ are the only things I have done of which I am glad now. . . . They will live, and they will bear fruit. . . . Every word of the Indian history in ‘Ramona’ is literally true, and it is being reenacted here very day.”—Helen Hunt Jackson, in a letter written shortly before her death in 1885 (Mathes, *The Indian Reform Letters*, 351)

Before examining space in the novel, I provide some background on Jackson’s involvement with the Indian Reform movement that includes a more detailed overview of her rhetorical situation and the exigence that prompted her to write *Ramona*. In the decades following the Civil War, the “Indian problem” became increasingly critical. Early solutions to the problem—isolating Indians on reservations beyond civilization’s reach, or believing vaguely in the eventual disappearance of Indian tribes—were proving unviable as “civilized” society expanded across the continent and the Indians “stubbornly refused to vanish” (Dippie 141). Indian reformers agreed that Indians needed “better, fairer, and more effective treatment” (Dippie 142), but they faced the dual problem of disagreement about policy and public apathy. Historian Brian Dippie suggests that “Only loud, organized protest would alert Congress to the need for a comprehensive policy
reform, and only concerted, unrelenting pressure would make Congress act” (156). Helen Hunt Jackson, he suggests, proved to be “the perfect agitator,” a woman determined to use all available means to stir up public interest.


Jackson became an ardent supporter of Indian affairs as a middle-aged woman, only six years before her death. In the fall of 1879, on a visit to the East coast, she attended a lecture by Chief Standing Bear about the forced relocation of the Dakota territory-based Ponca Indians to Indian territory (Mathes). Roused by what she heard, she
began writing letters to the editors of prominent East coast newspapers about this and other unjust governmental dealings with the Indians.⁶

Although Jackson’s letters were moderately successful in drawing attention to the Indian cause and raising money for the Poncas,⁷ she was not satisfied with their limited effect. She hoped that a short “sketch” of failed government treaties with various Indian tribes, might reach a wider audience than her published letters.⁸ In clear (if somewhat sensationalized) prose,⁹ Jackson explained the failings of the government to honor their historic treaties with Indian tribes and suggested that, if the citizens of the nation did not do something to rectify the situation, they risked both international and divine judgment.

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⁶ As historian Valerie Mathes notes, because Jackson had no official position at the time with which to influence public policy, she was forced to try to persuade her more powerful associates, like Whitelaw Reid, editor of the New York Daily Tribune, and William Hayes Ward, editor of the Independent, to support her cause. In letters to Ward, Reid, and other editors, along with numerous published letters to the editor, Jackson relied primarily on factual reporting from official documents and logical rebuttals to convince her audience of the injustice done to the American Indians. Like later female journalists, such as Ida B. Wells, Jackson was not afraid of stating what she perceived as the unvarnished truth, and she never seemed to let considerations of her femininity get in the way of her message. In a letter to the editor of the Tribune about the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado, Jackson responds to a prior editorial assertion that “The two more serious hindrances to a satisfactory solution of the Indian question are Indians and white men” with a tart rejoinder that “[a]ny problem is embarrassing when one of its factors is addicted to scalping men, torturing women, and braining children” (Mathes, Letters, 90), referring to reported actions of whites.

⁷ Her letters also helped Jackson forge relationships with like-minded reformers. By the end of 1880, in response to public agitation by Jackson and others, President Hayes had appointed a commission to investigate the Ponca affair, and the Poncas were subsequently allowed to live on the reservation of their choice and Congress approved $165,000 as indemnity for their losses (Mathes, Introduction to A Century of Dishonor).

⁸ As Jackson described to Caroline Dall, a woman’s rights advocate and potential reviewer of A Century of Dishonor, she hoped to show that the government historically recognized the Indians’ “right of occupancy” as a thing to be bought and sold; that early massacres of whites by Indians were almost always instigated by English, French, or American military officials or caused by violations of treaty agreements; and that a large number of Indians were “self-supporting in their reservations” (Mathes, Letters, 176). Finally, she also hoped to include testimony and evidence of character and intelligence in the Indians. In Century, Jackson appealed directly to the American public, explaining that “What the people demand, Congress will do” (30).

⁹ In a December 1879 letter to her husband, William Sharpless Jackson, Jackson insisted that her presentation would be clear and straightforward, relying primarily on official and reliable sources: “[I] shall not write one word as a sentimentalist! Statistical Records—verbatim reports officially authenticated, are what I wish to get before the American people:--& are all which are needed, to rouse public sentiment” (qtd. in Mathes, Letters, 66). She opted to tell the history of several tribes individually, believing that this organization would “be much more intelligible & interesting & effective to rouse people’s attention. It is like getting interested in the personal history, for instance, of the Ward family—or the Jackson!” (letter to William Hayes Ward, Mathes, Letters, 120).
Jackson finished writing *A Century of Dishonor* in the spring of 1880, and it was published the following January. Upon completion, she sent a copy at personal expense to every member of Congress (Banning). Although *A Century of Dishonor* received primarily good reviews (with the exception of the Tribune, which found it too partisan in its attacks on the government), it did not succeed in rousing the public interest Jackson had hoped. She herself acknowledged that it “failed to realize my hopes. I fear few read it, except those that did not need to!” (Letter to unknown reviewer, 13 January 1885, Mathes, *Letters*, 340).

Jackson continued to actively seek ways to stir Indian reform. While writing a series of articles on the California missions for *Century Illustrated* magazine in 1881, she became aware of the need of the poverty-stricken Mission Indians for greater governmental support and protection. Jackson was openly distressed by the threat of Anglo-American settlers to Indian settlements, writing to Charles Dudley Warner that

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10 Some also criticized it on the grounds that it offered no practical solutions like allotment in severalty or general citizenship (Dippie), although Jackson’s purpose was more to raise interest in the problem than to solve it—solving the problem, she felt, was the government’s responsibility.

11 Her husband suggested that the main drawbacks to the work were stylistic; its style was not likely to “clutch the average reader.” He believed that only those already interested in the “Indian Question” would find it rewarding, as it was a “very attractive & carefully prepared work on a question that so little has heretofore been written about in a . . . condensed shape” (qtd. in Mathes, *Letters*, 17). However, as Mathes points out, some of the positive results of *Century* were intangible—Jackson’s research bolstered those humanitarian workers already invested in the cause, and Jackson gained the knowledge and credentials she would later need as an agent for the Bureau of Indian affairs. Jackson also drew some consolation from the fact that, “somehow it stirred things—for you see books, pamphlets, & mag[azine] articles are steadily pouring out on the subject” (qtd. in Mathes, *Letters*, 17).

12 As Jackson and Kinney explain in the introduction to their “Report on the Condition and Needs of the Mission Indians of California,” although the term “Mission Indians” had been used to loosely refer to the descendents of those tribes in the Catholic system, the Indian Bureau used it to refer specifically to Indians living in the three southernmost California counties. They are known more individually as Serranos, Cahuillas, San Luisenos, and Dieguinos (the latter from San Luis Rey and San Diego).

13 By the time Jackson first encountered the Mission Indians, their situation was indeed dire. Carey McWilliams writes that at the time of the American conquest in 1848 there were about 72,000 Indians living in California. By 1865, this number was down to 23,000. By 1880, shortly before Jackson’s tour, only 15,000 Indians remained in California. Of these remaining Indians, as Jackson’s letters and later official report indicate, many were living in poverty, and the livelihood and lands of many more were threatened by encroaching settlers, who did not “regard the presence, on [so-called government lands], of Indian families or communities as any more of a barrier than the presence of so many coyotes or foxes” (Jackson, “Present Condition”).
“There is not in all the Century of Dishonor, so black a chapter, as the history of these Mission Indians—peaceable farmers for a hundred years driven off their lands like foxes & wolves—driven out of good adobe houses & the white men who had driven them out, settling down calm & comfortable in the houses!” (Mathes, Reform Letters, 240). After returning to her Colorado home in 1882, Jackson sought for an appointment as an agent in California with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In July of that year, she was appointed as a Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Southern California, to report on the conditions of the Mission Indians and to see if non-reservation land could be made available for them. Her tour of mission lands and subsequent report, compiled with Abbot Kinney, was undertaken in 1883. Although Jackson was able to parlay her official status into limited gains for the Mission Indians, such as setting aside the homestead claims threatening the Indians in San Ysidro, she felt her efforts were largely unsuccessful. She wrote to Henry Laurens Dawes, U.S. Senator and later author of the Dawes Act, “It has been the greatest disappointment of my life that all my work in

14 According to the provisions of the 1851 Land Act, federal land commissioners were required to determine the extent of Indian lands, but the commissioners generally failed to do so (Shipek). Additionally, although local California authorities initially attempted to protect Indian lands, by 1865, increasing pressure from settlers was threatening Indian landholdings. Historian Florence Shipek writes that, “Inasmuch as Indian-occupied lands were technically public lands open to preemption and homestead settlement, settlers began taking the best, well-watered Indian farmland and dispossessing the Indians, even taking their adobe homes” (34).

15 A bill for the relief of the Mission Indians, based on their report, was eventually passed by the California state legislature in 1891.

16 The Dawes Act of 1887 was hailed as “one of the most important pieces of legislation dealing with Indian affairs in United States history” (Prucha, Introduction to D. S. Otis’s The Dawes Act, ix). The major provisions included a grant of 160 acres to the head of each family (the patent in fee for these lands was to be held by the government for twenty-five years, during which time the land could not be sold) and the conferment of citizenship “upon allottees and upon any other Indians who had abandoned their tribes and adopted ‘the habits of civilized life’” (Otis 6-7). The Act also allowed for the sale of surplus reservation land to white settlers. Proponents of the act believed that allotment was the quickest, most effective way to civilize the Indian tribes. However, Otis’s history of the Dawes Act (written at the request of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and included as part of Senate hearings on Indian affairs) concluded that the Act was generally a failure, in part because insufficient provisions (both in terms of financial and educational assistance) were made to help Indians transition from communal land ownership to individual farms.
investigating [the Mission Indians’] state, and making that Report, has accomplished nothing” (Mathes, *Letters*, 323).

For some time now, Jackson had contemplated writing a fictional story about Indian affairs, but hesitated because she felt she lacked the experience and background for such a story. As she wrote in a letter to a friend,

> You know I have for three or four years longed to write a story that should ‘tell’ on the Indian question. But I knew I could not do it; knew I had no background,—no local color for it. . . . Last spring, in Southern California, I began to feel that I had; that the scene laid there—and the old Mexican life mixed in with just enough Indian to enable me to tell what had happened to them—would be the very perfection of coloring. (Mathes, *Letters*, 313)

The places and people Jackson encountered during her tour of Southern California as a federal Indian Agent in 1883 seem to have not only concretized her desire to write a novel about the Indian experience, but provided the inspiration and setting she needed for her work.¹⁷ Even on her first visit to California, as a tourist in the 1870s, it was clear that she saw possibilities in the landscape, writing to a friend: “Whoever will come & life a year on this coast, can make a book of romance which will live: it is a tropic of color and song” (qtd Phillips 252). Just as she had initially found a moving cause in the story of the mistreatment of the Ponca tribe, so now her real experience among the Mission Indians provided her with a powerful exigence.¹⁸ Moreover, many of the events that figured in

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¹⁷ In a letter to Antonio and Mariana Coronel, wealthy Californio friends of Jackson’s whose home may have served as a model for the Moreno ranch in her novel, Jackson described her intentions to write a novel incorporating the expulsion of the Temecula Indians from their homes, and asks them for any “romantic incidents, either Mexican or Indian, which you think would work well into a story of Southern California life” (Mathes, *Letters*, 298-9).

¹⁸ DeLyser suggests that “[Jackson’s] field research in numerous small villages compelled her even more powerfully than her previous archival research had” (9).
her novel—the dwindling Moreno estate, the dispute over Indian lands, the expulsion of
the Indians from Temecula—have their roots in the unique land situation that prevailed in
California during the nineteenth-century, described in the interchapter on California.
Thus, the events of the novel result from the particular confluence of cultural frameworks
and spatial practices peculiar to Southern California. Jackson used both the natural and
manufactured landscapes of Southern California to stage her novel in deliberate ways.

In choosing to write a novel, Jackson drew on her considerable experience as a
fiction writer\(^{19}\) to try and stimulate a real change in public sentiment about the Indian
Question. Jackson believed that a fictional story would have a better reception than her
earlier reform writings, which tended to win hearings only among those already
interested in Indian reform. As she wrote to several friends, she hoped that a fictional
story, particularly one that included interesting local color elements of Mexican life,
would “draw a picture so winning and alluring in the beginning of the story, that the
reader would become thoroughly interested in the characters before he dreamed of what
was before him:--and would have swallowed a big dose of information on the Indian
question, without knowing it” (1 December 1884 letter to Thomas Bailey Aldrich,
Mathes, *Letters*, 337). Moreover, Jackson hoped to emulate the wild success of Harriet
Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which was published (first in serial in the *National
Era* and then in two volumes) in 1851-2, became the first American novel to sell over a
million copies, and helped galvanize public interest in the slavery controversy
(Tompkins). As Jackson explained to Amelia Quinton, co-founder (with Mary Bonney)
of the Women’s National Indian Association, “I do not dare to think I have written a

\(^{19}\) In the literary world, she was best known as H.H. and Saxe Holm, the author of numerous stories and
novels and friend of literary figures like Emily Dickinson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow.
second Uncle Tom’s Cabin—but I do think I have written a story which will be a good stroke for the Indian cause” (319). Not only did Jackson hope to achieve a similar success in affecting public sentiment, but she hoped to reach the same audience.20 Just as Stowe’s novel struck a powerful chord with evangelical reformers, Jackson also hoped to “hit the religious element” through serial publication in the Christian Union (2 April 1884 letter to Amelia Quinton, Mathes, Letters, 319).21

Following her stint as an Indian agent, Jackson returned to New York where she began writing feverishly, telling friends that she was “haunted” by the plot (Phillips 253). The resulting novel, Ramona,22 tells the story of the title character, a young Indian-Scottish mestiza grudgingly raised by Señora Moreno, a well-to-do Californio landholder, until she defies the Señora by eloping with the Temecula Indian Alessandro. The remainder of the novel details the couple’s futile attempts to build a home as Alessandro’s people are driven to increasingly remote locations by new waves of Anglo-American settlers. When Alessandro is unjustly murdered, Ramona returns to the Moreno ranch, where she and the Señora’s son, Felipe, leave California for Mexico.

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20 She had long wondered why those who had been so passionate about abolition could not be interested in improving the condition of the Indians, writing in July 1880 to her friend Moncure Daniel Conway that “The thing I can’t understand is that all you who so loved the Negro, & worked for him, should not have been ever since, just as hard at work for the Indian, who is on the whole much more cruelly oppressed with the name of a certain sort of freedom, but prisoner in fact—left to starve, and forced into poisonous climates to die—he is far worse off than the average slave ever was—and is a higher nobler creature” (Mathes, Letters, 135).

21 Although she could not command as high a price in the Christian Union as she could in her more usual publication venues, like Century Illustrated or the Atlantic, she believed that the kind of closely timed serial publication the Union offered was a better choice because “100,000 readers of this sort will do more for the cause, than four times that number of idle magazine readers” (Mathes, Letters, 319).

22 Jackson wanted to call the novel, “In the Name of the Law,” but was advised by several sources not to do so. She wrote to Thomas Bailey Aldrich that, “I grudge giving up the other title: but I am advised strongly that it will be a mistake;—will ‘show my hand,’ so to speak” (Mathes, Letters, 318). The title she chose instead places the novel more solidly in a tradition of romances named for the heroine.

Although not a runaway success like Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or other popular sentimental novels of the nineteenth century, Jackson’s novel was fairly popular, going through 74,000 copies before 1900 and continuing to sell 10,000 copies a year until 1935 (Moylan 225). However, the success generated by the novel was not the success Jackson was looking for—although some reviewers responded sympathetically to the plight of the Indians, the majority of the reviewers saw only the love story or the

23 The popularity of the novel is also suggested by various spin-offs: films, plays, and even a yearly pageant (Moylan).
24 Not all readers overlooked the Indian reform issue. As Padget points out, it did influence people like Constance Goddard DuBois, who, along with the Women’s National Indian Association, tried to carry on Jackson’s work by opening the “Ramona Mission” among the Cahuilla Indians. Yet even those that responded to the Indian issues in the novel did not necessarily act as Jackson would have hoped. As Senier
idealization of Spanish-American culture (Phillips; Mathes, *Helen Hunt Jackson*). The novel itself drew large numbers of tourists from the East, who were interested in exploring “Ramona’s country” for themselves (see Fig. 8, above).

To return to the question driving this analysis: Why did Jackson’s novel fail in its explicit aims? Part of this failure stems from her socio-historical context, which differed from the context in which Stowe’s novel had succeeded. Although Jackson aimed her novel at the reform minded audience that had responded so powerfully to Stowe’s sentimental salvo three decades earlier, her novel was received by an audience whose cultural conditioning had changed; sentimental novels were beginning to give way to realism in fiction. Moreover, the cultural context in which readers read and responded to her novel was different; thus, readers could—and did—respond to her novel differently than earlier readers had responded to Stowe. For one thing, during the Reconstruction era following the Civil War, the nation was more interested in preserving a fragile unity than joining in another agitation on the basis of race. For another, the increasing postbellum westward expansion led to an increase in promotional discourses encouraging both settlement and travel to western regions like California, so many readers read her novel, particularly its elaborate descriptions of place, in terms of this literature.

But the context alone does not account for the novel’s reception. To refine the question raised: What was it about Jackson’s rhetorical strategies that allowed her audience to so misread her aims? Although scholars have suggested a number of reasons, varying from her generic choices to her depiction of Native Americans, I argue that

notes, Jackson did not support the allocation of surplus reservation land to white settlers, as the 1887 Dawes Act stipulated. Nor were Indian-white relations subsequently measurably improved: Douglas Monroy describes a photo archived in the Huntington library, depicting the Pechanga (Temecula) Indian school about 1890. The caption on the photo explains that the teacher “was killed by the Indians and the school burned” (265).
Jackson’s reliance on spatial discourses about domestic, natural, and national spaces to generate public sympathy for her characters constitutes a primary obstacle to her instrumental success. As Bart Keunen argues, spaces (and the temporal narratives associated with spaces), are crucial to audiences’ reception and interpretation of particular narratives: a narrative’s “spatial indications (an idyllic setting, a commercial-industrial environment, a desolate landscape, the simultaneous chaos of a city) and its specific vision of temporal processes . . . set the boundaries within which fictional events can take place” (qtd. in Jack 54). Thus, the landscapes Jackson invokes in her novel cue her audience about how to understand the characters’ roles and how they should feel about these characters. In what follows, I argue first that while domestic spaces enhance her reform message by critiquing U.S. imperialist policies, discourses of domesticity also create an uncertain place for non-white individuals; second, that Jackson’s use of natural spaces draws on a myth of wilderness that both underscores the narrative tragedy and undercuts her reformist impulse; and third, that both domestic and natural spaces help transform California into a national space by creating a usable past for Anglo-American settlers.

Domestic Space as a Rhetorical Appeal

“I have shown a few glimpses of the homes, the industry, the patience, the long suffering of the people who are in this immediate danger of being driven out from their last footholds of refuge, ‘homeless wanderers in a desert.’ . . . If the United States Government does not take steps to avert this danger, to give them lands and protect them in their rights, the chapter of the history of the Mission Indians will be the blackest one in the black record of our dealings with the Indian race.”—Helen Hunt Jackson, “The Present Condition of the Mission Indians of Southern California,” p. 529
“Like words, places are articulated by a thousand usages. They are thus transformed into ‘variations’—not verbal or musical, but spatial—of a question that is the mute motif of the interweavings of places and gestures: where to live? These dances of bodies haunted by the desire to live somewhere tell the interminable stories of the Utopia we construct in the sites through which we pass. They form a rhetoric of space.” –Michel de Certeau, “Practices of Space,” p.131

In response to the threatened ejection of Mission Indians from their homes (in some cases actual fact), Jackson drew on the quintessentially domestic space of the home to rouse an emotional response from her audience. Like most sentimental novels of the era, Ramona revolves around domestic spaces, which position women at the center of the novel and its action. Michel de Certeau suggests that space is ultimately articulated by the movement of the bodies that inhabit it; thus, it is the actions and movements of the women who dominate these domestic spaces that define the spaces of the novel. Because Jackson hoped to appeal to the same reform-minded audiences that had responded overwhelmingly to Uncle Tom’s Cabin, she deliberately used sentimental discourses of domesticity, which emphasized emotional readerly responses, as an audience appeal. According to literary scholar Jane Tompkins, sentimental literature often glorified the private space of the home because it was the site of the most crucial social work: moral and spiritual conversion. However, unlike other sentimental novels, Ramona does not envision a domestic, woman-centered utopia (Padget) or the triumph of domesticity with its concomitant spiritual conversion. On the contrary, Jackson’s novel dramatizes the fate of such sentimental visions in a society where domestic spaces cannot be maintained, either because of failing traditions or recurrent exile, both triggered by U.S. imperialist policies. Ultimately, none of the domestic spaces are stable—Señora Moreno tries desperately to maintain fading traditions, but after her death her ranch is ultimately relinquished; Ramona is driven from one home to another; even Aunt Ri, a lesser
housekeeper than the others, is still, at the end of the novel, working to establish a
home.\textsuperscript{25} This domestic uncertainty forms one of Jackson’s most powerful critiques of
current government policies and a correspondingly powerful appeal for Indian reform to
an authorial (ideal) audience that privileges the sanctity of the home. Despite this
powerful appeal, the spatial discourses associated with domesticity (particularly its ties to
nationalism and Manifest Destiny) open the way for alternate readings of the novel.

Domestic ideologies and discourses are implicitly spatial, as they dictate the
social and physical places of men, women and children—not only within the home, but
within the nation itself. The nineteenth-century “cult of domesticity,” which held that
women, especially mothers, functioned as the moral center of the home and nation, and
contributed to the Republic through the nurturing and educating of their children, was
closely tied to the notion of separate spheres, which dictated that men belonged to the
exterior public world of politics and business, while women belonged to the more interior
private sphere.\textsuperscript{26} The discourse of domesticity was also racialized; as many critics have
noted, the ideal of a nurturing mother at the center of the home is a predominantly white,
middle- and upper-class ideal. Nicole Tonkovich, in her introduction to Harriet Beecher
Stowe and Catharine Beecher’s domestic advice treatise, \textit{The American Woman’s Home},
notes that servants, particularly those of other races (such as African American or Irish),

\textsuperscript{25} In an interesting counterpart to this, González suggests that Jackson reformulates domesticity in the novel
in terms of racial tolerance: thus, Senora Moreno is not a good model for domesticity because she draws
strict racial boundaries; Aunt Ri, who is more tolerant, is the ideal model.

\textsuperscript{26} The notion of separate spheres has been extensively critiqued by literary and historical scholars in the last
decade or so (see particularly Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher’s edited collection, \textit{No More
Separate Spheres!}). The separation between spheres was never as clear cut as commonly portrayed; men
were influenced by the actions of women in the private sphere, and women’s lives were clearly impacted
by occurrences in public. Additionally, the ideology of domesticity was often used as a justification for
women’s entrance into more public spheres. Jackson herself was able to parlay domestic discourse into her
appointment as Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs (González “Warp”). Widespread belief in the
efficacy of women as moral instructors may have also fueled Jackson’s recommendation in her subsequent
“Report on the Mission Indians” that only women be installed as teachers on reservations (although this
also stemmed from a personal encounter with a male teacher who reputedly got a female student pregnant).
were often classed with children as individuals needing to be civilized and moralized before they could be fully accepted into the home and nation.

Jackson centers the first half of *Ramona* around the Moreno ranch, anchoring the novel in a literary tradition of domestic fiction. This tradition preconditions reader expectations for the eventual triumph of domesticity over outside forces, making the ultimate failure of such domestic models all the more striking, and all the more powerful as an appeal to audience sympathy. The ranch, described in rich detail at the beginning of the novel, seems to promise the most stable domestic space of the novel, a moral anchor for rich Spanish traditions. The spaces of the home—the kitchen, verandas, and chapel—define the daily routines. The verandas, in particular, are the center of ranch activity and where most of the work and social activity takes place:

The greater part of the family life went on in them... All the kitchen work, except the actual cooking, was done here... Babies slept, were washed, sat in the dirt, and played, on the veranda. The women said their prayers, took their naps, and wove their lace there. Old Juanita shelled her beans there... The herdsmen and shepherds smoked there, lounged there, trained their dogs there; there the young made love, and the old dozed. (18)

The domestic spaces of the Moreno ranch extend outside the house proper to include much of the work done on the ranch, such as the sheep shearing which opens the novel.  

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27 Brian Wagner claims that Jackson transplanted this scene from the local color writings she produced for *Century Illustrated Magazine*, and that such scenes constitute an account of aestheticized labor—i.e., labor presented as a panorama or picturesque view, with laborers as just another feature of the landscape. (Senier offsets this claim by contrasting the polyvocality of *Ramona* to Jackson’s conspicuously consumerist travel writings.) The rise of sheep shearing as a replacement for cattle ranching following the droughts of the 1860s also lent itself to the romanticization of a Spanish past. Starr suggests that the practice of sheep shearing “brought beauty and civility to the semi-barbaric Southland” (36). The shearing represents a historical ritual “capable of linking the degenerate present to the glorious past” (7). This ritual, then, becomes a part of what Eric Hobsbawm calls “invented tradition,” or “a set of practices, normally governed
Given Jackson’s stated purpose to interest her readers in the story before raising the
Indian issue, the dual combination of warm domestic routine and Californio culture seem
calculated to draw the reader into the story. The familiar domestic scenes of the first half
of the novel provide Jackson with a nonthreatening venue for introducing her “local
color” before proceeding to the complex and potentially discomfiting threat to Indian homes.

If the “home is the center of all meaningful activity” (Tompkins 141), and the
moral center of the nation, then the Moreno chapel is perhaps the most intensely domestic
space in the ranch—not incidentally, the narrator explains that the chapel was more
important to the Señora than the rest of her home (20). The Moreno chapel is not only a
site for moral instruction, but an anchor for old traditions. Juan Canito reflects that the
Señora wants to delay the sheep shearing till Father Salvierderra comes, so that they can
fill the space of the chapel with Indians and recreate (literally re-embody) old traditions:
“it’s like old times to see the chapel full of them kneeling” (9). On a smaller scale, the
moral work of the chapel extends to the rest of the ranch through the figures of saints
salvaged from the Missions that inhabit the rooms, and which serve as persistent
reminders of the moral and spiritual imperatives of domestic spaces. Although Jackson
was not unaware of the darker aspects of Mission life, her concern in writing Ramona
was less with an accurate historical rendering of the past than it was with rousing strong
emotional protests against present conditions.28 Thus, significantly, it is around the moral
center of the chapel that Jackson introduces Mission Indians into her story, deliberately
placing them within a peaceful, productive, domesticated historical context that
emphasizes their civilization and sets a dramatic backdrop for their later brutal treatment.

Throughout the course of the novel, Jackson uses chapels as a moral barometer
measuring civilization and domesticity. Alessandro’s father, Pablo Assis, builds a chapter
in Temecula; later, Ramona finds her own domestic space incomplete without a saint or
two. The decay of the chapel at San Diego where the couple is married seems to not only
foreshadow their troubled marriage but indicates the moral decay of California culture in
the wake of Anglo-American settlements. “Everything about [the San Diego chapel] was
in unison with the atmosphere of the place,--the most profoundly melancholy in all
Southern California. . . . And the only traces now remaining of [Father Junipero Serra’s]
labors and hard-won successes were a pile of crumbling ruins”(224). For Jackson, the
ruin of the Missions was another point of shame for both the Catholic and Anglo-
American settlers of California.29 By associating chapels with domestic spaces, Jackson
is able to use the chapel ruins as a thematic prelude of unstable domestic spaces.

However, despite the moral aspects of the Moreno rancho, it is not a stable
domestic space: the loss of old traditions can be read in the diminishing staff and the
empty rooms of the rancho: “In the General’s [Moreno] day, it had been a free-handed

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The picture of life in one of these missions during their period of prosperity is unique and
attractive. The whole place was a hum of industry: trades plying indoors and outdoors . . . children
in schools; women spinning; bands of young men practicing on musical instruments . . . at
evening, all sorts of games . . . and the picturesque ceremonies of a religion which has always been
wise in availing itself of beautiful agencies in color, form and harmony. (“Father Junipero and His
Work.II” 200)

Deborah Ann Gilbert suggests that Jackson’s romantic portrayal of a benign mission system is a deliberate
rhetorical move designed to showcase Anglo-American greed.

29 In her first Century article on Father Junipero, she describes the crumbling chapel that houses his grave
and admonishes, “It is not in our power to confer honor or bring dishonor on the illustrious dead. We
ourselves, alone, are dishonored when we fail in reverence to them. . . . [F]or men of the country whose
civilization [Father Junipero] founded, and of the church whose faith he so glorified, to permit his burial-
place to sink into oblivion, is a shame indeed!” (“Father Junipero and His Work.I” 18).
boast of his that never less than fifty persons, men, women and children, were fed within
his gates each day; . . . but that time had indeed gone, gone forever” (11). Moreover, by
filling the Moreno chapel with Indians for Father Salvierderra’s visit, the Señora does not
succeed in recreating Mission culture, but only in creating an illusion. Indians no longer
live under the auspices of the missions, nor are Catholic chapels the moral center of
California culture. The nostalgic descriptions of ranchero traditions already underscore
the rancho’s eventual demise. The Señora herself is a questionable moral center for the
household; as some critics have suggested, the Californios in the novel are represented by
“wicked, domineering women and weak, effeminate men” (Jacobs 219). Although this
reading needs to be placed in the context of Jackson’s warm friendship with the Coronels,
an old Californio family, it is clear that the Señora is not an exemplary figure. By the
novel’s end, the Moreno chapel and the ranch are virtually abandoned after the Indians
are driven from Temecula, the Señora dies, and her son forsakes his inheritance to resettle
in Mexico. It is tempting, too, to read the decay of the ranchero tradition as a commentary
on the feudal-like lifestyle of the ranch; if traditional Anglo-Saxon wisdom held that
individual landownershio was essential to democracy—and thus to civilization—then the
ranchero tradition, despite its intense domesticity and morality, does not yield the same
civilizing potential as other, more Americanized spaces. Despite the domestic activity,
this center, weakened by the encroachment of Anglo-American settlement, cannot hold.
And although Jackson reserves most of her reform efforts for the beleaguered Indians, the
instability of Californio domestic spaces becomes one more strike against Anglo-
American occupation and the government policies that drive it.
In the second half of the novel, Jackson details Ramona’s increasingly futile efforts to create a stable domestic space of her own. After Alessandro and Ramona flee the Moreno ranch, they establish their first jointly created domestic space at San Pasquale. Curiously enough, the land itself suggests domestic arrangements—Alessandro tells Ramona that the village is in a valley, “with hills all around it like walls” (231), implying that the land itself shapes an interior, home-like space. As enclosed landscapes are often read as “feminine” (Comer), this description reinforces associations of domesticity with the land itself, overturning historic readings of the West, with its wide, open spaces, as masculine and making the region itself more inviting to Jackson’s female readers. Like the Moreno ranch, San Pasquale shows evidence of productive domesticity in the winemaking, sheep shearing, and other local tasks. Ramona artistically arranges her and Alessandro’s few possessions in their home, so that “[i]t looked like a palace to the San Pasquale people” (241). And just as Señora Moreno incorporated Catholic saints into her home, Ramona consecrates her domestic space with a Madonna figure. Indeed, so successfully does she do this that her home becomes a kind of shrine for the local women, merging the functions of chapel and home. John González suggests that this kind of merger echoes the civilizing (domesticating) influences of the earlier Mission culture (“Warp of Whiteness”). This merger is also in keeping with sentimental traditions in which women morally redeem their men (Luis-Brown); Ramona’s consecrated home space helps bring Alessandro closer to deity, as do their many conversations about the saints. Ramona’s home with Alessandro is thus deliberately placed within a familiar domestic framework that allows Jackson’s readers to identify with the heroine and hero.
Ramona and Alessandro’s individualized domestic space is also in keeping with Anglo-American notions of domesticity and land-ownership; while Ramona creates a home, Alessandro is busy working the fields that he has laid claim to. Both activities are evidence of their mutual claim to civilization. In her non-fiction works, like “The Present Condition of the Mission Indians of Southern California,” Jackson repeatedly returned to images of Mission Indians working the land in a familiar Europeanized mode as evidence of their right to retain lands their families had possessed and cultivated for generations. By placing the Mission Indians in a familiar domestic context, Jackson refutes the common justification used in appropriating Indian (and Californio) lands, that the lands were not cultivated as they could be. In her fictional narrative, Jackson invokes the same image of cultivated Indians to similar effect. This domestic arrangement, while underscoring Jackson’s appeal to audience conceptions of domestic spaces, also serves as tacit evidence for the civilizing power of individual landownership.30

In Ramona and her non-fiction writings on the Indian question, Jackson suggests that if the responsibility of the government was to promote assimilation through land ownership, then allowing settlers to threaten that ownership is a manifest failure of government responsibility. In the remainder of the novel, Jackson dramatically portrays how the lack of government protection of the Mission Indians threatens the neat and

30 The implicit connection between land ownership and democracy was, incidentally, behind the push toward allotment that gained popularity among Indian reformers and others toward the end of the century—both U.S. Indian agents, many Indian reformers, and other interested groups were increasingly persuaded that the best route towards civilization of the masses of Native Americans was the individual ownership of land, which would introduce them to white concepts of property and break up tribal influence (Otis). In 1877, Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz recommended allotment of land to all heads of families of Indians on reservations, on the grounds that “the enjoyment and pride of individual ownership of property being one of the most effective civilizing agencies” (Otis 5). Jackson herself believed that individual title to land would provide Indians with more incentive to provide for themselves (Century), although she was not an assimilationist: her agenda for the Mission Indians was very specific: to protect established rancherias (Indian villages) and set aside more land for them if necessary (Gilbert).
cultivated homes that bear mute witness to their civilization and right of occupation. Anglo-American settlement disrupts Ramona and Alessandro’s domestic space; unfair legal policies allow incoming settlers to dispossess the Native Americans in San Pasquale, and Ramona and Alessandro are forced to sell their comfortable home to the man who has acquired their land and head for the San Jacinto mountains. Alessandro wants to retreat into the mountains to a place “where no white man has ever been, or ever will be,” but Ramona demurs, explaining that she would be afraid to live so far from people (279). They settle instead in a poor Indian settlement in Saboba, and Ramona once again tries to recreate a home. However, following the death of their child and the increasing presence of white men in the valley, they move into the mountains. Although, as Senier suggests, Alessandro and Ramona’s sense of home depends more on one another than their possession of tribal lands, the novel ultimately forecloses even this possibility of a home. Even here the illusion of safety and freedom proves to be just that: Alessandro is unscrupulously shot down as a horse thief, and Ramona once again flees her home, to seek help in Saboba. Here Felipe finds her and brings her back to the Moreno ranch. From there, eventually, they leave California for Mexico.

Jackson uses this relentless movement to suggest the devastating threat of homelessness. As González notes, the trajectory of the novel is a restless movement to increasingly distant (marginal) sites (“Warp”). The constant motion in the novel thus evokes a sense of placelessness and homelessness: Ramona and Alessandro are driven from place to place; Aunt Ri and her family migrate desultorily in search of a place for Jos to recuperate; Felipe begins wandering in search of Ramona and does not stop until he leaves the U.S. for Mexico. As de Certeau notes, walking carries with it the lack of a
stable site of reference; “It is the indeterminate process of being both absent and in search of the proper, of one’s own” (139). In other words, the wanderer is always homeless—her very wandering carries with it the absence of home. As Jackson was well aware, homelessness was perhaps the worst fate her authorial audience—who believed home was the nearest thing to heaven on earth—could imagine. If homes are the sites of industry, feminine creativity, moral education, and self-identity, then to be homeless is to lack all this; the ultimate danger of being driven from one’s home is to become “homeless wanderers in a desert” (Jackson, “The Present Condition,” 529). In the context of Jackson’s critique of spatial displacement, it seems significant that these “homeless” families all come from marginalized social groups: Native Americans, Californios and lower-class whites.

Some of the profoundest signs of exile in the novel are forcible displacement from one’s home and the inhabitation of one’s home by others. For Jackson’s Eastern audience, trained by sentimental literature to put a premium on domestic space, this is possibly one of the most powerful emotional appeals Jackson can make. Alessandro finds others living in his home in Temecula; later, after Father Gaspara’s visit to San Pasquale, the narrator reflects, “Long before Father Gaspara visited San Pasquale again, Alessandro and Ramona were far away, and strangers were living in their home” (247). The consequences of Anglo-American settlement are similarly figured in terms of spatial occupation and cultural exclusions based on race: near the end, Alessandro reflects that it is as well that their baby died: “by the time she had grown to be a woman, if she had lived, there would be no place in all the country where an Indian could find refuge” (295, emphasis mine).
Perhaps ironically, the only seemingly stable domestic spaces in the novel are graveyards. Graves are peculiarly associated with homes, possibly because a grave is one piece of property that is (generally) permanent.\textsuperscript{31} Señora Moreno refuses to let Felipe go after Ramona while she lives, dictating that he wait until she has another domestic space before he defiles hers: “You may rear as many Indian families as you please under the Moreno roof, I will at least have my grave!” (260). Graveyards also seem to become the final home of Indians who are driven from other homes. In Temecula, Ramona spends most of her time in the graveyard, a space that functions as a metonym for the village itself, full of ghosts and haunted. Ramona seems as much disturbed by the land as by the ghosts: she reflects that without Carmena (an Indian woman who stays by the grave of her baby), she would have “died of terror . . . Not that the dead would harm me; but simply from the vast silent plain, and the gloom” (208). This burial of Indian culture (literally and figuratively) allows Anglo-Americans to displace them and build their own homes in their places. Thus, while Alessandro and Ramona are in Temecula, Alessandro feels compelled to see the Americans who have taken his home, to see “the new home-life already begun on the grave of his” (208).

Graves (and graveyards) thus become a particularly apt site for Jackson’s critique of Anglo-American settlement practices and the government’s failure to regulate them. Not only do the graves in Temecula bear mute testimony to the destruction of homes (and lives) by incoming Anglo-American settlers, but they constitute a kind of perverse domestic site (perverse in the sense that we tend to associate domesticity and home with the living, not the dead). And, as Michel Foucault and others have noted, cemeteries function as valuable spaces for social critique. In “Of Other Spaces,” Foucault identifies

\textsuperscript{31} Such attitudes were also common in nineteenth-century slave narratives.
cemeteries as a powerful example of heterotopias, unique places where “all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (qtd. in Wright 54). In other words, heterotopias both reflect social idealizations of spatial relations, but also work to subvert those ideas of space. As rhetorical scholar Elizabethada Wright points out, although cemetery spaces seem to be ideally ordered social spaces, with built-in mechanisms for order (epitaphs that admonish the living, surveillance, seeming consensus—corpses are not going to contest much), they actually open up spaces in which to challenge social norms. For instance, there is little censure of epitaphs, and cemeteries represent a confusion of public and private space (cemeteries are public spaces with privately purchased plots) that allows women’s voices to be heard. Similarly, in Jackson’s novel, graves and graveyards represent the final refuge for dispossessed peoples (although, given Americans’ tendency to loot Native American graves for “artifacts,” even this refuge ultimately proves illusory). By virtue of their location, as the resting place of the dead, they also signify ironically against the people responsible for their placement there.

After repeated domestic displacements, Jackson ends the novel on a note of exile. Although Ramona and Felipe view their move as a chance to establish a new, permanent home, readers are less sanguine. Their exile suggests that stable domestic spaces are impossible for non-Anglo people in the U.S. Moreover, Ramona, who as a wife and mother is supposed to anchor their new domestic space, is only a shadow of her former self: “a part of me is dead,” she tells Felipe (348). For Jackson’s Eastern audience, trained by sentimental literature to place a premium on domestic sanctity, the instability of
domestic spaces in the novel presents a powerful emotional appeal and critique of U.S.
imperialist politics—particularly as those politics lead to spatial dispossession.

Although discourses of domestic space constitute a powerful appeal for the
religious and reform-minded readers of sentimental romances that Jackson hoped to
target, such discourses also ironically open up a space for misreading of the novel’s aim.
According to Kenneth Burke’s concept of “terministic screens,” any particular
terminology, or discourse constellation, is “a reflection of reality, . . . a selection of
reality; and to this extent it must function as a deflection of reality” (Language as
Symbolic Action 45). This suggests that when a particular kind of discourse is invoked to
describe a perceived reality, that discourse’s attendant vision of reality is also invoked,
limiting the ability to perceive other realities. Burke continues, “much that we take as
observations about ‘reality’ may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our
particular choice of terms” (46). In other words, the language that constitutes a rhetorical
strategy is part of a particular ideological system, complete with specific understandings
of space and time; by invoking the language of domesticity, Jackson also invokes
domesticity’s attendant understanding of national space and the consequences of that
understanding for non-white individuals in that space (the “spinning out of possibilities
implicit in [her] particular choice of terms”).

Discourses of domesticity, as Amy Kaplan has noted, were deeply imbricated in
discourses of Manifest Destiny, which relied on figurations of the home and nation as
domesticated, civilized spaces in which insiders were to be maintained through the
exclusion of all outside, foreign elements. Thus, the function of the home was, in part, to
uphold the imperatives of Manifest Destiny (a movement Kaplan terms “Manifest
Domesticity”). These discourses invoke an understanding of space/time that foresees an inevitable future progression of Anglo-American expansion and domination that leaves no place for foreign elements like Native Americans, African Americans, Californios, and others. The only alternatives for Native Americans within this ideological frame were to assimilate or be exterminated. As González suggests, in Ramona Jackson reformulates discourses of domesticity to allow for the assimilation of Indians within the nation. But this, as both González and Jesse Aléman note, does not allow for other alternatives—including the alternative Jackson herself envisioned in her “Report on the Mission Indians,” which recommended in essence that the government grant Indians protected lands and the Indians then be allowed to live on those lands as they see fit.32

However, the conclusion of the novel does not necessarily support the assimilation alternative. Scholars like Alemán and Margaret Jacobs acknowledge the apparent contradiction of Jackson’s perceived solution to the Indian question in the novel. Where, in both her Century of Dishonor and her “Report on the Needs of the Mission Indians,” Jackson had argued in behalf of assimilation (believing it the best chance for Indian survival), Ramona’s conclusion seems to frustrate the possibility of assimilation. The cumulative effect of domestic displacement in the novel is exile, not assimilation, and although this may have been intended as the most dramatic indictment of the consequences of American governmental failure in regards to the Indians (exile represents not only displacement from one’s home but from one’s nation), it ultimately leaves no place for Native Americans in the narrative. Thus, the narrative allows readers

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32 Senier argues that Jackson did not always favor assimilation through allotment—only in those cases where the Indians themselves seemed in favor of it. Jackson was, however, consistent in advocating that Indians be allowed to keep their own lands and that they ought to use those lands as they saw fit (whether through individual allotment or through retaining the lands as tribal lands).
to continue to see extermination or exile as the natural end for the Indians. Finally, the inclusion of nostalgic descriptions of “the old Mexican life” and its domestic elements that Jackson believed would be “the very perfection of coloring” (Mathes, *Letters*, 313) firmly root the novel in a past that, while tragic and lamentable, compels no action in the present. Like most regional fiction, such local color descriptions were popular precisely because they portrayed people outside of modern life and the pressures of modernization (DeLyser). In other words, the presentation of domestic life in the novel that is meant to agitate audience sympathy ultimately allows, instead, for readers’ continued apathy.

**Natural Space as a Rhetorical Appeal**

“Climate is to a country what temperament is to a man—Fate.”—Helen Hunt Jackson, “Outdoor Industries in Southern California”

Like domestic scapes, the natural landscapes in *Ramona* figure prominently in the development of the novel, but surprisingly, their roles are almost entirely overlooked by critics; Daneen Wardrop’s “The *Jouissant* Politics of Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*: The Ground that Is ‘Mother’s Lap’” is perhaps the only scholarly study to engage sustainedly with place in the novel.33 Often, landscapes get overlooked in literature because of their seeming transparency as backdrop for action, but, as Comer notes in her survey of twentieth-century Western women’s literature, the use of landscape is often quite strategic (and therefore rhetorical): landscape gets “deployed all the time, in many different political guises, to make all kinds of extratopographic meanings” (11). In

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33 However, I don’t agree with all of Wardrop’s argument. She believes that Jackson’s strongest appeal is a feminine celebration of the body through the landscape. Although Wardrop does concede that Jackson “may not have realized the most subversive diversionary tactic she devised” (36), I find it hard to believe that Jackson or her contemporary readers would have recognized the veiled reference to women’s sexual parts in the landscape descriptions (or seen it as a powerful emotional appeal if they had). This reading seems to me more a late twentieth-century feminist reading than a reading contextualized by nineteenth-century culture.
Ramona, Jackson uses natural landscapes to emphasize the thematic motif of exile and create sympathetic characters. In keeping with sentimental fiction designed to evoke emotional responses from readers, these landscape descriptions underscore the pathetic appeals of the novel. Like her domestic spaces, however, Jackson’s use of natural spaces invokes a culturally freighted terminology that worked against her reform message. As “a brimming-full social topography that creates and enacts the various cultural assumptions and power struggles of the age” (Comer 13), Jackson’s depiction of nature produces mixed results. Although the cultural associations of wilderness may function to generate audience sympathy for the characters, this same cultural discourse carries with it a concomitant commitment to the myth of virgin land, a myth that necessitates Indian removal and displacement. Just as Jackson believed that the physical characteristics of a landscape dictated its fate, so the discursive characteristics of her fictional landscapes helped determine the reception of her novel.

Because landscapes are framed by particular cultural moments that dictate how we view and respond to them (Schama, Cronon), Jackson’s own view of natural space is highly colored by a cultural moment that valorized the redemptive power of wilderness. According to Simon Schama, the nineteenth-century view of nature overturned earlier generations’ belief that the eastern forests were a sign of evil and refigured wilderness as something sacred and holy. William Cronon suggests that this reversal came about partly through the confluence of romantic notions of the sublime and the frontier: sublime landscapes were a place where one might meet God, and the frontier was viewed as a place for national renewal. As the frontier disappeared, wilderness began increasingly to fill its role as a place of refuge and a testing ground for manhood. Muscular Christianity
in nineteenth-century America also contributed to the notion of wilderness as a source of 
spiritual renewal (Perry). These attitudes toward nature colored and fueled Jackson’s own 
response to the California landscape and likely shaped readers’ reactions as well.

As I have described, Jackson uses increasingly remote landscapes to ground the 
narrative action and underscore the trajectory of the novel’s domestic displacement. 
These settings culminate finally on a mountain peak so remote that the local Indians 
refuse to live there\(^{34}\) and no white man has ever been seen. As the characters move 
through these different landscapes, Jackson relies on detailed descriptions of the 
landscape to further her rhetorical agenda: she uses the cultural connotations of willow 
trees to create a mournful emotional context for Ramona and Alessandro’s doomed 
relationship; she uses the canyon where Ramona and Alessandro take refuge to recast 
Anglo-American settlement as a fall from Edenic grace; and she uses the sublime 
mountain heights of San Jacinto to demonstrate the moral superiority of her Indian 
characters.

Scene and action are often closely correlated; in Burkean terms, “the scene 
contains the act,” and the scene often influences and echoes actions (Grammar 3).\(^{35}\) Not 
only do individual and cultural circumstances frame the way that we read natural 
landscapes, but certain landscapes imbue acts with different significance (Casey). Thus, 
authors are able to use “space and spatial processes metaphorically to suggest emotions, 
insights, concepts, characters” (Brady 8). By setting Ramona and Alessandro’s

\(^{34}\) James ascribes this reluctance to certain myths and legends that the Cahuilla Indians held about the San 
Jacinto mountains (conveniently, he conflates Indian life in nineteenth century Saboba with the fictional 
accounts in the novel).

\(^{35}\) Burke similarly suggests that scene influences the agent of the action, but he avoids a kind of 
environmental determinism by suggesting that a given “set of scenic conditions will ‘implement’ and 
‘amplify’ given ways and temperaments which in other situations would remain mere potentialities” (19).
introduction and later exchange of vows near a willow tree, Jackson draws on nineteenth-century cultural associations of willow trees to evoke a particular feeling of elegiac mourning within her audience. Willow trees were closely associated with mourning and homesickness (Davies). Significantly, in Biblical traditions, willows were a place to shed tears for a lost homeland; willows surrounded the waters of Babylon where the Israelites wept for the loss of Zion (Psalm 137). Through the associations of mourning and exile, Jackson powerfully shapes reader expectations for the lover’s relationship and underscores the exilic motif in the novel itself. Perhaps more importantly, in true sentimental fashion, these associations invite readers to shed their own tears over the inevitable loss of home and homeland that Ramona and Alessandro. According to Tompkins, tears are a sign of redemption (of both characters and audience) in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (132). In that novel, Stowe sought ultimately not to recommend a specific course of action, but to encourage a change of heart: “There is one thing that every individual can do—they can see to it that *they feel right*” (qtd. in Tompkins 132). Similarly, Jackson hoped to induce a proper feeling in her audience about the treatment of Indians. By creating a recognizably tragic setting for her lovers’ trysts, Jackson encourages her authorial audience to feel with Alessandro when he promises lifelong devotion to Ramona: “But there were tears in his eyes, and they were not tears of joy; and in his heart he said, as in his rapturous delight when he first saw Ramona bending over the brook under the willows, he had said aloud, ‘My God! What shall I do!’” (179). Like Alessandro, ideal readers would recognize with intense sympathy that this relationship would likely end disastrously, particularly given the current state of affairs for the Mission Indians.
Another significant natural site in Jackson’s narrative is the canyon where Ramona and Alessandro take refuge after their elopement. Their brief stay in the canyon represents a turning point in the plot, separating the dreamlike, past-oriented state of the Senora’s ranch from the squalid future the lovers face. Jackson’s descriptions of this natural space draw on two powerful cultural discourses about space—nature as a divine sanctuary and the expulsion from Eden—to demonstrate the virtues of her Indian heroes and underscore the thematic motif of Anglo-American-driven exile. In describing the natural landscape of the canyon, Jackson suggests the redemptive power of the wilderness popular in nineteenth-century thought.36 As Schama demonstrates, there is a long mythology associating nature (particularly woods) and religious sanctuaries. The canyon is figured as a holy space and divine sanctuary that sanctifies Ramona and Alessandro. Here, the couple consecrate their daily worship. One morning, as Ramona finishes her prayer, light breaks into the canyon just for a second and lights her rosary.

To both Ramona and Alessandro it came like an omen,—like a message straight from the Virgin. . . . Perhaps there were not, in the whole great world, two souls who were experiencing so vivid a happiness as thrilled the veins of these two friendless ones, on their knees, alone in the wilderness, gazing half awe-stricken at the shining rosary. (201)

This sanctification also testifies to their sincere religious conversion, another important demonstration to readers of the civility and Christianization of the Mission Indians. Ramona and Alessandro’s experience in the canyon also demonstrates their virtuous simplicity as a people near to nature. Both Alessandro and Ramona draw physical and

36 Jackson herself seems strongly influenced by such conceptions of nature; she was somewhat acquainted with prominent naturalist John Muir, to whom she wrote for camping suggestions in Yosemite during her final illness (Phillips 270).
spiritual comfort from their interlude in the canyon. This episode serves, in effect, to convince potentially skeptical readers that, unlike the “heathen devils” of earlier captivity narratives, these Mission Indians are good, simple folk who have done nothing to merit their shameful treatment.

In addition to a divine sanctuary, Jackson depicts the canyon as a kind of Eden, presenting in miniature the prominent cultural conception of California as a Western Eden (Perry). In the lush, exotic landscape of the canyon, Alessandro and Ramona become a kind of New World Adam and Eve, whose experience of being at home in Eden suggests the purifying and redemptive power most Americans saw in the Western wilderness. God himself seems present in this wild space. As Alessandro watches over Ramona their first night in the canyon, he feels an incredible stillness: “Countless times before in his life he had lain in lonely places under the sky and watched the night through, but he had never felt like this. It was ecstacy, and yet it was pain” (199). But this idyll is only transient—like their original models, Alessandro and Ramona must ultimately leave the garden, in part because of insufficient food stores, but more immediately because Alessandro has discovered the presence of a white man at the end of the canyon. Tellingly, when they leave, they both “felt as if exiled afresh” (204). By invoking the powerful cultural associations of wilderness and Eden in Ramona and Alessandro’s experience of the canyon, Jackson contrives to make their inevitable exile all the more potent and Eden’s figurative corruption by Anglo-American settlers the more visible.

This episode encapsulates in miniature a part of Jackson’s overall narrative strategy; Sackman suggests that Jackson draws on the California-as-Eden mythology to
critique Anglo-American conquest, in part by demonstrating the healthy relationships of
Californios and Native Americans to the landscape. He continues, “Against this idyllic
backdrop, the fragmentation of the landscape that happens with the American entry
becomes all the more tragic—indeed, it is a fall out of Eden” (48). Thus, not only is this
canyon episode representative of Alessandro and Ramona’s personal exile, but it
symbolizes the general fall from Eden occasioned by Anglo-American invasion. This
figuration of the canyon as Eden allows Jackson to present the Anglo-American
occupation of California as a fall from grace, thus parlaying one of her readers’ most
powerful cultural myths into sympathy for the Mission Indians as the original inhabitants
of Eden, driven out not by their own sin, but by the sins of their conquerors.

Finally, Jackson uses the sublime landscape of the San Jacinto mountains to
demonstrate the moral superiority of her characters. Nineteenth-century individuals were
conditioned to read such wilderness spaces as reprieves from the ills of civilization as
well as spaces that evoked a powerful emotional response to the dramatic landscape and
enabled the viewer to draw nearer to God (Schama, Cronon). From the mountain,
Ramona,

stood on the rim of the refuge valley, high on San Jacinto. Then, gazing around,
looking up at the lofty pinnacles above, which seemed to pierce the sky, looking
down upon the world,—it seemed the whole world, so limitless it stretched away
at her feet,—feeling that infinite unspeakable sense of nearness to Heaven,
remoteness from earth which comes only on mountain height, she drew in a long
breath of delight, and cried: ‘. . . Here we are safe!’” (299)
This place “brought healing to both Alessandro and Ramona” (300)—although the healing for Alessandro was only superficial, as it is also in the mountains that he ultimately succumbs to madness (driven, we are led to believe, by the frustrations of dealing with Anglo-American settlers).

Jackson draws on this valorization of wilderness to implicitly critique the forces of industrialization and modernization—in effect, modern society. The association of Alessandro and Ramona with nature helps establish them as the most superior moral characters in the novel. Alessandro and Ramona’s moral superiority comes in part from nature’s tutelage. Early in their relationship, Ramona is more credulous than Alessandro, despite her superior education: “All her education had not taught her to think, as he, untaught, had learned in his solitude with nature” (239). Yet after Alessandro’s death, Ramona draws strength and wisdom from nature. She tells Felipe, “When one thinks in the wilderness, alone, Felipe, many things become clear. I have been learning, all these years in the wilderness, as if I had a teacher” (341). This moral superiority drawn from nature helps further the novel’s reformist impulses; David Luis-Brown suggests that Ramona is a proto-feminist work that challenges Anglo-Saxon male superiority through “romantic racialism,” which posits the moral superiority of minority characters and advocates conciliation rather than conflict.

And yet, although the description of these natural spaces seems designed to evoke a sympathetic audience response to the characters, the cultural discourses they invoke militate against Jackson’s aims. Although Jackson appears to believe that nature is clearly superior to civilization, and the Indians, in their “natural” state are morally superior to the Anglo-Americans, the novel itself remains profoundly ambivalent in its approach to
natural spaces (and by extension, to those characters bound to natural spaces). Cultural discourses about wilderness saw it as a necessary temporary retreat, but, significantly, not as a permanent home. Because civilization is placed antithetical to nature, the Indians’ very closeness to nature renders their civilization suspect.\footnote{Indians in general, for Jackson, seem to serve as a bridge between purely natural spaces and domesticated spaces. In the wake of the Missions’ disintegration (literally and figuratively), the Indians were disappearing, “driven back to their original wildernesses” (37).} If Alessandro’s simplicity makes him morally superior to Felipe—“when it came to the things of the soul, and of honor, Alessandro’s plane was the higher of the two” (74)—his simplicity also makes him unfit for civilization; with all his superiority, he was “not a civilized man” (55).\footnote{Alemán suggests that the novel reproduces a naturalized racial hierarchy, in which Californios and Indians are inevitably doomed to displacement. In this naturalized hierarchy, both Ramona and Alessandro—regardless of their cultural virtues—are ultimately doomed because of their Indian blood. It is because of his Indian blood that Alessandro goes mad; it is because of her Indian blood that Ramona is persistently infantilized.} And if nature in its pure state is redemptive, it is also profoundly threatening: there is a panther in the canyon and the wild heights of the San Jacinto mountains frighten Ramona. By extension then, the novel (through its narrative—not authorial—voice) suggests that both Indians and nature are in need of domestication.\footnote{González suggested that many Indian reformers of Jackson’s era advocated domesticating the Indians to facilitate their assimilation into white society. As part of this effort, reformers figured Indians as children in need of education. Ultimately, however, Ramona suggests the failure of such domesticating projects, as neither the Californios (Felipe) nor the Indians (Ramona and Alessandro) are integrated into Anglo-American society.}

The association of Indians with nature is also a profoundly feminizing gesture, suggested in their need for further domestication and by a pervasive cultural binary that equates feminine with nature and masculine with culture (Rose, McDowell). As Comer suggests, “In the guise of ‘natural’ nature, landscape representation concocts primitivist attitudes about women and/or people of color” (29). In other words, representations of “natural” nature often invoke cultural associations of women and people of color (in this case, Native Americans) as individuals lacking appropriate civilization. In some ways, it
was precisely because women and people of color were believed to be “natural” creatures that domestication and confinement to the domestic realm was considered the safest way of dealing with potentially unstable/uncivilized natures. Moreover, as an extension of the implied binary discussed here (feminine/nature v. masculine/culture), morality, as a feminine virtue, is opposed to the more masculine virtue of reason. Thus, individuals defined primarily by their morality (like Ramona and Alessandro) are not principally rational beings, and the possession of morality buys them no cultural capital; nineteenth-century society claimed that women were morally superior and yet persisted to marginalize them socially. Felipe, although to Anglo-American perspectives a feminized scion of a “degenerate” race, still emerges as more masculine than Alessandro. Because of the intrinsic association, then, of femininity with nature, it becomes difficult—if not impossible—for Jackson to deploy natural landscapes without also invoking the feminizing consequences of those associations.

Jackson’s deployment of wilderness motifs has another, perhaps more deadly, consequence: the myth of redemptive wilderness requires that that land be “untouched,” and untouched land must perforce be empty, requiring the displacement of the Indians to retain the virtue of wilderness (Cronon). As Brady suggests, the narratives we tell about landscapes and the way we envision space together provide an implicit argument about how we perceive the past and future of that space; thus, narratives about wilderness suggest that not only has the land historically been uninhabited, but it will continue to be so (except, of course, for the presence of transient Anglo-American tourists). Jackson’s

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40 Feminist geographers like Gillian Rose, Doreen Massey, and Linda McDowell have widely critiqued the kind of binary thinking that thus confines women to private, domestic spheres.
41 Ironically, of course, in driving the Indians out of the wilderness to create an inviolable wilderness, Anglo-American settlers and tourists repeatedly violated the sanctity of that supposedly untouched space. Their mere presence as an observer in that space meant that it was not untouched.
use of natural spaces in the novel demonstrates that, far from being a neutral container for events, space (and spatial discourses) can, in fact, signify independently from the desires of those who would shape its representation and reception.\(^42\) Thus, just as rhetoric shapes space in ways that dictate who moves freely in those spaces, so space (and the discourses surrounding it), in turn, shapes rhetoric in ways that determine what kinds of rhetorical arguments will be heard in a given situation. Although Jackson introduced natural space as a pathetic appeal to demonstrate the sympathetic and moral nature of her characters, the ideological associations of her spatial terminology ultimately interfered with her readers’ abilities to “hear” her argument.

**National Space as a Rhetorical Appeal**

“The people of the United States have never in the least realized that the taking possession of California was not only a conquering of Mexico, but a conquering of California as well.”—Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona*, p. 16

“National identity, to take just the most obvious example, would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland”—Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p. 15

In writing *Ramona*, Jackson hoped to remind her readers of how much California had lost in the 1848 conquest; while Mexico had her treaties to console her, “California lost all” (Jackson, *Ramona*, 16). This loss, she suggests, was felt not only by the Californios, who suffered the sting of a defeated people, but by the Mission Indians. Yet her readers persisted in seeing this conquest in terms of California’s future population, not in terms of its previous inhabitants. Although Jackson’s deployment of domestic and natural spaces in the novel was intended as a rhetorical device to move her authorial

\(^{42}\) Both LeFebvre and Soja argue that space is neither empty of significance nor neutral.
audience on behalf of the Indians, her use of these spaces ultimately allowed for an altogether different reader response. According to Aimee Marie Carillo Rowe, rhetorics of nationalism—particular the rhetoric of those in power—dictate who moves freely in national spaces and who does not. Similarly, Jackson’s construction of both domestic and natural spaces in the novel ultimately undermined her Indian reform project because it helped transform California into a national space and allowed Anglo-American readers to appropriate those spaces for the free movement of Anglo-American bodies.

Jackson’s depictions of California spaces, characterized by elements of Californio culture and unique natural landscapes, seem intended to generate interest in the story and demonstrate the value of California to the nation. For Jackson, part of the region’s appeal to the nation lay not only in its cultural traditions and scenes, but in its unique landscape. I have described at length how Jackson uses the natural landscape as a rhetorical device to emphasize thematic motifs and strengthen character appeals, but she also uses the natural landscape as an appeal in its own right—an inducement to readers to come to love the landscape of California (and by extension, its people) as much as she herself did.

Thus, she includes lavish descriptions of the landscape:

The almonds had bloomed and the blossoms fallen; the apricots also, and the peaches and pears; . . . The willows were vivid light green, and the orange groves dark and glossy like laurel. The billowy hills on either side the valley [sic] were covered with verdure and bloom,—myriads of low blossoming plants, so close to the earth that their tints lapped and overlapped on each other, and on the green of the grass, as feathers in fine plumage overlap each other and blend into a changeful color. . . . The countless curves, hollows, and crests of the coastal hills
in Southern California heighten these chameleon effects of the spring verdure; they are like nothing in nature except the glitter of a brilliant lizard in the sun or the iridescent sheen of a peacock’s neck. (38)

Such descriptions evoke an almost surreal lushness that posits the region as a very real contribution to the nation in terms of culture and land.

Yet, as this chapter has repeatedly emphasized, Jackson’s strategies did not have the intended effect; rather, her use of landscape served more to promote tourism and settlement in the region than anything else. Like any readable text, landscapes suggest particular interpretations (for instance, descriptions of the Moreno rancho imply the instability of domestic life under Anglo-American occupation); however, readers also bring their own interpretations and cultural conditioning to bear on their understanding of the landscape. Although Jackson may have intended the landscape of the rancho to generate interest in the story and convey the detrimental domestic effect of Anglo-American settlement policies, the landscape details are available for alternate interpretations.

According to Claire Perry, the idealized image of California’s Spanish heritage as a life of leisure and tranquility became one of California’s major selling points in the 1870s and 1880s. (The completion of the transcontinental railroad, of course, made the California vacation more feasible.) This tranquil landscape was offered as a remedy to the hectic ills of modern industrialized society, a draw that Jackson herself responded to. Thus Jackson’s images of California found a ready audience in readers already predisposed by promotional literature and images to view California in terms of its romanticized past and idealized natural spaces. As Dydia DeLyser argues in her book-
length study of how Jackson’s novel was inscribed on the landscape of Southern California, the most obvious outcome of Ramona’s publication was not renewed attention to the Indian reform issue, but travel literature designed to promote travel to the region and identify Ramona sites in the region. The promotion of Ramona sites was not just a tourist draw, however; tourists themselves promoted these sites by demanding that “Ramona-related places become visitable parts of southern California’s landscape” (xii).

However, as has been suggested in previous sections of this chapter, the misappropriation of Jackson’s rhetorical strategies was also enabled by the very discourses she sought to use. The spatial discourses of the novel (domestic, natural, and national) allowed readers to see the novel’s function not as an appeal for reform of governmental Indian policies, but the creation of a usable past and a familiarization of the landscape that allowed for—even facilitated—Anglo-American settlement.

Effective settlement or colonization of any new region generally requires the creation of a usable past. Because place and memory are inevitably linked, belonging to a place often requires some memory of one’s right to that place. Place anchors memory through sites around which we organize our memory (Casey); conversely, memory endows places with meaning. In his phenomenological study of memory, scholar Edward Casey suggests that individuals cannot inhabit sites which are empty of significance (and memory): in order to inhabit places, individuals need memories that help us orient ourselves in terms of these places. Perhaps significantly, Casey associates the lack of orientation with the sense of “Heimatlosigkeit”—a profound loss of and longing for a national home (195). In other words, national spaces must provide citizens with appropriate orientations in order to be incorporated into the national landscape. In the
absence of social memories providing national orientation, early settlers appropriated an ideализed Spanish history (Starr, Goldman, McWilliams). This shared social memory helped settlers maintain a sense of right of occupancy, and helped constitute the disparate racial and ethnic elements in California as a society.43

Thus, for many readers, particularly those invested in Anglo-American settlement of California, Jackson’s depictions of a Spanish past and unique California places seemed an effective resource for a shared social memory. Moreover, as DeLyser suggests, the Ramona phenomenon (the enormous tourist influx following the novel’s publication) demonstrated that places do not need to be real to serve as sites for social memory, since the shared nature of such memories is more significant than their factual accuracy.

Because landscapes, as a physical record of historical traces, often serve as a metonym for history or memory, readers were able to read the Californio landscapes of the novel as a metonym for California history:

> It was a picturesque life, with more of sentiment and gayety in it, more also that was truly dramatic, more romance, than will ever be seen again on those sunny shores. The aroma of it all lingers there still. . . . [I]n fact, it can never be quite lost, so long as there is left standing one such house as the Señora Moreno’s. . . .

The Señora Moreno’s house was one of the best specimens to be found in California of the representative house of the half barbaric, half elegant, wholly generous and free-handed life led there by Mexican men and women of degree.

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43 As Paul Connerton notes, social groups are cohesive to the extent that they share social memories. According to Connerton, shared images of the past are often used to legitimate current social orders.
Here, place becomes not simply a holder for memory, but a physical manifestation of the past; spatial dimensions and temporal dimensions become conflated as Jackson’s California is both the place and past. Readers responded also to the benign descriptions of a Mission system, like the abiding concern of Father Salvierderra for his parishioners, as a valid record of a historical past that they could admire and celebrate as their own. By providing readers with a clear images of the past around which to organize “memories” of this romanticized past, Jackson contributed—however inadvertently—to the appropriation of California landscape and history by her readers. Crucially, this identification of California depends upon a romantic Spanish mythology intimately connected with California’s landscape. Kevin Starr suggests that even into the 1930s, the Ramona myth was the most powerful myth by which Southern California identified itself (to itself and others). He argues that Southern Californians “appropriated the characters, mood, and plot of Ramona as the basis of a public myth which conferred romance upon a new American region” (55).

Although Ramona did not, as critics like Starr, McWilliams, or Richard Dillon suggest, single-handedly generate the “Spanish fantasy heritage” glorifying a mythical

44 Jackson invokes this rich past through vivid descriptions of the Señora’s wedding ceremonies, which “were the most splendid ever seen in the country... The feast lasted three days, open tables to everybody; singing, dancing, eating, drinking, and making merry... The Indians came in bands, singing songs and bringing gifts” (22-3). This evocation of a past era of light-hearted celebration and romance was calculated to appeal to readers’ interests in exotic, historic locales. Jackson describes also the Catholic religious rites that made up a large part of the culture: “Father Salvierderra, in gorgeous vestments, coming, at close of the services, slowly down the aisle, the close-packed rows of worshippers parting to the right and left to let him through, all looking up eagerly for his blessing, women giving him offerings of fruit or flowers, and holding up their babies that he might lay his hands on their heads” (21). Such warm religious scenes may have been intended in part to allay anti-Catholic sentiment among readers, but they also serve to emphasize the appealing, if exotic, nature of the novel’s locale.

45 However, Goldman also defends Jackson against critics like Starr, by suggesting that Jackson, unlike other pastoral writers of the era, did not attempt to naturalize the U.S.-Mexican political conflict and instead exposed and critiqued U.S. imperialist politics for its effect on Indian communities.
idealized past of Spanish dons and ladies and a benign mission system, it did
significantly (albeit unintentionally) promote it. Jackson’s sentimental and nostalgic
portrait of the genteel Spanish and Mission cultures articulated and gave form to the
longings of other settlers in the 1880s. According to Goldman, the mission system
served as an appropriate mythical cultural identity for Anglo Americans searching for a
past. The nostalgia for an imaginary past allowed Anglo-American settlers to appropriate
an imaginary and idealized past for their own and signaled the end of Spanish culture in
California: after all, nostalgia exists primarily for things and places that no longer exist.

In addition to creating a usable past, Jackson’s rhetorical uses of space functioned
to familiarize the landscape for Anglo-American occupation. Although, as DeLyser
suggests, the rich landscape descriptions may have created an exotic locale that drew
tourists, most people do not want to actually live in an exotic location. To live in a place
requires not only memories endowing a place with significance, but, as Kolodny
demonstrates in her study of women’s writings about the West, refiguring that place in
familiar terms. Anglo-American settlers in California in the latter part of the nineteenth-
century expressed the need for a language or framework with which to understand the

46 McWilliams, in musing over the inexplicable rise of this Spanish fantasy past, writes the following about
Jackson: “And of course it would be a tourist, a goggle-eyed umbrella-packing tourist, who first discovered
the past of Southern California and peopled it with curious creatures of her own invention” (71).
47 For a nuanced overview of this fantasy heritage (including Californios’ own embrace of aspects of the
myth, particularly their implied Spanish heritage and twentieth century challenges to it), see F. Arturo
Rosales, “‘Fantasy Heritage’ Reexamined: Race and Class in the Writings of the Bandinin Family Authors
and Other Californios, 1828-1965.”
48 Senier suggests, however, that this nostalgia may stem as much from an appreciation for communal
landholding as a paternalistic longing for an imperial past.
49 As Padget explains, Jackson’s writing shows evidence of “imperialist nostalgia. . . . the process whereby
members of a colonizing society come to mourn the passing of the formerly autonomous culture their
society has defeated and incorporated” (844). Goldman notes a curious anachronism in the literature of this
era, which both admired the idealized Spanish past and derided its Mexican present as inferior.
50 For instance, the women in Kolodny’s study made the West familiar and habitable by conceptualizing it
as a kind of garden.
unfamiliar landscape. In the 1896-7 volume of Charles Fletcher Lummis’s promotional magazine, *Land of Sunshine*, E. S. Thatcher writes,

> We Southern Californians are set to learn new songs in a land foreign to our traditions. And not to learn them only, but to make them . . . . And to make new songs means to have a new heart, trained to this un-Saxon environment, and so made fit to read the strange communications that travel in cipher overhead. (111)

Thatcher suggests that, although settlers arrive in California with cultural baggage that influences their response to the landscape, they lack an appropriate interpretive framework. The author concludes: “Within the bounds of our own country we Saxons are to build a chapter of American life that shall fit a semi-tropic, semi-arid setting; to enter on this sunlit empire and make it ours” (112). The problem then, for Thatcher and for others, was to generate some sort of orientation that would allow settlers to “enter on this sunlit empire and make it ours”—to sufficiently familiarize the landscape for settlement.

The Spanish “fantasy heritage” described above offered some orientation. Some of the earlier brochures for California also provided necessary orientation by comparing California to Italy and the European Mediterranean (Perry)—by making the landscape thus familiar, promotional material allowed people to inhabit the land. Similarly, Jackson’s novel provides readers with “memories” of a historic past that color the space of California for them, imbue things with a sense of familiarity, and allow inhabitation.

The carefully drawn local color elements that Jackson included in her novel to draw readers into her story succeeded perhaps too well—although they did not necessarily garner the sympathy for Indians that she desired, they drew thousands of tourists to California. Wagner attributes Jackson’s contribution to the bourgeoning tourist
industry primarily to her use of local color genre writing, which simultaneously elicits sympathy and encourages commodification. Local color writing, which had been popularized by writing about the south, “made local cultures intelligible by making them functionally interchangeable” (2). In other words, to return to Casey’s formulation, Jackson’s use of local color writing familiarized the landscape for her readers by presenting it in a form that they could readily understand. In addition, her descriptions of natural landscapes spawned a number of books endeavoring to “authenticate” the story by authenticating the details of the landscape. James, for instance, spends a good portion of *Through Ramona’s Country* verifying the plants, places, and people of Jackson’s novel. If the spatial elements of the novel seemed unfamiliar and exotic to Jackson’s audience upon first reading, repeated exposure throughout the novel has the effect of making them seem familiar, of allowing “thousands of far away strangers to sit with closed eyes, dreaming of this fair land of Southern California” (James 363) and making Southern California a recognizable part of the American national landscape.

Ultimately, place is largely defined by the people who inhabit it—what many readers took from the novel was the Americanization of California space. Not only did the novel’s spatial discourses create a usable past for settlers and refigure the land in familiar terms for inhabitation, but the final placement of characters seem to underscore not Indian but Anglo-American right of occupancy. When, after their exile from San Pasquale, Ramona suggests that they might relocate themselves in Los Angeles,

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51 It should be noted, however, that such commodification was not inevitably the result of regional writing; McCullough makes a compelling case that such arguments often serve to diminish the work of regional writing, which was primarily written by women, and suggests that, in fact, such regional writing often serves to highlight regional differences and critique the myth of a homogeneous nation.

52 These works include Lummis’s *The Home of Ramona* (1888), Clough’s *Ramona’s Marriage Place* (1910), and James’s *Through Ramona’s Country* (1913).
Alessandro violently rejects such a notion, suggesting that to live among whites would be their annihilation. Instead, he chooses further exile, a place where white men have not been, and, consequently a space they have not defined or articulated. And when Ramona feels most at home with the Indians (in San Pasquale and Saboba), it is because she has become “one of them” (278). Felipe’s return to Mexico with Ramona occurs not so much because they have been driven out, but because the environment has become uncongenial—the space is not their own, neither are the people.\(^{53}\) In the final analysis, both the domestic and natural elements of Jackson’s rhetoric of space provide for Anglo-American readers (and potential settlers) a language with which to define their experience of California space.

**Conclusion**

The issue of space remains, I maintain, fundamental to the novel. Most studies of *Ramona* have been interested in race rather than space—but the two are closely connected. Issues of space in the novel, particularly the conflicts over land, are concerned with border negotiation in much the same way as racial mixing. Susan Gillman suggests that the Stowe-Jackson discourse about mestiza culture that José Martí identifies disrupts traditional narratives (both American and Latin American) by drawing attention to the borderlands of the Black Atlantic and Spanish Borderlands. Goldman also suggests that mixed blood marriages (Ramona’s as well as her parents) symbolize “an overtly historical struggle to (re)define borders” (67). The struggle over physical spaces of land is

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\(^{53}\) Significantly, Yolanda Venegas points out that “at the novel’s end the only people of color left in Jackson’s turn-of-the-century California are the Mexican laborers, and the Mexicana maids” (70), suggesting that the novel ultimately works to reestablish strict racial hierarchies.
thus reenacted across and through corporeal bodies. As Casey recognizes, the “lived body itself serves as a place” (195)—it is itself a place and it moves from place to place, articulating space by its movement. Thus questions of race, which are often associated with physical bodies, are not long separated from questions of space. Whatever questions of interpretation are raised regarding Ramona, they return, ultimately to particularities of place and the socio-historical contexts that imbue those spaces with meaning.

If, as de Certeau suggests, spaces are largely articulated by our movement through them, then the spaces of the novel afford multiple routes, different interpretations yielding different relationships between points. On the one hand, Jackson intended descriptions of the domestic spaces of the novel and many of the natural spaces to shape a journey for readers toward a sympathetic understanding of the Mission Indians and their continued displacement from their homes. On the other hand, the very discourses Jackson invoked drew attention away from her aims by simultaneously invoking an understanding of space (and time) that foresaw the spatial and temporal fate of the Indians as displacement. Although her use of domestic exile may have roused some sympathy, discourses of domesticity were themselves predicated on precisely this exile of foreign elements. Similarly, although discourses of wilderness may establish the moral superiority of Native Americans, the wilderness myth demands unoccupied territory for Anglo-American spiritual redemption. Both domestic and natural discourses provide for a dual displacement of Californios and Indians. Following this narrative trajectory, readers arrive at a nationalized space that has appropriated Indian land and Californio history and is open for their inhabitation—if, of course, they are Anglo-American.
These ideological laden discourses, or terministic screens, determine not only the ways arguments like Jackson’s are read, but they dictate the kinds of appeals that can operate in a given rhetorical setting. In this, terministic screens can be seen to function like Bakhtin’s chronotopes, or particular space-time configurations that include “the ways in which a text draws upon, constitutes, or appeals to particular notions of space and time” (Jack 53-4). As Jordynn Jack has argued, chronotopes influence the shape of arguments because they set important limits on the kinds of appeals that operate in a given rhetorical setting. Because chronotopes work within particular ideological systems (and utilize particular terministic screens), only those appeals are effective that function within the logic and values of that ideology. For Jackson, this effect of spatial discourses meant that not only were audiences able to pick up on the “possibilities implicit in [her] particular choice of terms” (Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 46)—including possibilities Jackson herself seems unaware of—but it meant that the appeals she made on behalf of the Mission Indians failed largely because they did not make sense in terms of the larger ideological systems her spatial terminology invoked.
"It makes me heart-sick to think how unjustly the native Californians have been treated. I assure you, sir, that not one American in a million knows of this outrage. If they did, they would denounce it in the bitterest language; they would not tolerate it."—[Clarence Darrell to Don Mariano Alamar], María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*, p. 145

"Unjust laws despoiled them, but what of this? Poor they are, but who is to care, or investigate the cause of their poverty? The thriving American says that the native Spaniards are lazy and stupid and thriftless, and as the prosperous know it all, and are almost infallible, the fiat has gone forth, and the Spaniards of California are not only despoiled of all their earthly possessions, but must also be bereft of sympathy, because the world says they do not deserve it."—María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*, p. 351

When María Amparo Ruiz de Burton published her historical romance *The Squatter and the Don* in 1885, about the relationships between Anglo-American settlers and native Californians of Spanish descent (Californios, as they called themselves), the social position of the Californios had decreased dramatically from their preeminence under Spanish and Mexican rule. Far from the wealthy, generous, and society-loving people described so romantically at the outset of *Ramona*, Californios were increasingly being displaced by incoming Anglo-American settlers who often squatted on their land, by the high costs of litigation to prove their right to their land, and by a general unfamiliarity with Anglo-American commercial practices, with which they were often unable to compete. Moreover, many Anglo-American settlers classed the native Californios with lower class Mexican Americans and Native Americans, and viewed them contemptuously as lazy and improvident people who did not deserve to keep their

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1 For an explanation of the term Californio and additional historical context for late nineteenth-century California, please see the Interchapter on California.
Finally, incoming settlers also sought to reduce the political influence wielded by Californios, some of whom still held positions of power in the territory immediately following the Mexican American war and were considered white enough to vote by the territorial (and later state) government, hold office, have laws printed in Spanish as well as English, and block citizenship of indigenous groups (González, “Romancing Hegemony”). In The Squatter and the Don, Ruiz de Burton seeks to generate sympathy (even outrage) for displaced Californios by critically examining the factors driving Californios into a social decline: the greed of Anglo-American settlers; the corrosive influence of railroad monopolists who schemed to prevent the completion of the Texas Pacific railroad which promised prosperity to Southern California; and the corrupt legislature (both national and regional) that passed laws aiding the squatters and monopolists in their unethical pursuit of wealth.

Alongside her critique of corrupt Anglo-American practices—and at times in odd tension with her critique—Ruiz de Burton sought to ensure the inclusion of her people in

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2 Even before the war, Anglo-American settlers in California increasingly chafed at being governed by a people they perceived to be inferior (Monroy). These settlers saw Californio men as proud, lazy, and extravagant. Part of this perception stemmed from differing cultural values: for the Californios, their very extravagance and generosity was a sign of their gentility. However, Californio women (Californianas) were largely considered exempt from these negative stereotypes—in part because Californios and Anglos held similar sexual standards for women and both cultures valued feminine domesticity (Hurtado), in part because many early Anglo-American settlers married into Californio families (particularly those involved in the hide and tallow trade), and in part because the general disenfranchisement of women meant that granting citizenship to Californianas was much less threatening than granting similar rights to Californio men. The acceptance for Californianas, particularly those who marry white men, fits with the dichotomy between “good” and “bad” women typical of stereotypes of women of color: “Within this dichotomy, ‘good’ women of color are light-skinned, civilized (Christian), and virgins. They are ‘good’ because they give aid, or sacrifice themselves, so that white men may live; white men marry them. ‘Bad’ women are dark-skinned, savage (non-Christian), and whores; white men do not marry them” (Casteñada, “Women of Color,” 75).  

3 During the three decades following the end of the Mexican American war, Californios began to lose the political power they had long held in the territory, in part due to their loss of land following the Land Act of 1851 and the increasing pressures of Anglo-American settlers, who resented the prominent role the conquered people played in their governance. In addition, national debates about reconstruction in the South following the Civil War and the extension of suffrage to black males simultaneously challenged notions of citizenship belonging exclusively to whites and led to renewed efforts to preserve citizenship precisely on racial grounds, in California as well as the rest of the nation.
the new social order by reinstating their upper-class status. Many literary scholars offer readings of Ruiz de Burton’s strategies for claiming “whiteness” for her characters: for instance, Jennifer Tuttle demonstrates how Ruiz de Burton draws on discourses of nervousness, a middle and upper-class complaint, to suggest her characters’ social class; John González argues both that frequent blushing by the Californio characters exhibits their “whiteness” (“The Whiteness of the Historical Blush”) and that interracial marriages help establish Californio place in the social hierarchy (“Romancing Hegemony”). Despite these nuanced readings, literary and rhetorical studies of Ruiz de Burton’s work often overlook the ways in which space informs the construction of race. Yet the way we understand particular spaces often structures the way we understand the social hierarchies that get enacted in those spaces (Duncan). Thus, intervening in the perception of spaces can conceivably influence the perception of social relationships in those spaces.

This chapter focuses on the ways that Ruiz de Burton intervenes in the perception of Southern California spaces to challenge existing social hierarchies. First, by

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4 Although Rosaura Sánchez argues that the essential conflict Ruiz de Burton addresses in her writing was that of the “nuestra raza” (the Latino race) and Anglo-Saxons (“Dismantling the Colossus” 121), subsequent scholars have suggested that a more telling class-based contrast emerges in her work, between the Californios and lower class mestizas and Indians. As scholar José Aranda notes, although Ruiz de Burton was critical of some American institutions (such as the monopolies and western expansion), she also “represents a group of elite individuals who resisted their social and class demotion after 1848 but nevertheless had more in common with their conquerors than they were willing to acknowledge” (“Contradictory Impulses” 125). Like her good friend Mariano Vallejo, Ruiz de Burton questions U.S. colonial policies from the view of a marginalized elite, but her invocation of an idealized pre-1848 Californio community posits the eventual integration of Californios into the new white nation—in other words, she critiqued as an outsider the community she eventually hoped to join (Pérez). And in fact, as Kate McCullough points out, Ruiz de Burton often downplays the ethnic differences between her English-speaking Californios and Anglo Americans in her novels, emphasizing instead acceptable differences of religion and ethnic culture.

5 Ruiz de Burton was not the only Californio seeking for ways to consolidate her people’s social position as elites; many Californios emphasized their Spanish blood as a way of showing a European heritage similar to that of white settlers. Ruiz de Burton uses a similar rhetorical strategy in her novel, depicting the Alamar sons as gentlemen with English or German appearance; Mercedes has blue eyes and blond hair.

6 Spatial theorist Linda McDowell explains that “the ways in which bodies are presented to and seen by others vary according to the spaces and places in which they find themselves” (34).
manipulating existing spatial discourses (both about California and the South, as a parallel conquered region) and social conventions of place and movement, Ruiz de Burton presents Californios as cultured, leisured individuals with a right to citizenship in the U.S. Second, in order to critique the U.S. imperialist policies that resulted in the displacement of the Californios, Ruiz de Burton analyzes the transformation of land in California and the way this transformation has altered social hierarchies. Her critical assessment of this transformation allows her to not only condemn the governmental policies that enabled it, but to make an argument for a revised view of California land that restores the Californios to their rightful place in the social hierarchy.

Placing María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and *The Squatter and the Don*

“An underdog with aristocratic pretensions and a sense of superiority, a liberal with monarchist tendencies, a U.S. citizen with a racial memory of her latinidad, an anti-imperialist with opportunistic tendencies, [María Amparo Ruiz de Burton] strongly defended her fellow *californios*, whom she nevertheless tended to see as indolent and unclear as to the true dimensions of the changes at stake.”—Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, *Conflicts of Interest: The Letters of María Amparo Ruiz de Burton*, p. x

“There is more love at first sight in this story than one usually finds in real life, but this may be attributed to the effect of the semi-tropical climate.”—Anonymous reviewer, *San Francisco Chronicle* (1885?) (qtd. in Sánchez and Pita, 569)

Before providing my analysis of Ruiz de Burton’s rhetorics of space, some background to the author and her novel seems in order. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton was the first Mexican-American woman to publish novels written in English: *Who Would Have Thought It* (1872) and *The Squatter and the Don* (1885).\(^7\) Born in Baja (Lower)

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\(^7\) Both novels are critical of aspects of Anglo-American society and represent Californios as admirable, upper-class individuals. However, because *Who Would have Thought It?* is set primarily in New England, I have chosen to focus my critique on *The Squatter and the Don*, because its regional setting is more pertinent to my discussion of spatial rhetorics in the American West.
California in 1832, she moved with her family during her teens to Alta (Upper) California following the defeat of Mexico in the Mexican American war. Shortly after, at age sixteen, she married Captain Henry Burton, an officer with the United States army. As his wife, she spent a considerable amount of time in the eastern United States, moving among the upper classes of American society. After her husband’s death in 1869, she returned to California and settled in San Diego.


In many ways, Ruiz de Burton was an unusual woman for her times: as a woman who straddled two national borders, she moved freely in Anglo and Californio society.¹⁰

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⁸ As her family had been among those who offered some support to American soldiers during their occupation of Baja California, they feared reprisals from Mexican patriots and were granted safe-harbor in Alta California.
⁹ Henry Burton was a lieutenant colonel at the time of their marriage.
¹⁰ Scholars such as Aranda, González and Manuel Rodríguez point out how difficult it is to categorize Ruiz de Burton. Aranda notes her elitist sympathies (“Contradictory Impulses”), while González suggests that her literary recovery illustrates one of the difficulties with Chicano nationalism (particularly as it fuels literary recovery projects), in that a nineteenth-century historical romance by and about elite Californios does not necessarily represent or prefigure the interests of twentieth-century working class Chicanos.
Her dual perspective enabled her sharp critiques of U.S. imperialism, but it also engendered ambivalent loyalties. As someone who benefited from her ties to Anglo-American elites, but who also saw much to criticize in U.S. affairs, Ruiz de Burton often experienced what her biographers, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, describe as a “conflict of interest.” Ruiz de Burton’s long-time friend and correspondent, Mariano Vallejo (the model for Don Mariano) similarly characterized her as “un alma atravesada” (translation: a split and fissured sense of self and place [Sánchez and Pita 74]).

In addition to her dual nationality, Ruiz de Burton also crossed gender boundaries: instead of contenting herself with a domestic role in the private sphere, she actively participated in the traditionally male realms of commerce and property management. She was a lifelong litigant in courts over her property, started a cement company, made plans for building a reservoir on her property, wrote a mining prospectus, and actively sought investors for the development of her properties.

As a Californiana, Ruiz de Burton experienced personally many of the difficult socio-economic conditions facing Californios post-conquest that she depicts in her novels, such as court battles over property and financial losses. After her husband’s death, she was often financially insolvent and involved in drawn-out court proceedings.

(“Romancing Hegemony”). Similarly, Rodriguez points out that Ruiz de Burton’s protest emerges from a class-based position that current Chicano/as would not share today.

11 This insider/outsider positioning also enables Ruiz de Burton’s rearticulation of space within the novel—feminist geographer Gillian Rose suggests that alternatives to masculinized space (with its rigid public/private binaries) stem from a feminist spatiality that relies on inhabiting multiple spatial positions at once, thereby resisting and deconstructing spatial binaries. Ruiz de Burton’s ability to see local and national issues as both an insider and an outsider also allow her to more easily see alternatives to the existing constructions of California space.

12 Although the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promised protection for Californio lands, following the Land Act of 1851 up to 40 percent of Californios lost their landholdings (Monroy), not only because of denied claims, but because of high litigation costs (McWilliams). Most Californios held much of their wealth in land, rather than more liquid resources, and were forced to sell their land to pay litigation expenses. Paul Gates points out, however, that contrary to the impression that many old families lost their land, some 494 of the 813 claims that appeared before the Land Commission belonged to land grants bestowed during the 1840s, in anticipation of the conquest.
over her land, both in San Diego and in Baja California.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, she may have been affected by the prejudice that faced many Californios (if she was not personally affected, then she surely knew individuals who were affected by it). Like her fellow Californios, Ruiz de Burton was also subjected to the political anxieties of white settlers concerned with questions about what role Californios ought to play in their new nation. Although Ruiz de Burton was guaranteed citizenship as the wife of an American military officer, she was nonetheless concerned with the tenuous citizenship status of most of her people.

The socio-economic concerns of the Californios provided Ruiz de Burton with a powerful exigence for her second novel, \textit{The Squatter and the Don} (1885), which she published in 1885, under the pseudonym C. Loyal\textsuperscript{14} with Samuel Carson and Co., of San Francisco.\textsuperscript{15} Because the magazines that carried announcements and reviews of her work aimed primarily at a white, middle-class audience (and no acknowledgement is made of

\textsuperscript{13}Ruiz de Burton spent long years in court litigating for the rights to Rancho Jamul near San Diego, and even after her claims were upheld in 1876, she was plagued with squatters and creditors (she had borrowed money to help fund her legal defense of her property). She was eventually forced, in 1880, to sell the land to pay her debts (Sánchez and Pita). Additionally, her financial prospects, like those of her characters, were severely compromised by the failure of the Texas Pacific (Gilbert).

\textsuperscript{14}“C” for \textit{Ciudadano} (Citizen) and “Loyal” for \textit{Leal}. This signature (\textit{Citudano Leal}) was commonly used on official correspondence in nineteenth-century Mexico (from Jennifer M. Acker, “A Note on the Text,” \textit{The Squatter and the Don}, p. xix).

\textsuperscript{15}Unlike \textit{Ramona}, we have only a few clues as to this novel’s possible reception. Its publication was announced in a number of national magazines, such as \textit{The Critic: A Literary Weekly, Critical and Eclectic} and \textit{The Independent}, without review. Charles Howard Shinn, in his review of the first fifty years of literature in California (a characterization that implicitly assumes that only Anglo-American settlers were capable of producing “literature”), mentions her novel only briefly and with no recognition that the author was a Californiana: “Loyal’s ‘Squatters and the Don’ [sic] serve to keep record of struggles against the railroad.” However useful her novel is for its insight into a particular aspect of California history, it is not the “really great novel” that Shinn hopes will someday “embody[.] this second, and still-continuing conquest of a vast domain.” Local papers, such as the \textit{Daily Alta California} and the \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, found the novel an engaging tale, but they tended to think its claims against the railroad were overstated (Sánchez and Pita). One such review explicitly connected \textit{The Squatter and the Don} with \textit{Ramona}, writing, that “like Mrs. Jackson’s ‘Ramona,’ it is an eloquent and impassioned plea for the holders of Spanish grants, whose patrimony was filched from them, acre by acre, by squatters” (qtd. in Sánchez and Pita 568). Interestingly, \textit{The Squatter and the Don} was also the first case of censorship in the San Diego library, as some of the library trustees felt it should be removed because of its attacks on San Diego affairs. Somewhat ironically, the denizens of Southern California (including, presumably, some of the residents of San Diego) also protested the publication of Jackson’s \textit{Ramona} as libel—until it became clear that the novel would serve as a powerful tourist draw (McWilliams).
her ethnic status as a Californiana), it seems reasonable to assume that the primary audience for her novel is a white, middle-class audience. Like the audience for most romances of the era, this audience is presumably composed primarily of women. This, then, was the audience that Ruiz de Burton hoped to influence with her rhetorical appeals on behalf of Californios.

The novel details the interactions among several families living on the Alamar rancho near San Diego in the 1870s: the Alamares, an old Californio family; the Mechlin family, an upper-class New England family who have lawfully purchased their land from the Alamar family; the Darrells, an Anglo-American Catholic family who have laid claim to part of the Alamar rancho; and several squatters. Although William Darrell seems to serve as the nominal “squatter” from the title (and indeed, he fiercely defends “squatter’s rights”), the Darrell family are not, in fact, squatters. Early in the novel, Mary Darrell, the mother and moral voice of the family, instructs her eldest son Clarence to purchase their land from Don Mariano Alamar (although he must do this in secret, lest it be perceived as an insult to his father’s judgment). The central romance of the story is between Clarence Darrell and Mercedes Alamar, whose love for one another is thwarted first by Doña Josefa’s opposition to Clarence as the son of a squatter (a difficulty resolved when Don Mariano reveals that Clarence has in fact purchased the land), and later by William Darrell’s deliberate insults of Don Mariano and the Alamar family after he discovers his son’s seeming duplicity in secretly purchasing the land. Of course, the

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16 Rodríguez suggests that Ruiz de Burton wrote with two audiences in mind: an Anglo-American readership that required long narrative (or character-voiced) explanations of the abuses against California, and a Californio readership that would recognize encoded references to significant cultural details, such as Mercedes’ birthday on the fifth of May (the day Mexico celebrates the 1861 defeat of the French army) and the fact that Mercedes’ wedding to Clarence is initially set for the sixteenth of September (the date of Mexican independence from Spain).
two ultimately surmount these obstacles, and most scholars see their union as symbolic of the potential union of their races.17 Drawing from Dorris Sommer’s term, “Foundational Fictions,” John González suggests that the interracial marriages in the novel (during the course of the story, Lizzie Mechlin marries Gabriel Alamar, Elvira Alamar marries George Mechlin, and Victoriano Alamar courts Alice Darrell) reflect a common trope in nineteenth-century Latin American fiction; the union of different races suggests the imagined communal possibility for integration and citizenship (“Romancing Hegemony”).18

However, the real material of the story is not the romances tying the various families together, but the complex history underlying their stories. Ruiz de Burton first depicts the despoliation of California lands by squatters (whose acquisition of land and destruction of property is upheld by legislature), but her ultimate indictment is of the railroad monopolies (particularly the Central Pacific), who blight the prospects of Californios and squatters alike by thwarting plans to build the Texas Pacific railroad to San Diego.19

Although place and discourses about space are not the only topics of Ruiz de Burton’s novel, they are fundamental to her rhetorical purpose of elevating Californio status and critiquing the U.S. policies that threatened that status. Ruiz de Burton understood that “race” was read not simply through physical and behavioral signs, but

17 McCullough offers a particularly interesting read of this marriage, suggesting that the marriage works, ultimately, because Ruiz de Burton figures it as a mixed marriage terms of religious, regional, and cultural differences, not ethnic differences—i.e., a mixed marriage in the same sense that Clarence’s parents’ marriage is mixed (Mary Darrell is a Catholic Southerner of French descent; Clarence Darrell is a Protestant New Englander).
18 Ruiz de Burton would have been familiar with such literature; “The historical romance of Latin America provided a narrative strategy for articulating Californio citizenship within the post-Reconstruction reformation of national interests around race” (González “Romancing Hegemony,” 35).
19 The Sante Fe railroad was built to San Diego in 1885—but presumably that was “too late to revive Ruiz de Burton’s fortunes” (Gilbert, fn 80).
also through one’s relationship to land and the places one inhabits. Thus, for Ruiz de Burton, changing public perception of Californios involved ultimately harnessing and shaping cultural perceptions of their place (in its various manifestations)—their physical location, their citizenship status, and their social position. In order to rewrite the racial categorization (and the closely allied class affiliation) of Californios, Ruiz de Burton utilizes a number of place-based rhetorical strategies: she draws geographical parallels to align California with the South, making the region and its races comprehensible as part of a diverse national union; she borrows from promotional literature about California to make the region and its people attractive to Anglo Americans; and she uses the placement and movement of characters in specific landscapes to argue for particular class and racial hierarchies. In each case, she borrows and adapts existing discourses of space and place to make her arguments comprehensible to her predominantly Anglo-American audience. She uses these rhetorical strategies to argue that not only should California be considered a national space, but her native populations of Spanish descent should be considered citizens. Because, as Linda McDowell argues, the perception of space is closely connected with the perception of bodies within that space, Ruiz de Burton reformulates the class and racial status of Californios by rearticulating a sense of place in California.

Ruiz de Burton’s second aim—to critique Anglo-American practices that displace Californios physically and socially—also draws on spatially inflected rhetorics. Because changes in economic systems affect attitudes toward (and uses of) land, these changes necessarily transform social relationships as well.20 Ruiz de Burton deconstructs and critiques the transformed social relationships in California by critically assesses the

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20 For example, Mary Pat Brady argues that capitalist development “changes not simply the look of the land but social relationships as well” (4), as it changes the way workers relate to one another and to their employer as they develop the land.
transformations of space under Anglo-American occupation. By demonstrating the lack of harmony between Anglo-American squatters, the U.S. legislature, railroad monopolists, and the California landscape, Ruiz de Burton argues for a revised conception of space and social place that foregrounds the values and position of her beloved people.

Geographic Parallels with the South

“Well, the poor South is in pretty much the same fix that we are.”—[George Mechlin to his wife Elvira Alamar], *The Squatter and the Don*, p. 287

One of the formidable obstacles facing Ruiz de Burton as she attempted to rewrite Californio racial status was the inability of many Americans to understand existing racial categories in California. For most of the nineteenth-century, the U.S. saw racial categories primarily in terms of a black/white binary, with “mulatto” as a third racial category. Gradually, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese were added, but, according to nineteenth-century censuses, “Hispanic” was not a racial category—thus, the only way Anglo-Americans were able to understand Hispanic races was to impose alien racial structures on them (Bost). Most nineteenth-century visitors to the southwest saw Mexican Americans as either white or black (sometimes Indian), depending primarily on skin

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21 This kind of categorization would have been unfamiliar to Californios, for whom racial categories were relatively fluid (census records indicate that some individuals frequently changed categories, presumably in response to increased wealth and social status). The primary racial distinction for nineteenth-century Californios was *gente de razón* and *gente sin razón*, those with and without reason, referring respectively to Spaniards and Indians, although there were, of course hierarchies within each category (Haas). The historical racial mixing of Mexican Americans was also perplexing to Anglo-American settlers, who regarded it largely as taboo; however, in Mexico, such racial mixing had a nationalistic aim, as Spanish settlers were historically encouraged to mate with native populations as a means of settling new territories (Bost, Hurtado).
color, although class also played a part in determining race (Bost). Because Californio racial category (and attendant social class) depended largely on Anglo-American perceptions, the issue of whiteness became a crucial one for many Californios: their elite class status was seriously threatened by the tendency of most Anglo-American settlers to equate all Californians (whether of Spanish or mestiza descent) with Mexicans (Sánchez and Pita).

Throughout The Squatter and the Don, Ruiz de Burton addresses this threat by attempting to realign Californio racial categories through a rhetorical alignment of California with the Southern states, a move that allows her to recast an unfamiliar region in terms of the familiar. Moreover, this alignment allows her to contend with national perspectives that saw California (and her native populations) as marginal. As with the other rhetorical strategies I discuss in this chapter, Ruiz de Burton argues for a particular social relationship by creating a positive perception of California space that draws on familiar discourses.

Ruiz de Burton connects the Southwest with the South through societal similarities and their economic link through the proposed Texas Pacific railroad. Like the Southern aristocracy, Ruiz de Burton’s Californios had been dispossessed by armies of invading Yankees. In addition, the large ranchos of the Californios roughly parallel the southern plantations and are depicted in Ruiz de Burton’s novel as a kind of benign

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22 However, class does not seem to have played as large a role as skin color in determining race; as Monroy points out, at least one Californio owner of a large rancho was unable to testify in court because his mixed background meant that he was labeled Indian.
23 The implicit parallels between these two regions, which Ruiz de Burton uses to foreground the social claims of the Californios and to challenge the geographical centering of the United States, have been noted by several scholars, including Suzanne Bost, Aranda, González, and Vincent Pérez.
24 As one who had lived on both coasts and had social entrée into both elite Californio and Anglo-American circles, Ruiz de Burton would have been well aware of both Anglo-American incomprehension of California classes and this border mentality.
patriarchy dependent upon the labor of servants. The women of California, like the women of the South, are quintessential ladies: beautiful, modest, and sheltered. These parallels are more implied than stated outright, but it seems reasonable to assume that these parallels were intentional. Ruiz de Burton was acquainted with at least one preeminent southern lady, Varina Davis, the wife of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Ruiz de Burton met Varina Davis when Jefferson Davis was held as a prisoner of war under Henry Burton’s charge after the Civil War. The two women reportedly enjoyed their sessions vilifying “Yankee” aggression (Aranda “Contradictory Influences”; Alemán “María Amparo Ruiz de Burton). Moreover, in a letter describing Ruiz de Burton, Varina Davis draws an explicit parallel between the South and the Southwest (Aranda), which suggests that she and Ruiz de Burton may have discussed this parallel in their discussions. This implied parallel helps suggest that the Californios be viewed in the same light as the vanquished Southern aristocracy: defeated individuals who nonetheless retain their class status and citizenship rights.

The strongest link between the two regions in the novel is an economic link: in the difficult reconstruction following their conquest, both regions (according to Ruiz de Burton’s account), looked toward the creation of the Texas Pacific railroad to restore some of their prosperity. This proposed railroad would physically link the South to the Southwest, and would tie their economic futures together. While George Mechlin is in New York visiting his uncle, he begins to lose hope in the future of the Texas Pacific, telling his uncle that he fears Congress “will not hear the wail of the prostrate South, or the impassionate appeals of California” (191). When Congress fails to assist the Texas

25 Bost and Pérez both note the stylistic similarities between Ruiz de Burton’s novel and similar nostalgic romances written after the Civil War, an observation that further suggests that the social similarities between the regions was intentional.
Pacific as they had the Central Pacific, their moral failure becomes “the blight, spread over Southern California, and over the entire Southern States” (374). Thus, the economically depressed regions are alike oppressed by legislative corruption.

The conclusion of the novel, in its indictment of monopolies, also emphasizes the geographic parallels between the South and Southern California and presents an explicit appeal for the consideration of Californios as citizens. In the concluding (and much discussed) paragraph of the novel, Ruiz de Burton writes that the legislature ought to legislate according to the will of the people. “If they do not, then we shall—as Channing said ‘kiss the foot that tramples us!’ and ‘in anguish of spirit’ must wait and pray for a Redeemer who will emancipate the white slaves of California” (375). Significantly, this final appeal, although it draws on this geographic parallel between Southern California and the South, also inverts the association of white Californios with dispossessed southern whites by equating the Californios’ white bodies with black slaves. As González notes, by the novel’s end, Ruiz de Burton has aligned corporate monopolies with corrupt slaveholders and equates white labor under a tyrannical monopoly-driven economy with slavery (“Romancing Hegemony”). Significantly, as the emancipation of the slaves led to a reconsideration of their citizenship status and the eventual extension of the franchise to black men (even if such rights were contested in the aftermath of Reconstruction), this

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26 The novel suggests that this failure comes in large part because the railroad barons of the Central Pacific brought their considerable influence to bear on the legislature as they feared competition for their Southern Pacific Railroad.

27 Scholars currently dispute who exactly these “white slaves” are. Pita and Sánchez suggest that these white slaves are all those oppressed by the monopolists: Californios and squatters alike, all the residents of San Diego. Rodriguez, however, suggests that this is a classist alignment of Californios with an Anglo-American elite that, “rather than making theirs a universal situation, works to separate them from the rest of the population of Spanish-Mexican descent” (47).

28 This argument contradicts the trend of the nineteenth-century working class, which moved from a rhetoric of “white slavery” to “wage slavery,” as the notion of white slavery emphasized class (as whiteness was not the marker differentiating slave from free), while wage slavery “signified the reorganization of that identity not solely around a self-conscious awareness of class but around nationalism and race” (González, “Romancing Hegemony,” 29).
appeal can also be seen as a plea on behalf of the Californios. In Ruiz de Burton’s reasoning, if African Americans (whose black bodies and lower socioeconomic status mark them clearly as “Others”) still merit inclusion in the nation-state, how much more do the Californios, as “white” slaves, merit inclusion?

This final appeal to a “Redeemer” is, however, as González points out, a potentially fraught appeal. On the one hand, this appeal can refer to Christian salvation, to Lincoln’s Emancipation proclamation, and to other positive sources of redemption from tyranny. On the other hand, the Redeemers were a group of Southern Democrats who were viewed as “the liberators of a distraught (white) South from the ravages of black misrule” (30). Vincent Pérez, in fact, reads this appeal for emancipation of the “white slaves of California” as a move of solidarity with the South, referring to this Southern political party, and conferring “‘whiteness’ on the dispossessed Californios” (36). These problematic associations may stem, in part, from Ruiz de Burton’s tendency to invoke potentially conflicting alignments and rhetorics to suit her various purpose—in this case, her alignment of white Californios with Southern gentility and former slaves varies according to her need to establish the upper-class status of Californios and her need to emphasize their oppression under the current government.

By emphasizing the social and economic parallels of the two regions, Ruiz de Burton attempts to recast the more exotic society of California in terms her readers nationwide might understand. As Bryan Wagner has suggested, local color writing often works to make different regions of the country “functionally interchangeable” (2).29 The parallels between California and the South place the Mexican/American conflict in the

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29 However, this reading has been challenged by other regionalist scholars, like McCullough, who argue that regional writing serves instead to challenge the homogeneous construction of nation.
familiar terms of the North/South conflict (Bost), and allow readers to understand Californio frustration with Anglo-American settlers in a context that allows for regional critique without regional alienation (i.e., California, like the South, could feel animosity toward the North without jeopardizing its place in the union). In addition, these parallels provide Ruiz de Burton with a way to frame racial relations in California in terms of the southern black/white dichotomy—but as a dichotomy relying on social position rather than skin color, thus guaranteeing Californios “white” status. Since this parallel places Californios in the same position as the displaced southern gentry, their class status implicitly translates to the same racial category as these southerners. Finally, this alignment allows Ruiz de Burton to rally the same sympathy for dispossessed Californios that was expressed for the deposed southern aristocracy.

The alignment of the Southwest with the South not only allows Ruiz de Burton to rewrite Californio racial categorization, but it allows her to revise California’s place in national affairs. The alignment between the South and the Southwest challenges the conceptualization of the United States along a North-South axis (particularly after the Civil War) and the political centrality of the Northeast by reminding readers that other regions have important economic contributions to make to the nation. As literary critic Anne Goldman points out, the realignment of the nation along a South-Southwest axis also helps relocate politically marginalized people to a more central position in the nation (“Satire and Sentimentality”). Since borders constitute nationality by indicating points of exclusion (Kaplan, McCullough), this relocation also challenges the construction of the

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30 Other literary critics make similar arguments: Bost argues that by aligning the southwestern and southeastern margins of the U.S., Ruiz de Burton makes these margins (rather than the Northeast) the center of the nation. McCullough argues that “by shifting the locus of ‘America’ from New England to Southern California, and by shifting the salient geographic distinction from North/South to East/West, Ruiz de Burton recasts America” (11).
nation’s ideal citizens: by relocating the axis of the country, Ruiz de Burton suggests that individuals positioned along a national axis cannot be considered “border-line” and cannot, simply by virtue of their location, be excluded from citizenship.

Finally, this geographic connection—particularly its emphasis on dispossession—becomes critical to understanding Ruiz de Burton’s rearticulation of California spaces. The alignment with the South suggests that, like many post-bellum Southern Writers, Ruiz de Burton saw a kind of organic connection between preservation of the land and preservation of one’s cultural inheritance. (One thinks of Scarlett O’Hara’s insistence on preserving Tara in *Gone with the Wind.*) As Pérez argues, *The Squatter and the Don* presents the hacienda (rancho) lifestyle as a model and cultural icon for the Mexican American community, rooting the positive values of a community, such as “cohesiveness, order, stability, interdependence,” in the land itself. However, it should also be noted that the understanding of California space that emerges through its alignment with the South carries with it specific consequences for the relationship of individuals in that space. If it does posit an organic connection between the land and one’s cultural inheritance, along with a cohesive and stable community, these characteristics are true

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31 This alignment also underscores Ruiz de Burton’s sense that space and time function differently in New England. According to Sánchez and Pita, her letters from New England stress the difference in space and speed, “from a pre-modern to modern time zone” (186). Brady suggests that shifts in spatio-temporal understandings are characteristic markers of border regions. Thus, it makes sense that Ruiz de Burton’s characterization of this border space would challenge the perceptions held of it by New Englanders, particularly as she also seems interested in challenging the general characterization of California as a border region.

32 In fact, Pérez argues that both Ruiz de Burton and her friend Mariano Vallejo argued for a vision of community that idealized the old socioeconomic order of the hacienda (rancho) community of Californios. Pérez suggests also that their literary strategies are very similar to those employed by the anti-Northern south, which offered a trenchant critique of northern capitalism while still retaining nostalgia for a conservative, elitist social order of the plantation. Bost, however, suggests that Ruiz de Burton’s writings differ significantly from some Southern writings by figuring the Southwest, rather than the Southeast, as the new moral center for the nation.

33 The connection of land ownership and citizenship, noted by McCullough, hearkens back to the same liberal idea of citizenship that influenced Jeffersonian democracy and the belief in the yeoman farmer as the ideal citizen of a democracy.
only for a particular social class: those who own the land. Those who provide the labor to fuel this idyllic community remain largely invisible.

Promoting California and Expanding the Nation

“The nights were lovely, with a full moon in the azure sky, and the sea air, neither cold nor warm, but of that California temperature, which seems to invite people to be happy, giving to all an idea of the perfect well-being we expect to find in the hereafter.”—María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *The Squatter and the Don*, p. 91

In addition to recasting California in terms of a more familiar region (i.e., the South), Ruiz de Burton also draws on existing cultural discourses about California itself to help rewrite Californio class and racial status.34 Because place can have a profound effect on the ways people perceive that place and the individuals who inhabit it, narrative descriptions of place become a powerful rhetorical strategy that allows Ruiz de Burton to shape audience responses to California and Californios. As Brady notes, narrative can play a significant—if often overlooked—role in the production of place as it shapes the perception and affect of particular places: literature “uses space and spatial processes metaphorically to suggest emotions, insights, concepts, characters” (8). This production of place also affects how individuals perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others (Brady). Using existing discourses allows Ruiz de Burton to build on (and intervene in) images and understandings that her readers already possessed regarding California. However, as was the case for Helen Hunt Jackson, circulating discourses also function as a rhetorical constraint for Ruiz de Burton: her options for presenting

34 Although Rodríguez argues that Ruiz de Burton uses literature depicting California as “the land of milk and honey” (42) to promote Anglo-American settlement, I would argue that her use of promotional discourses actually becomes part of her strategy to promote Californios and demonstrate the benefits of including California in the union.
California spaces are limited to existing Anglo-American discourses. Although she can modify those discourses with her own perceptions, she cannot abandon them entirely.

Ruiz de Burton uses positive promotional discourses about California to rewrite the terms of inclusion and exclusion in the U.S. Specifically, she draws on discourses that depict California as a kind of earthly paradise (of the sort described in the epigraph) in order to argue for California’s potential place in the nation, and to argue that California’s upper-class Californios are socially indistinguishable from the nation’s white citizens. Because discourses about place influence the construction of class and racial hierarchies within particular places, Ruiz de Burton’s articulation of these discourses involves a corresponding (re)articulation of the social hierarchies existing within those spaces.

Popular promotional discourse of the 1870s and 1880s often presented California as a kind of Pacific Arcadia, or “this Pacific Coast edition of Eden restored” (Wallian), representing the best qualities of American landscape. Promoters boasted that the arid climate and balmy weather not only encouraged healthy living, but literally repelled diseases. Some, like San Francisco doctor P. C. Remondino, even argued that the climate could stimulate moral living. In still other cases, California was presented as the nearest

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35 Although such rhetorics were often used to encourage Anglo-American colonization, Ruiz de Burton resists, to some extent, the colonizing bent by emphasizing Californio claims to citizenship.

36 As McDowell notes, “nations are usually defined in terms of the links between particular space or territory and its peoples to the exclusion of ‘others’” (170). By linking California to the rest of the nation, Ruiz de Burton also forges a link between the Californios and other upper-class whites that helps cement their inclusion in the nation.

37 Remondino, writing for California Illustrated Magazine in 1892, offered California as a panacea for a wide variety of maladies, including overwork, malaria, and wasting diseases. He claimed that “for young or old, the well or the ailing, there is no climate that for the whole year, under all circumstances and conditions, can equal that of Southern California in its physical, mental or moral relations to mankind” (58).
thing on earth to heaven. Similarly, the California of Ruiz de Burton’s novel, has a “perfect climate” (23). Early in the novel, one of the squatters on the Alamar rancho tries to convince William Darrell to settle there by extolling the climatic virtues of the city: “you never hear of any malarial fevers in San Diego, sir, never. Our perfect climate, the fine sloping ground of our town site, our eucalyptus trees, sea breezes and mountain air, make San Diego a most healthy little city” (23). Moreover, the climate was sometimes held to cure the kind of spiritual malaise associated with city living. Ruiz de Burton describes how James Mechlin, an Anglo-American businessman, was persuaded to settle in San Diego after “a too close application to business” (18) had ruined his health and he had failed to find a cure in Florida, Italy, or France (all regions known for their “healthy” climate). Expecting to die, Mr. Mechlin found instead that “his health improved so rapidly that he made up his mind to buy a country place and make San Diego his home” (18). Southern California, then, is depicted as the epitome of the California climate myths.

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38 Remondino concludes his article by describing the region as a “terrestrial paradise.” Douglas Sackman explains that in places like Pasadena, the elderly were encouraged to think of their experience there as a prelude to heaven.
39 In fact, so popular did this health resort notion become that at least one local writer, Theodore Van Dyke, devotes a chapter to dispelling some of the myths about California’s climate—among them, the notion that it never rains and that the climate can cure all ills. He writes rather drily that anyone so far gone with consumption that they have little hope of recovery had far better stay at home to die than come to California.
40 This kind of redemption motif was fairly common in literature about the West. As Kolodny notes, by the mid-1850s, the changing industrial environment in the cities had fairly disrupted the Jacksonian illusion of a nation of yeoman farmers all more or less equal. The cities were viewed as unhealthy places that led to the dissolution of families as children were drawn from rural areas into the cities. In addition, the cities also demonstrated the growing gap between rich and poor. In response to this urban decay, domestic fiction writers began to project their novels in the West, using their fantasies about the West to suggest possible avenues of reform for the East. The frontier, in these instances, became the site of a domestic ideal where the family could be gathered together, and men and women had equal roles in family life. However, as Kolodny points out, this domestic ideal was a nostalgic ideal that hearkened back to earlier family/domestic formulations that existed prior to industrialism and capitalism. This redemptive motif also buys into the valorization of wilderness described in the previous chapter.
Not only did the climate itself heal people physically and spiritually, but the land offered its own kind of nurture, in the form of a garden of plenty, or “Cornucopia of the World” (Perry). Not coincidentally, at the time Ruiz de Burton began writing in the early 1880s, the fruit-growing industry in Southern California was rapidly expanding.\(^{41}\) In her narrative, Don Mariano repeatedly extols the virtues of California’s fruit-growing potential to both squatters and indifferent government officials: “If our county does not take the lead as wheat-growing, it certainly can take it as fruit-growing. We have no capital to make large plantations of vineyards or trees, but what has been done proves, conclusively, that for grapes, olives, figs, and in fact all semi-tropical fruits, there is no better country in the world” (307).

In addition to its healthy climate and Edenic qualities, California was known for its sublime landscapes, like Yosemite, which made it a popular tourist destination in the latter part of the nineteenth century, particularly after the completion of the transcontinental railroad made such travel feasible.\(^{42}\) As Stanford Demars explains in his history of Yosemite, “the cliffs, waterfalls, giant trees, and gently meandering streams of Yosemite Valley bespoke the very essence of romantic landscape” (23). As with other promotional discourses, Ruiz de Burton was quick to capitalize on tourist discourses of California’s wilderness places: for their bridal tour, George and Elvira Mechlin, accompanied by Elvira’s sister Mercedes and Clarence Darrell, view the Pacific Ocean from the Cliff House, a fashionable nineteenth-century San Francisco hotel. Mercedes

\(^{41}\) Aply enough, one of the early citrus farmers, the del Valle family, who lived in the Camulos rancho often thought to be the inspiration for the Moreno rancho in Jackson’s novel, sought to capitalize on their fame by labeling their citrus and raisin crops “Home of Ramona brand” (DeLyser). See also Sackman for a rich history of citrus farming in California.

\(^{42}\) Demars explains that Yosemite was widely known as a “must” for tourists visiting the Far West, even prior to the Civil War.
“pronounced the Pacific Ocean to be very grand and the wild surf dashing madly against
the impassive rocks very impressive” (128). Later, the bridal party visits “[t]he crashing
and thundering of Yosemite’s falls plunging from dizzying heights, in splendor of furious
avalanches” (131). Both of these descriptions attest to the sublime contrasts of
California’s natural landscape.

Fig. 11. Photograph of the Cliff House, c. 1880. From S.F. Images. 6 Feb. 2008.

Significantly, Ruiz de Burton’s positive representation of California space
challenges conceptions of California as a peripheral national site, suggesting instead that
California is central to the economic and spiritual prosperity of the U.S. 43 Moreover,

43 Unlike Jackson, whose use of discourses about California space was unintentionally promotional, Ruiz
de Burton borrows climatic motifs from promotional discourse in part to encourage development of the
region—not only do her characters try to develop San Diego, but she herself owned an extensive tract of
land near San Diego at Rancho Jamul and increased settlement would drive up the property value of her
land. However, by drawing on promotional literature, Ruiz de Burton may have found herself caught in a
kind of catch-22 in keeping with the conflicts of interest that would plague her for most of her adult life. On
the one hand, the familiar promotional literature provides her with an effective avenue of promoting
because most readers were already familiar with these discourses, they would have little trouble accepting Ruiz de Burton’s representation (and presumably its concomitant implications). Not only do the garden-like qualities of the state offer abundant economic prospects in the form of orchards and vineyards, but that same climate provides physical rejuvenation (at much lower cost than a trip to Europe)\textsuperscript{44} and spiritual renewal. The purported curative properties of Southern California represent an enormous regional contribution to the well-being of a nation that was increasingly concerned with the negative side effects of urbanization, such as overwork and polluted environments. As Claire Perry notes, given this fin-de-siecle reconsideration of the Protestant work ethic, “Old California, with its close bound families, its fervent Catholicism, and its pastoral way of life, held out the promise of redemption from the sins of modernity” (149).\textsuperscript{45} California’s very social, cultural, and religious differences from New England promised an antidote to the ills of city life.

By positing California as a center for physical and moral regeneration, Ruiz de Burton challenges the idea of the East coast (and particularly, the federal government) as the moral center of the nation. In fact, in contrast to the rhetoric of good health used to describe California, Ruiz de Burton uses a metaphor of degenerative illness to describe the national legislature, which in her view is stricken with palsy and “moral stagnation”

\textsuperscript{44} McWilliams argues that a “folklore of climatology” arose during the 1870s partly because the newly rich middle class wanted an “Italy nearer home—an Italy without the Italians, an Italy in which they could feel at home, an Italy in which, perhaps, they might settle and live out their days in the sun” (96).

\textsuperscript{45} Because Catholicism was a large part of the historical appeal to the region, its role in the nostalgia for a fictitious Spanish past may have helped mitigate an otherwise wide-spread anti-Catholic bias in nineteenth-century America.
The only check for this kind of palsy is morality or “dread of responsibility,” but the contemporary Congress is unfortunately devoid of such feeling. In the absence of moral grounding in the center, it falls to the peripheral areas (like California) to provide such grounding. Given the corrupt tenor of this era (more commonly known as the “Gilded Age,” when the national government was plagued with corrupt dealings), audiences would likely have been particularly receptive to the moral and physical redemption Ruiz de Burton’s California offers to the nation.

These promotional discourses also allow Ruiz de Burton to present California as a quintessentially national space. For one thing, California’s sublime landscapes appealed to a sense of American national pride as superior to anything in Europe. While Americans lacked the history to claim the kind of picturesque and pastoral landscapes of Europe that were valued by nineteenth-century Romantic sensibilities, they came to believe that their sublime landscapes were symbolic of their loftier ideals. Demars explains that these landscapes

confirmed what Americans had suspected all along: that America was, in fact, a nation of divine favor, and that just as its political and social aspirations were of a loftier plane than those of the Old World, so was it only natural that its scenery should represent definitions of beauty of a higher order. (21)

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46 This phrase, “dread of responsibility,” does not mean an avoidance of duties, but rather refers to the fear of a final spiritual accounting before God that encourages individuals to act in accordance with religious laws of morality.
Since sublime landscapes could represent a kind of national identity for Americans, California’s sublime landscapes, like Yosemite,\(^{47}\) constituted a distinctly American space.\(^ {48}\)

![Nevada Falls, Yosemite Valley.](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13232/13232-h/images/lg1000.jpg)


Perhaps more significantly, the Edenic rhetorics that Ruiz de Burton uses to describe California transform California into a national space by domesticating it. As

\(^{47}\) In 1864, Abraham Lincoln signed a grant giving Yosemite valley to the state of California for public use and recreation.

\(^{48}\) Paul Hjartarson explains that both the U.S. and Canada, which faced the difficulty of formulating a national identity for settler-invader colonies that lacked linguistic, racial, or religious homogeneity, often turned to landscape to represent a kind of unified national identity.
explained in the previous chapter on Jackson, discourses about California space served to
familiarize readers with the landscape, opening the region for inhabitation. Promoters like
John Hittell drew comparisons between California and the European Mediterranean: “In
clearness of sky and mildness, and equality of temperature, our coast surpasses Italy and
it will therefore be more attractive. . . . California occupies for America and Eastern Asia
that same place that the Mediterranean coast does for Europe” (24-5).49 Such
comparisons supposedly made the exotic aspect of California seem less foreign (and
therefore more appealing) to prospective settlers. Similarly, the tourist rhetorics Ruiz de
Burton borrows help domesticate California by presenting its spaces as a kind of home.
Tourism, as a kind of cultural consumption, allows for the imaginative conquest of
different areas, and thus, the integration of those areas into the nation. As Gregory Clark
argues in *Rhetorical Landscapes*, one of the primary aims of tourism in the late
nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to experience being “at home” in disparate parts
of the country.50 Discourses of tourism shape the experiences of viewers in a particular
site in similar ways, generating a shared experience that serves as common ground
uniting viewers from different regions of the nation. Thus, the descriptions of California
spaces like Yosemite that Ruiz de Burton includes in her novel allow readers to
experience the same places as her characters and feel “at home” in those places.

49 Curiously, Hittel’s promotional tract betrays some of the general ambivalence about racial categories that
was to perplex California for years (and, indeed, continues to perplex it today). In discussing the
population of California, he writes that there are about 568,000 people—including whites, Chinamen,
Indians and Negroes. There is no mention of the area’s Hispanic population, although that ought to have
been considerable. This raises a couple of questions: Where then do Hispanics fall, and why elide the
Spanish population? Was this, perhaps, an attempt to calm readers’ (and prospective settlers) fears about
the prominence of the white populations? Or were the Hispanics included in the population of non-voting
whites?
50 As Clark points out, most American tourists tend to imagine themselves at home in a new landscape:
“Certainly people seek out, observe, and enjoy landscapes for aesthetic purposes, but for Americans, the
most intense aesthetic experience of a landscape includes images of themselves enacting a new identity
there” (*Rhetorical Landscapes* 35).
In Ruiz de Burton’s narrative, California space is further domesticated by the presence of gardens and the moral associations of its climate. Many Americans at the end of the nineteenth century believed that the garden was one of the highest forms of civilization and Americanization (Sackman). The symbolic power of gardens may stem in part from the fact that gardens represent nature (with its redemptive potential) tamed and made productive. The ordering of the California landscape into gardens ultimately serves to emphasize California’s place in the union as a colonized space, appropriately disciplined and civilized as per the imperatives of Manifest Destiny. Further, California’s nurturing climate and prosperous climate are eminently domestic and feminine to the extent that they encourage moral development. According to the twin discourses of domesticity and Manifest Destiny (Kaplan’s “Manifest Domesticity”), nineteenth-century Americans believed they had a moral imperative to civilize or expunge foreign elements. By highlighting the nurturing aspect of California space, Ruiz de Burton highlights California’s natural fit into the nation. Ultimately, all of the spatial discourses that Ruiz de Burton adapts allow her to present California in ways that underscore its benefit to, and place in, the national union.

Through her articulation of a particular perspective on California, Ruiz de Burton ultimately aims to influence readers’ perceptions of individuals (primarily Californio) within that space. By harnessing positive perceptions of California to the Californio characters, Ruiz de Burton makes clear their elite social and citizenship status. For one thing, Ruiz de Burton harnesses the garden motif, using the image of the garden as a

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51 E. J. Wickson, in an 1889 publication, *The California Fruits and How to Grow Them*, argues that “the fruited garden, not the frontier, was the space of the most rapid and complete Americanization” (qtd. in Sackman 27).

52 Kolodny writes that paradise for women “denoted domesticity” (54) and this domestication was often represented by the image of a garden.
hallmark of the Alamares’s civilization. Her initial description of the Alamar rancho emphasizes that it has a fruit garden in front, an orchard, and grain fields (in addition to the fields devoted to ranching). The gardens surrounding the house not only mark their long-standing cultivation of the region—and an implicit argument to their right of possession, as the failure of Californios to cultivate the land was one of the most commonly used justifications for dispossession by Anglo-American settlers—but they also indicate the Californios upper-class status. As Sackman notes, gardens (particularly those with rare plants) increasingly became a sign of wealth and power in late nineteenth-century California, as their maintenance required the labor of others. The less profitable the gardens, the more indicative of wealth. While the Alamar gardens were not merely decorative, their existence does denote the presence of servants to tend the garden.

Ruiz de Burton also uses, somewhat paradoxically, an inverted rhetoric of health to suggest the physical and moral sensitivity of her characters.\(^53\) As Tuttle notes, most of the main characters manifest crises physically:\(^54\) when Clarence and Mercedes are forced to break their engagement, Mercedes and Clarence’s sister Alice both fall ill and Clarence later develops a fever; after the failure of the Texas Pacific railroad (and the concomitant failure of San Diego’s hope for future prosperity), Don Mariano contracts a fatal illness and Mr. Mechlin commits suicide. These illnesses serve as signs of gentility through the heightened responsiveness of the characters’ physical bodies. As Tuttle explains, this

\(^{53}\) As with her rhetorical alignment of the South and Southwest, Ruiz de Burton adapts her rhetorical strategies for her own end, regardless of potential ideological contradictions.

\(^{54}\) Tuttle also argues that Ruiz de Burton “challenges medical narratives that enabled and justified conquest, particularly the theories and treatments for neurasthenia that underlay California boosterism” (57), in part by portraying the federal government as an agent of contagion. However, although I agree that Ruiz de Burton sees the government as physically debilitated (and debilitating!), I don’t think Ruiz de Burton was necessarily interested in critiquing the promotional literature that brought settlers to California. After all, to some extent her own prosperity and her investments in her rancho were tied up in driving up property values in the region. In addition, her repeated invocation of these same promotional rhetorics does not appear to me to be in any sense ironic, but rather serves as an additional virtue of her region.
discourse of nervousness helps establish Californio claims to whiteness and eliteness, since neuralgia (nervousness) was primarily a disease of the middle and upper classes.\textsuperscript{55} Moreover, this physical sensitivity indicates a concomitant moral sensitivity that the government lacks, and which serves as its condemnation. The fact that unjust actions (such as Mr. Darrell’s accusations against the Alamares and the government’s lack of support for the Texas Pacific) can have such a debilitating effect on individual well being \textit{in spite of} the healing properties of California’s climate serves as an indictment against such actions. Ultimately, only those with appropriate sensitivity (physical and moral) can benefit from the physical and spiritual curative properties of the California climate.\textsuperscript{56}

The rhetorical discourses of place that Ruiz de Burton draws on not only allow her to suggest the cultivation and sensitivity of her people, but they demonstrate the Californios’ leisure class status. It is the Californios’ wealth (and implied class status) that, like other nineteenth-century tourists, gives the Alamar-Mechlin bridal party access to Yosemite and other tourist sites. Demars explains that in the nineteenth-century, travel became a marker of the leisured classes, who sought increasingly to “escape” not only the ills of city life but contact with their social inferiors.

The position of the Californiana women as tourists in Yosemite is significant not only for demonstrating their leisured status, but because it helps figure them as national

\textsuperscript{55} Because the body is itself a site (Casey), these physical manifestations of illness become a spatially inflected strategy for promoting the whiteness of Californios: class distinctions are “read” through “bodily posture, gestures, facial expression and speaking voice” (McDowell 41), as well as the ways that bodies move through space and present themselves to one another. This bodily expression of class distinctions means that dominant cultural bodies are often transparent, since we tend to register only those postures, voices, and expressions that differ from the norm. Paradoxically, however, in order for Ruiz de Burton to argue that Californio bodies should be read in the same way as Anglo-American bodies, she has to draw attention to those bodies—in other words, she has to momentarily render them non-transparent.

\textsuperscript{56} A morally bankrupt Congress seems unable to benefit from the moral climate of California, and both the squatters and Indians seem insensitive to the qualities of the California climate that help engender such compelling moral qualities in the Alamares, the Mechlins, and the majority of the Darrell family.
citizens. As Michael S. Halloran and Gregory Clark argue in a pair of companion pieces in *Rhetorical Education in America*, national parks and other public monuments are often constructed to create a sense of shared identity among the visitors and thus enable a diverse group of individuals to come together as part of a discourse community as citizens. More specifically, Clark suggests that “[w]hen individual Americans gather in an uninhabitable landscape that has been rendered publicly symbolic of their nation, they can experience themselves as a national community” (158-9). Thus, the Yosemite experience serves to bring disparate people together in a unified experience of nation: a communion with the sublime landscape that epitomized American superiority. Both the Californiana sisters, Mercedes and Elvira, as well as the Anglo-Americans George and Clarence, felt a sense of awe and transcendence similar to that of other tourists, whose experiences were largely conditioned by guidebooks. Ruiz de Buron uses this experience to not only to promote the natural beauties of California and the elite claims of the Alamar family whose wealth gives them access to Yosemite, but to suggest that they also experience Yosemite as members of a national community, as citizens. This shared experience also serves to minimize the differences between Anglo Americans and Californios, further reinforcing the class and cultural parallels between them.

However, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, discourses of space can carry with them unintended connotations. In rearticulating place to elevate Californios, Ruiz de Buron also reifies (perhaps unintentionally) some of the social hierarchies she seeks to disrupt. As Brady argues, “[t]he danger of national rhetorics around place is that

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57 In addition, because the natural beauties of Yosemite had been well publicized by writers like Thomas Starr King, Horace Greeley, and later in the century, John Muir, literary tourists as well as actual visitors were able to share in the romantic appreciation of Yosemite and the symbolic citizenship implied by the Yosemite experience.
they may presume a particular, naturalized, ideological link between people and places” (147). For instance, the rhetorical trope of a Pacific Eden carries with it a paradoxical masking of the labor that enables the regions’ fruitfulness. Although fruitful landscapes, like gardens, can signify the social standing of the owners by emphasizing the labor required to maintain those landscapes, more often than not such labor is also made invisible. In his compelling analysis of the California citrus trade, Sackman notes that promoters of California’s fertile fields and orchards often glossed the Indian and Mexican labor that made such growth possible. Tapping into an Edenic mythology also elides the question of labor, as the fruitfulness of Eden suggests that the land does not need to be worked so much as “husbanded” or harvested; Adam was not compelled to till the ground until after his expulsion from Eden. Similarly, promotional images of California often suggested that its abundant fruits were produced with minimal human intervention. By making her Californio characters a visible part of the Eden landscape, Ruiz de Burton also implicitly separates them from the invisible labor force, reinforcing their upper-class status. Thus, although the garden motif functions as an argument for the inclusion of cultivated California and Californios in the nation, it also functions to exclude those individuals whose labor makes this cultivation possible, by making both them and their labor invisible.58

58 Ironically, this historical elision of labor is precisely the failing for which Ruiz de Burton would critique Anglo-American settlers. In a short article, “Bygone San Diego,” Ruiz de Burton romanticizes the mission history of the region. But she also critiques the forgetfulness of the current settlers: At the foot of the hill where the commandant’s quarters stood, a solitary date tree stands now, rather disheveled but erect as a standing protest against the indifference of the present incumbent race, which is so forgetful of those who conferred such lasting benefits upon them, the fortunate who without an hour’s toil, have come to possess and enjoy the fruit of the arduous labor of those heroic philanthropists. No, the Americans of California give no thanks; no, not even a thought, to the self-denying Spaniards who came here to show us that this magnificent land, a fine harbor, and heavenly climate were here. (qtd. in Sánchez and Pita 579)
Ruiz de Burton’s use of tourist rhetorics also works to elide lower-class workers from the social scene and helps illustrate the ways that social hierarchies get constructed through space. The aesthetic experience that the Alamar sisters participate in at Yosemite was reserved primarily for white, upper-class Americans. Financial restrictions prevented many individuals from visiting these sites, implying that those who inhabited those sites as guests belonged to the upper classes. In addition, labor roles tended to further segregate those who were found within the tourist site: the hired staff, generally Native Americans and Mexican Americans, were not positioned to leisurely consume the beauties of the site, but were paid to attend to the needs of the upper-class tourists in the kitchens, bedrooms, and stables of the resorts. As Demars relates, the staff that made the Yosemite experience possible were largely ignored by visitors. Those visitors to Yosemite who could not ignore the Native American presence typically belittled it and predicted their eventual disappearance, in keeping with the common nineteenth-century trope of the vanishing Indian. Thus, although Ruiz de Burton’s placement of her Californio characters in Yosemite serves to argue for their position as upper-class citizens of the United States, it also implicitly argues against inclusion of Native Americans in that same citizenship.

By borrowing from discourses that paint California in glowing terms, Ruiz de Burton clearly demonstrates the profound contributions California makes to the United

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Although Ruiz de Burton clearly objects to Anglo-American settlers’ failure to acknowledge the Spanish American labor that undergirds their economic prosperity, her focus on “the self-denying Spaniards” conveniently overlooks the Indian and mestizo labor that made Spanish settlement possible. Some visitors, in fact, registered surprise or amusement that their less-educated hosts were also capable of appreciating Yosemite’s natural beauty. Josiah Whitney, author of one of the authoritative guidebooks to the valley, wrote the following about the Indians living in the valley: “they are a miserable, degraded, and fast-disappearing set of beings, who must die out before the progress of the white man’s civilization, and for whom there is neither hope nor chance” (qtd. in Demars 38).
States as a whole, offering a curative climate, prosperous orchards and vineyards, a landscape that provides a profound aesthetic experience, and a potentially redemptive moral quality. Perhaps more significantly, these descriptions of space allow readers to vicariously experience some of the California culture that Ruiz de Burton values. Thus, readers seeing California through Ruiz de Burton’s perspective experience a domesticated and familiarized version of California that is relatively easy to imagine as part of a national community. Moreover, because readers share this experience of place with the Californio characters, readers can more readily identify with the Californios.

Ultimately, all of the discourses about California space that Ruiz de Burton draws on—the mythologized climate, California as the Western Eden, the tourist promotion of California’s sublime landscapes—allow her to portray the Californios as cultured, moral, and leisure-class individuals in terms that her white, middle-class audience could readily understand. However, the elevation of Californios and their identification with white readers comes at a cost: even as Ruiz de Burton rearticulates Californio class and racial status through place-based rhetorical strategies, these same strategies reinscribe a racialized hierarchy between the elite Californios and working-class Mexicano/as and Native Americans.

Social Place and Movement

“Years before, when she was Lizzie Mechlin, she had moved in what was called San Francisco’s best society. . . . [After her husband lost his job] this cordiality soon vanished . . . The fact that Gabriel was a native Spaniard, she saw plainly, militated against them. If he had been rich, his nationality could have been forgiven, but no one will willingly tolerate a poor native Californian.”—María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, The Squatter and the Don, p. 350

“Places are constituted by connections and movement.”—Linda McDowell, Gender, Identity and Place, p. 209
Feminist spatial theorist Nancy Duncan argues that “[s]ocial relations, including, importantly, gender relations, are constructed and negotiated spatially and are embedded in the spatial organization of places” (*Body Space* 4-5). By looking at the spatial relationships between individuals—particularly at who has access to what spaces—it becomes possible to reconstruct the social hierarchies that govern those individuals. And indeed, Ruiz de Burton’s placement of characters in her fictional landscape indicates (and argues for) a clear social hierarchy based not simply on race, but on social class. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, in *Frontiers of Women’s Writings*, describes how California writer Jessie Fremont “maps” the social geography of the area, describing herself and her husband as lawful property owners pitted against the bad elements of society (foreign, criminal, and so on). Similarly, Ruiz de Burton uses the locations of characters in *The Squatter and the Don* to provide a social map of Southern California for readers that places the Californio characters in the most desirable social positions.

Because the conventions of social class that dictate movement and placement were fairly uniform across different regions of the U.S., Ruiz de Burton was able to draw on these conventions to signal social categorizations that readers would easily recognize. To a large extent, social class determines access to space; thus, the characters with the widest range of access to different places seem to be those with the most social clout, and those with the most restricted range are of the lowest class. Doreen Massey notes that social classes are constructed in relation to one another and the division of labor, and that their relations are most often organized spatially, in part by dictating who occupies and has access to what space. This organization is often politically motivated; as Dolores Hayden writes, “one of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of
groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limiting access to space” (qtd. in Brady 134). Thus, space and social class are often mutually constitutive—one’s placement indicates one’s status, and one’s status influences one’s placement. In her influential *Feminism and Geography*, Gillian Rose demonstrates the link between social class and space. She cites studies showing that nineteenth-century women’s mobility was closely linked to income and social class—i.e., because domestic duties kept most women tied to their home, only those women with sufficient income to employ others to do their work for them had access to a variety of spaces outside the home. Social hierarchies are also a product of land tenure; as Monroy writes, “When people engage the land, its resources, technology, and human labor in the cause of production, they inevitably produce more than either their subsistence or commodities. They produce a particular structure of human society, . . . the social relations” (51). In the society Ruiz de Burton describes, those who provide the labor are also those who are most tied to the site of that labor.61

In Ruiz de Burton’s social hierarchy, the domestic servants and ranch hands are the most place-bound, and are thus easily recognized by readers as lower-class. Not surprisingly, the majority of these servants are racially marked: Tisha, Mary Darrell’s...

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61 Monroy points out that the existence of a lower class to perform field labor was crucial to the three economic systems present in California after European conquest: the Spanish Missions, Mexican ranchos, and Anglo-American ranchos all relied on some form of Indian labor (or, if Indians were unavailable, lower-class Mexican mestizo/as). In fact, because Indian labor began to be more and more unreliable after the American conquest of California, the California legislature in 1850 passed “An Act for the Government and Protection of the Indians”; this act helped bind Indian labor to the ranchos by prohibiting Indians from testifying against whites in court, allowing whites to pay for the Indians’ bail (who were then able to work out the money paid), and arresting any Indian caught loitering. These provisions effectively helped replace the peonage system of the Californios with the kind of forced labor of the Mission systems (Monroy). Because this law also specified that “Any Indian able to work, and support himself in some honest calling, not having wherewithal to maintain himself, *who shall be found loitering and strolling about, or frequenting public places where liquors are sold*” may be arrested (qtd. in Monroy 186, emphasis in original), the law effectively regulated social and labor hierarchies by regulating access to public spaces, specifying who can and cannot inhabit public spaces with impunity.
devoted servant, is the only African American in the novel, and all of the Alamares’s field hands are Native American. Their social place is indicated by the physical place of their labor—thus, for the most part, servants seem to be relegated to the kitchens, stables, and fields (at least, they are not encountered anywhere else in the novel). Thus Tisha spends much of her brief time in the novel near her kitchen domain; when the Alamares’s Indian vaqueros are not working with the cattle in the corral, they (the novel implies) lounge around the kitchen. When Victoriano Alamar needs someone to attend to the horses, he goes to the kitchen to find a servant. The “lazy Indian,” proceeds to smoke a cigarette and enjoy his supper before “shuffle[l]ing lazily to the front of the house” to attend to the request (265). Ruiz de Burton’s placement of these servants, although admittedly part of the cultural conventions of the era, also serves as a foil to the Californios—because they occupy a particular place (both in terms of the labor system and the social structure), the Californios do not have to. As McCullough suggests, one of the strategies by which Ruiz de Burton attempts to recast the relationship of Anglo-Americans and Californios is to displace social and racial difference from Californios onto Mexicans and Indians. Moreover, the fact that these servants are seldom actually depicted working, despite their status as servants and laborers, contributes to the invisibility of labor and concomitant elevation of landowners described earlier. Finally, the racial division between classes underscores the alignment of social class with race, furthering the claims of Californios to “whiteness.”

Ruiz de Burton also uses the placement and movement of the Anglo-American characters, particularly the squatters, to indicate their relative position in the social hierarchy of the novel. For the most part, interactions between the squatters and the
Californios take place out of doors: the meeting between the squatters and Don Mariano takes place on John Gasbang’s piazza (his claim is in the central point of the rancho); William Darrell insults the don, and is subsequently lassoed by Gabriel Alamar, on the road leading to the Alamar home; and, of course, the squatters shoot at the don’s cattle (Old Matthews even takes a shot at the don’s son-in-law, George Mechlin) outside. Only those with appropriate social status (the Mechlins, Clarence Darrell) are invited into the private spaces of the Alamar rancho. And only those of particularly low social status, like Peter Roper, John Gasbang, and Charles Hogsden, are uncouth enough to claim access to private spaces where they are uninvited (as they conspire to stake a “claim” to the Mechlin home after Mr. Mechlin’s death while the grieving widow is absent). Curiously, by making the more exclusive private site a marker of class affiliation rather than gender, Ruiz de Burton subverts the traditional spatial hierarchy that privileges public, uncontained, outdoor spaces as masculine and connects feminine spaces with private and enclosed places.62 Instead, she realigns this binary so that outdoor spaces signify lower-class status, and indoor spaces signal upper-class status. This realignment may have been designed to appeal to her predominantly female readers, who would have subconsciously registered their own implied upper-class status. It might also allow female readers to identify with both the men and women of the Alamar family.

The relative social stature (and limited mobility) of the squatters is also suggested by their confinement to the “colony” at the Darrell home, a room set aside for Mr. Darrell’s private domain. Although Darrell is widely seen as the leader of the squatter community, the squatters are nonetheless excluded from the main parts of the home and

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62 McDowell’s Gender, Identity and Place and Comer’s Landscapes of the New West both contain fascinating deconstructions of the association with public and outdoor spaces with masculinity, and contained, indoor spaces with femininity.
the moralizing influences of Mary Darrell. Their exclusion also suggests that the squatters are of a lower class than the rest of the Darrell family, and cannot, therefore, mix freely with them. Alice Darrell calls the “colony” the “squattery” because Darrell “always receives the squatters there; . . . and because the talk there is always about locating, or surveying, or fencing land—always land—as it would be in a new colony” (209). Here again, Ruiz de Burton plays with gendered spatial allocations by locating the discussion of imperial (and masculine) practices of space in a confined space. Although this indoor confinement might seem to contradict the realignment of indoor spaces with upper-class status, it does not—precisely because of the limited mobility suggested by the containment. While the Alamares and the Mechlins register as upper class because they are most commonly portrayed in private spaces, they have a freedom to come and go that the squatters in the colony lack. Moreover, the squatters are denied access to the real heart of the house—the private realm that would convey upper-class status. By confining the squatters and their discussions of colonizing to the “colony,” Ruiz de Burton does not negate or nullify the threat of colonization, but she does open up a space for the deconstruction of gendered binaries invoked by Anglo Americans to keep Californios “in their place.” In this instance, at least, it is most emphatically the squatters who must be kept “in their place.” Additionally, rhetorics of colonization often invoke power differentials in terms of gender: i.e., colonized individuals are almost inevitably read as feminized and their colonizers as masculine (McCullough). By depicting colonizers in a confined space indicative of their limited power, Ruiz de Burton instead invokes the squatters’ feminized status as lower-class individuals. By so doing, she suggests to readers that social placement ought to be more significant than imperialist dictums: in
other words, the abundant class markers signaling Californio’s upper-class status ought to weigh more than the fact that they are a conquered people.

In contrast to the squatters, whose association with the out-of-doors also suggests their role as field laborers (unlike the Alamares, most of the squatters are small-scale farmers who work their own land), the upper-class Californios are often found in leisured positions on the veranda of the Alamar home or enjoying social activities such as dancing. Their location is a function of their leisure and therefore indicative of their class status. However, Ruiz de Burton seems to feel it important to emphasize that, although the Californios are leisured, they are not lazy; even in their leisure they are industrious: the women sew, the men supervise the business of the ranch. Their leisure is also dependent upon the labor of others, whose (often invisible) labor underscores the superior class status of the Alamares. As Don Mariano explains to a group of squatters early in the novel, one does not have to be a *vaquero* or “go ‘busquering’ around ‘lassooing’”; one can hire an Indian boy to do so (48).

The location of the Alamar women is even more telling: they are most at home in parlors, rather than kitchens (suggesting that their role as domestic figures is to oversee domestic labor, not perform it). In the one instance where the Alamar women do appear in a kitchen, their presence is obviously out of place. When George Mechlin tells Mercedes that she is invited to a “canning performance” at Beatrice Mechlin’s along with her mother and sisters, Mercedes laughs and asks “Are they really going to do the

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63 As the footnote to the text notes, *vaquero* is the Spanish term for cowboy. *Busquering* comes from the root *buscar*, to search for.

64 Nan Johnson’s *Gender and Rhetorical Space* makes a compelling argument for the ways that conduct book literature not only reifies gendered behavior expectations, but reinforces the demarcation between men’s public roles and women’s private ones. Such literature, in effect, argues that women’s place is, quite literally, in the parlor and domestic spaces of the home.
canning? Who knows about it?” George responds, “They all know, theoretically, but as to practice, that ‘quién sabe’” (244), implying that the women’s experience was entirely theoretical, not practical.

Because place telegraphs so clearly one’s social standing, Ruiz de Burton is able to indicate the Alamares’s social downfall through their changing locations. When Gabriel Alamar loses his place at a San Francisco bank and takes up day laboring, he and Elvira are forced to move from an independent cottage to lodgings. Although such a move is fiscally dictated, it nonetheless illustrates dramatically his fall (which is perhaps the most dramatic of the Alamar family). Moreover, as the family loses both money and land, they are increasingly forced to perform the kind of outdoor labor previously associated with servants; Don Mariano and Victoriano attempt to drive the don’s cattle through the mountains to Clarence’s mine, Gabriel works outdoors as a mason, and Victoriano works outdoors to plow the fields and prune the orchards and vineyards. Significantly, outdoor labor presents a serious threat to the Alamar men, who are injured in these socially unnatural and uncongenial settings—Don Mariano catches the cold that will ultimately kill him, Victoriano develops a strange paralysis (an injury that is later exacerbated by his work in the fields), and Gabriel is nearly killed by injuries sustained in an accident while working as a hod-carrier.65 Ruiz de Burton represents Gabriel’s working experience as “a symbolical representation of his race. The natives, of Spanish origin, having lost all their property, must henceforth be hod-carriers” (p. 351). These episodes serve a double purpose: they illustrate the physical sensibility characteristic of

65 Gilbert critiques the description of Gabriel’s accident because “the working class reality is used symbolically in the service of dramatizing the experience of the privileged class, and in this way erases working class reality” (87). Gilbert points out that “this scene masks the worker’s experience rather than telling the story of an actual hod carrier” (87). Thus, this episode fits in with then novel’s general trend of making working class labor invisible.
upper-class white people, and they garner reader sympathy for the dramatic consequences of the loss of status. These changing locations also serve as an emotional appeal to readers by suggesting that no one’s class status is immune to the threat of dislocation.

The movement of characters across various spaces also indicates their relative class status, and constitutes an important part of rhetorics of space in the novel. Nedra Reynolds argues that one of the material aspects of space often ignored by rhetorical scholars is the way individuals move through space. Crucially, the movement of characters through space constitutes one of Ruiz de Burton’s most powerful rhetorical strategies for signaling their upper-class status. In contrast to the servants and the squatters, who are relatively place bound (by their need to labor and the concomitant lack of discretionary income), the Californios and upper-class Anglo Americans range freely between California and the cultural and governmental centers in New England and Washington D.C.

Significantly, Ruiz de Burton establishes the characters with the largest motion arcs as the founders of her idealized social order: the Anglo-Californio union between George Mechlin and Elvira Alamar propels the two of them, along with Mercedes, on a long bridal tour of not only fashionable sites in California, but of New England as well. The bridal party visits the wealthy Lawrence Mechlin family in New York, where they are introduced seamlessly into the highest circles of Anglo-American society. The Alamar sisters find themselves celebrated in all of the purported cultural centers of the East: New York, Boston, Washington D.C., and the fashionable travel resorts of Long Branch and Newport (incidentally, two of the most fashionable of the leisure resorts for the late nineteenth-century upper class [Demars]). Their easy assimilation into high
society implicitly argues for their rightful place in that society. In fact, Ruiz de Burton makes a case for the Alamar sisters being even more refined than the New England upper-crust. After Clarence follows Mercedes to New York to propose to her, Mrs. Lawrence Mechlin comments to Elvira that Mercedes’ behavior “was all that could be desired in a well-bred young lady,” because she paid attention to all the guests, not just her fiancé, and because she avoided being alone with any young man. Elvira responds that such improper behavior “is a thing never seen among our Spanish girls” (174). In general, the Alamar girls hold themselves to a higher behavioral standard than the strict standards for modesty and decorum of upper-class white women: Mercedes, for instance, will not kiss Clarence when they first become engaged, and later consents only reluctantly.

As a contrast to the social acceptability of Mercedes and Elvira, Ruiz de Burton includes the social downfall of Lizzie Mechlin and Gabriel Alamar, who, following the collapse of their fortunes with the collapse of the Texas Pacific, are forced to live in poverty-stricken surroundings and to work as laborers. Their fall in wealth accords with a fall in class status: most of their old friends revile them, though Lizzie had once been accustomed to move in the highest circles of San Francisco society. This incident serves several purposes in Ruiz de Burton’s narrative. It allows her to generate sympathy for the fates of the Californios, not only because Gabriel is a sympathetic character, but because Lizzie Mechlin, who is as blue-blooded Anglo-American as they come, shares his fate. In fact, because Gabriel, as a male Californio, carries the burden of opprobrium against his race, Lizzie is less protected from this downfall than the Alamar sisters (Mercedes and
Elvira) who marry white men. Ruiz de Burton to fiercely critique the wealth that represented social entrée in California society:

the weight of gold carried the day. Down came the jealously guarded gates; the very portals succumbed and crumbled under that heavy pressure. Farewell, exclusiveness! Henceforth, money shall be the sole requisite upon which to base social claims. High culture, talents, good antecedents, accomplishments, all were now the veriest trash. Money, and nothing but money, became the order of the day. (350)

Clearly, if wealth is the only ingredient required for social inclusion, then the Californios who were daily losing more of their possessions had little hope of inclusion in the future society. However, Ruiz de Burton’s critique also functions as an implicit argument for redrawing the lines of inclusion around “[h]igh culture, talents, good antecedents, accomplishments,” all of which her Californio characters possess in abundance.

The wide-ranging travels of George and Elvira Mechlin, Mercedes Alamar and Clarence Darrell not only indicate their place among the leisured upper-class travelers, but grant them a kind of cosmopolitanism that make them ideal figures for Ruiz de Burton’s imagined national future: their travels make them not only occupants of a particular region, but citizens of a nation. Not surprisingly, Clarence, who embodies Ruiz de Burton’s ideal Anglo-American settler (an innovative capitalist who respects—and marries into—Californio culture) is the most widely traveled character in the novel. He traverses easily across the length of California, to his Arizona mines, to New York to visit Mercedes, and, when their engagement is broken, he embarks on a long world tour

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66 This may also be a comment on the punishment leveled against white women who marry outside their race. While white men may marry “down,” white women ought to reserve themselves for white men.
that takes him through Mexico to Brazil, England, Egypt, and the Mediterranean before meeting George and Elvira in Paris, who persuade him to return home to California. Perhaps significantly, Ruiz de Burton reserves the most detailed description of his travels for the time Clarence spent in the interior of Mexico amid the sublime scenery and majestic ruins. These rich descriptions allow her to include—if only briefly—a valorization of Spanish culture.

Travel can often be problematic because of its association with imperialism and its wide representation as “an activity to add to the cultural capital of the traveler—usually a white bourgeois Western man” (McDowell 207). However, as Sánchez and Pita have pointed out, in The Squatter and the Don, Ruiz de Burton engages with a reversal of the expected tourist mode—instead of the Eastern traveler who proceeds from civilization to increasingly wild areas, the movement of the characters in the novel begins from the purported “marginal” regions of the U.S. and proceeds toward areas of increasing “civilization.” Such counter narratives typically feature non European travelers who visit Europe or America with a critical perspective. Although Clarence does not exactly fit this model, Elvira and Mercedes Alamar do, by virtue of both their race and their gender. Their visit to Eastern centers of American culture and government allows the reader to shift their frame of reference regarding those sites. In other words, the Alamares’s travel both critiques the assumptions of cultural superiority implicit in the East-West movement (after all, these western girls are shown as morally and culturally superior to Eastern girls), and also posits California as the civilized center from which the traveler departs, with New England as the less-civilized spectacle.
Moreover, as female travelers their movement helps break down certain spatial binaries associated with women. As McDowell notes, “Travel, even the idea of traveling, challenges the spatial association between home and women that has been so important in structuring the social construction of femininity in the ‘West’” (206). Thus, the Alamar sisters’ freedom of movement not only indicates their class, but it challenges conventional depictions of femininity that restrict gendered performance to carefully restricted domestic spaces. By simultaneously emphasizing the sisters’ ladylike breeding, Ruiz de Burton assures readers that women’s access to a wider range of spaces need not result in de-feminization.

In addition to challenging the centrality of New England, Ruiz de Burton uses the movement of characters between California and the “centers” of the nation (New York, Boston, Washington D.C.) to weave ties between the regions that help integrate California and her inhabitants into the nation. It seems significant, too, that railroads play such a large part in the novel (the fate of the Texas Pacific figures prominently in the characters’ discussion, and the Central Pacific railroad enables travel between California and New York), as railroads help cement the economic and social ties between regions. Moreover, the existence of the railroad collapses the physical distance between California and the Eastern seaboard—for the purposes of this narrative, these two regions might well be the *only* regions of United States (the entire Midwest is conveniently glossed over).

Significantly, this collapsed distance is one of the ways in which Ruiz de Burton challenges the geographical biases of the United States—in particular, the designation of a relatively small region on the Eastern seaboard (the roughly triangular region between...
New York, Boston, and Washington D.C.) as the “center” of the nation, and outlying regions like California as the border/periphery of the nation. By removing the distance between the regions, it becomes difficult to see California as marginal. As discussed previously, the alignment between Southern California and the South also functions to deconstruct this binary. Additionally, although the literal center of the novel is in Washington D.C. (the central chapters take place in the capital), the fact that characters both start in and return to California also works to de-center the nation: the circular movements of characters make it impossible to designate a center, as all points on their route are equally integral to their experience of the United States as a nation. Moreover, by characterizing the federal government as corrupt and palsied (as per the discussion above), Ruiz de Burton paves the way for California (with its Californio virtues) to emerge as a new cultural and moral center for the nation. Thus, the placement and movement of characters works to establish the Californio’s position at the top of social hierarchies and central to national relations. Crucially, challenging and critiquing spatial organizations, such as the eastern “center” of the nation and the placement of squatters, allows Ruiz de Burton to rework social arrangements, figuring Californios as privileged citizens of the nation.

Transformed Place: A Place-based Critique of U.S. Imperialist and Monopolist Practices

“As our legislators thought that we, the Spano-American natives, had the best lands, and but few votes, there was nothing else to be done but to despoil us . . . Then the cry was raised that our land grants were too large; that a few lazy, thriftless, ignorant natives, holding such large tracts of lands, would be a hindrance to the prosperity of the State, because such lazy people would never cultivate their lands, and were even too sluggish to sell them . . . It was so easy to upbraid, to deride, to despise the conquered race! Then to despoil them, to make
them beggars, seemed to be, if not absolutely righteous, certainly highly justifiable.” [Don Mariano Alamar to Clarence Darrell], *The Squatter and the Don*, p. 143

Anglo-American policies of Manifest Destiny in nineteenth-century America often justified imperialist expansion on the grounds that the spread of Anglo-American values would improve the level of civilization of the conquered people. These policies similarly justified Anglo-American seizure of land by arguing that (white) Americans were the natural heirs to the land because they would make better use of the land than the current inhabitants, whether Native or Mexican American. Through the place-based rhetorical strategies discussed previously—the alignment of California with the South, the use of promotional discourses, and character placement—Ruiz de Burton debunked the first of these rationalizations, demonstrating that Californians were just as civilized and cultivated as their white counterparts, if not more so. To debunk the second rationalization, Ruiz de Burton turns to an analysis of the transformation of California space under Anglo-American occupation and its negative consequences. Ruiz de Burton contrasts the harmonious relationship of Californios and the land with the discordant approach to the land shown by squatters, legislators, and railroad monopolists. This contrast not only reinforces Californio cultural superiority, but it provides the basis for Ruiz de Burton’s critique of U.S. imperialism and government-abetted monopolies.

The logic of Manifest Destiny implied that California land would flourish under Anglo-American occupation. What Ruiz de Burton shows, however, is a region whose bright prospects are blighted, first by squatter misuse of the land (aided and abetted by legislative blindness), and then by railroad monopolists, whose commodified approach to land is even more lethal and whose practices ruin Californios and squatters alike.
By depicting the squatters as unsuccessful cultivators of the land, Ruiz de Burton debunks the myth that Anglo-American occupation of Southern California is justified because the Anglo-American settlers will make better use of the land. As explained previously, many incoming Anglo-American settlers believed that Californios had no right to their large land tracts—in part this belief stemmed from an entrenched American belief in small, individual landholdings that were self-sufficient in other regions of the country. However, what the settlers failed to realize was that the drier climate of Southern California often would not support such limited claims. In addition, most of the Californios made their living from the sale of cattle (initially from hides and tallow; later, after the gold-rush, from the sale of beef), a land-use that required broad acreage but did not necessary show wide-spread signs of development. Thus, parts of Californio claims often appeared unused to Anglo-American settlers. Walter Lindley and J. P. Widney reflect a prevailing Anglo-American attitude toward the Californios in their 1888 guide-book to Southern California, writing that the “old residents” believed the land was only fit for grazing, but that in 1888, agriculture was thriving: “The climate, the land, and their possibilities were simply not understood” (46).

However, Ruiz de Burton suggests rather that it was the squatters, not the “old residents” who failed to understand the possibilities of the climate. Through the voice of Don Mariano, she explains why Californios were given such large grants in the first place: they served as “an inducement to those citizens who would utilize the wilderness of the government domain” (144). These original grant owners were also substantial partners in the creation of the missions and employed both white and Indian labor, which helped the Indians become “less wild.” Moreover, these land owners, like feudal lords in
Europe, were able to muster their dependents and defend the missions during Indian uprisings. Don Mariano concludes his explanation by explaining, “Thus, you see, that it was not a foolish extravagance, but a judicious policy” (144). Don Mariano’s position helps readers understand the contrasting cultural position behind the large Spanish land grants that so many Anglo-American settlers objected to.

Ruiz de Burton also demonstrates that the Californios actually know best how to profit from the landscape. Don Alamar warns the squatters that grain will not profit in Southern California and advises them to raise orchards or cattle: “it is a mistake to try to make San Diego County a grain-producing county. It is not so, and I feel certain it never will be. . . . This country is, and has been, and will always bee, a good grazing county—one of the best counties for cattle-raising on this coast, and the very best for fruit-raising on the face of the earth” (45). The most successful Anglo-American settlers are those, like Clarence Darrell, who take Don Mariano’s advice. Although the Alamar rancho ultimately fails, this failure is not attributed to improper land-use, but rather to the legislature’s failure to assist the Texas Pacific railroad (which would have brought prosperity to the region) and to the squatters’ malevolent attacks on the don’s property. Moreover, this failure functions as a powerful emotional appeal: through the course of the narrative, readers witness the unjustified killing of the don’s cattle by the squatters, the ruinous litigation costs, as well as the taxes the Alamares were forced to pay for “improvements” made by squatters to the Alamar lands. The cumulative effect of these setbacks likely inspired sympathy, if not outrage, among the readers.

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67 It should be noted that Ruiz de Burton was not indiscriminately opposed to Anglo-American settlement—in fact, as Tuttle points out, she approved of it in cases like that of Clarence Darrell, where such settlement “ensure[s] participation of the Californios in the new economy” (62), for instance, through intermarriage.
In contrast to the climate-conscious Alamars, the squatters exhibit abysmal ignorance of the nature of the land. Rather than tailoring their cultivation efforts to the natural landscape, squatters simply seek to impose Eastern farming habits onto the drier regions of Southern California—with a predictable lack of success. As Don Mariano repeatedly attempts to tell them, the land is ideally suited to grazing, or to the cultivation of orchards and vineyards, but not to raising grain. In their pig-headedness, however, the squatters continue to ignore him, and, when the don’s cattle eat the grain that the squatters refuse to fence (an act of stupidity in which they are upheld by the California legislature), the squatters retaliate by shooting his cattle—thus rendering the land unprofitable to all involved.

By highlighting the discord between Anglo-American settlers and the landscape, Ruiz de Burton further articulates the differences between Anglo-American perception of land and Californio perception of land—a perception that also shapes the way they view the placement of individuals in the landscape. Ruiz de Burton suggests that Californios, rather than Anglo Americans, understand the need for a connection between land and lifestyle—that there needs to be an organic connection between the two, that one’s lifestyle ought to harmonize with the rhythms and shape of the landscape (as the Californio’s land use is dictated by the resources of the area), rather than forcing the landscape to conform to one’s lifestyle, as the squatters do. By implication, Ruiz de Burton suggests that the gracious hacienda lifestyle (supported by Native American

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68 In fact, Pérez sees this conflict of economic systems—rancho versus grain farming—as one of the fundamental splits in the novel.
69 It should be acknowledged that although Ruiz de Burton depicts the Spanish way of life as more “natural” to the landscape, it is to some degree an artificial imposition, like all human manipulations of landscape. As Sackman points out, even the Native American landscape was to some extent manipulated, as they maintained gardens through controlled burning and some cultivation.
laborers) is a more “natural” social hierarchy, while the Anglo-American hierarchy, which would displace the Californios and their organic lifestyles, is alien and unproductive.

If the squatters fall under condemnation for their ignorance of the California landscape, so too does the legislature (both of California and the nation), which aids and abets the squatters in their ignorance. Ruiz de Burton is careful to attribute most of the fault here to the legislators: Don Mariano, who appears to voice many of Ruiz de Burton’s sentiments, explains that many of the squatters take lands in good faith and are themselves victims of a corrupt legislature (25). Like the squatters, the legislature seems blind to the real value of the land. Clarence Darrell explains to a group of squatters that they are in danger of “destroy[ing] the large industry with the smaller. If, as the Don very properly says, this is a grazing county, no legislation can change it. So it would be wiser to make laws to suit the county, and not expect that the county will change its character to suit absurd laws” (31). In particular, Ruiz de Burton criticizes the legislature for their “no-fence” law, which allowed squatters to plant small grain fields in the midst of grazing lands where they’ve staked their claims and to take up any cattle found grazing on their property. Of course, as Don Mariano points out, if the squatters will not fence their land (and the law, favoring farming over grazing, does not force them to), the cattle will come and eat the grain.

The legislature is also condemned for its lack of respect for landholdings, instituting laws like the 1851 Land Act that placed the burden of proof of landownership on the Californios. Additionally, members of the legislature appear to show no concern for the prosperity of California as a whole, only for their individual prosperity; for
example, the Alamares and Mechlins bitterly blame Governor Stanford for his selfinterested refusal to enable the building of the Texas Pacific railroad, as he had a stake in the competing Central Pacific. After the governor’s indifference effectively crushes the hopes of Mr. Mechlin, Mr. Holman, and Don Mariano (all of whom have invested heavily in property in San Diego), Don Mariano’s health begins to fail rapidly. He explains sadly that if the railroad is halted, then “the work of ruining me begun by the squatters will be finished by the [railroad] millionaires... Our legislators will then complete their work. Our legislators began my ruin; our legislators will end it” (304). On his deathbed, he twice decries “the sins of our legislators!” (324). By highlighting the illogic and injustice behind the legislature’s actions, Ruiz de Burton contrives to make the Californios’ complaints sound measured and reasonable, which might make their position more sympathetic to the Anglo-American readers of the novel, who might otherwise resent the strong condemnation of their government.

The great sins of the legislature, in treating land as a homogenous commodity, the same in Southern California as in other regions, are matched in Ruiz de Burton’s narrative only by the overriding greed of the railroad monopolists, who complete the financial ruin of so many Californios in Southern California. The squatters and the legislators sin in ignorance or out of inaction; the railroads actively bring blight and contagion to the previously healthy and prosperous region (Tuttle). Ironically, where Anglo-American settlers protested the large California land grants as wasteful and uncultivated, as Don Mariano points out, no one seems to protest when the government turns around and bestows similarly large grants of land on the railroad shareholders (143). Henry Nash Smith points out that despite the promise of various nineteenth-
century Homestead Acts to establish homogenous communities of small family farms in the West, ultimately more land was sold by the railroads than won through the Homestead Acts. In language that echoes Ruiz de Burton’s prescient observations nearly a century earlier, Smith goes on to explain that “[t]he agrarian utopia in the garden of the world was destroyed, or rather aborted, by the land speculator and the railroad monopolist” (191).

Although railroads can successfully link disparate regions of the country, they also tend to devalue land—in their view, land becomes merely another form of property, not a rich natural resource. Brady argues that the abstraction of land is a consequence of capitalism, which tends to see the land as “measured” and “homogenized” (4). Brady thus critiques the capitalist transformation of space because it “changes not simply the look of the land but social relationships as well” (4). The railroads (even non-monopolistic ones) often transform the uses to which the land is put as well; Don Mariano explains to Clarence and George Mechlin that, if the Texas Pacific is completed, he will sell his land as farming lots; if not, “then the best use he can make of the rancho will be to make it a cattle rancho” (215-6). Monroy attributes the shifting relationships between land and people in California to the successive economic systems that occupy the region, from the “primitive communal orientation of the natives, to the notions of trust and entitlement that prevailed in the mission and rancho periods, to the commodification of the land with the advent of the Anglo-Americans” (233)—and, Ruiz de Burton might add, the monopolists. Although Ruiz de Burton is not uniformly opposed to capitalism (after all, her hero, Clarence Darrell, is the epitome of the successful capitalist), she does seem to oppose this general tendency towards commodifying the landscape, particularly as this
commodification breaks the identifying link between individuals and their land; in other words, if land under Californio governance was viewed as a source of cultural identity and personhood, when it becomes a commodity with no intrinsic value, land can no longer endow individuals with meaningful identity. If the Californios take their identity (and name) from California, the squatters take their name only from their role in occupying someone else’s land, an identity with limited connection to a particular place.

Ruiz de Burton signals her criticism of the transformation of space under legisatural misrule and monopolist practices with words meant to suggest death and decay: the legislature “killed” the Texas Pacific Railroad (358); the monopolists “cast the shadows that will be our funeral pall” (314); and San Diego is “dead” (360). Perhaps most significantly, the example of the monopolists is “deadly to honorable sentiments; it is poison to Californians” (367). The monopolists figure as the greatest evil in the novel because their greed and corrosive influence turn potentially honest (at worst, merely ignorant) legislators into corrupt politicians. By casting the monopolists, rather than the legislators, as the ultimate villain in her piece, Ruiz de Burton manages to appease readers who may have been frustrated with her sharp critiques, and she also creates a common enemy whom both whites and Californios can unite in vilifying.

The monopolists, along with the corrupt legislators who aid them,70 are ultimately responsible for the shifting social place of the Californios. Not only does the impersonal machine of the railroad indiscriminately value land, it devalues individual connection to land and can thus more easily disrupt social hierarchies tied to land. González points out

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70 Most specifically, Ruiz de Burton criticizes Governor Stanford, making a thinly veiled reference to a “modern king—one of California’s tyrants” who “punish[ed] a little city because it did not turn out en masse to do him humble obeisance” (373). She compares the governor to a Persian tyrant who razed a city where he had suffered indigestion.
that unlike most historical romances, which offer an allegory of national union through joining families through marriage, *The Squatter and the Don* demonstrates how tenuous this kind of familial union can be—particularly when threatened by monopolies. Although such unions can make a claim for Californio inclusion into the nation as upper-class whites, the monopolies deconstruct the link of class and race, so that whiteness no longer automatically equates to middle or upper-class status. Because the influence of the monopolies (and their newly minted *nouveau riche*) often made wealth the sole indicator of social class and the source of political power, the juggernaut progress of monopolies destroys the economic security of many and reduces even upper-class whites to “slave” status—thus, to return to Ruiz de Burton’s closing appeal for a Redeemer for the “white slaves” of California, Ruiz de Burton seems to be seeking for a power to stand against the monopolies and their threat to the privileges of whiteness on a national scale.71 By jeopardizing potential sources of wealth (for all but the monopolists themselves), monopolists jeopardize what in monopoly-controlled systems is the only guarantee of social class: money.

In Ruiz de Burton’s literary world, the monopolists also threaten the link between land ownership and social class, as Californios, land-owning whites (like the Mechlins) and squatters alike are bankrupted by the monopolists’ interference with the Texas Pacific Railroad. In fact, it is precisely those who *do* own land, who have speculated most heavily in buying land in San Diego, who are most hurt when the proposed railroad fails to materialize. By drawing attention to the way monopolists threaten the social position

71 However, González ultimately critiques Ruiz de Burton for failing to see any alternatives to this situation aside from reinscribing “the wages of whiteness” (165) and restoring the class and racial link by reinstating Californios into a middle/upper-class position within the new economy (“Whiteness”).
of all Americans, Ruiz de Burton makes her critique relevant to her readers, Anglo-American and Californio alike. This shared threat also functions to create common ground between Ruiz de Burton’s Californio peers and her Anglo-American readers, allowing her readers to empathize with the financial woes of the Californios.

Ultimately, by emphasizing the lack of harmony between Anglo-American settlers’ use of space and the shape of the natural landscape, Ruiz de Burton criticizes the capitalist tendency to reduce land from a source of livelihood and sense of self to a commodity that is essentially interchangeable with any other piece of land (and therefore has no intrinsic meaning in itself). This criticism also serves to underscore the importance of a sense of land and space that recognizes the interdependency of cultural identity and place—that cultures endow places with meaning, and those places, in turn, become symbolic of a particular culture and constitutive of relationships within that space.

Conclusion

“Chicana literature has consistently offered alternative methods of conceptualizing space not only by noting how social change must be spatialized but also by seeing and feeling space as performative and participatory, that is, by refusing a too-rigid binary between the material and the discursive.” Mary Pat Brady, Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies, p. 6

This chapter contributes to my unfolding grammar of rhetorical space in two ways. First, this chapter illustrates the ways that discourses about the material spaces of California shaped Ruiz de Burton’s rhetorical practices by providing her with both rhetorical constraints and resources for invention. Second, I demonstrate the ways that Ruiz de Burton was able to use these existing discourses to intervene in the established social hierarchy. Ruiz de Burton’s spatially inflected rhetorical strategies help her defend Californio social position and critique the transformations of space under Anglo-
American occupation. By drawing on and adapting promotional discourses about California’s space, particularly discourses emphasizing the climate and Edenic qualities of the region as well as a tourist rhetoric, Ruiz de Burton challenges dominant cultural perceptions of the Californio inhabitants of the region. More specifically, she challenges the notion of a nation centered in New England and argues in behalf of California’s centrality to the nation and her upper-class inhabitants’ rights as citizens. If these rhetorics of space emphasize the moral and social superiority of the Californios, Ruiz de Burton’s critique of Anglo-American perceptions of space serves to emphasize the superiority of Californio spatial perceptions, which value the intimate connection between individuals and their land. Ruiz de Burton’s attentiveness to space reveals a way of conceptualizing space that differs from Anglo-American norms. For the Californios she describes, land is not simply a source of wealth, but an anchor for familial identity, a source of pride when well cared-for, and a lifeline connecting them to other Californios and supporting their social position.

By rearticulating California spaces and the placement of characters in these places, Ruiz de Burton offers a new conception of California space that attempts to change the way those spaces are experienced, and, perhaps more crucially, the way that bodies embedded in the social relationships that constitute those spaces are perceived. As Brady notes, “the production of space involves not simply buildings, transportation and communications networks, as well as social and cultural groups and institutions . . . , but it also involves the processes that shape how these places are understood, envisioned, defined, and variously experienced” (7). Given the interconnection of spatial perceptions and social hierarchy, the spatial discourses Ruiz de Burton uses work to (re)create a land-
based social hierarchy. Unlike the monopolists and corrupt government officials who equate wealth with social position (and who elide the unique importance of land by viewing land as a commodity), Ruiz de Burton’s literary world valorizes the link between land ownership, race, and social class. If land is not simply a commodity to be bought and sold, but a place-holder for cultural values, then it is those individuals who possess and “husband”\(^\text{72}\) the land’s fertile resources who become the true citizens of California. In Ruiz de Burton’s revised equation, those who own land and supervise the labor of others are also those who are “white” and truly elite.

This emphasis on space in Ruiz de Burton’s novel places her, as Brady outlines briefly,\(^\text{73}\) within a tradition of Chicana literature and rhetoric that offers alternative conceptions of space as a means of critiquing dominant cultural values.\(^\text{74}\) Brady argues that Chicanas write “with a sense of urgency about the power of space” (9). In part, this attentiveness to space stems from a history of dispossession—those with unthreatened property can afford to ignore it. As a writer who had personally experienced displacement and dispossession—first in her evacuation of Baja California after the Mexican-American

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\(^\text{72}\) I use the word “husband” advisedly here, meaning it to connote not only the close care of the land originally intended by the word, but the gendered position of power that it presumes in the relationship between land owners and others.

\(^\text{73}\) As Brady’s emphasis is on twentieth-century Chicana writers, she spends only a paragraph or two to demonstrating how Ruiz de Burton’s novels reveal “a deeply spatial stance in her work” and illustrate “how spatial formation depends on racial ideologies and how gender is in turn utilized to maintain spatial dominance” (10).

\(^\text{74}\) However, in identifying Ruiz de Burton as a kind of literary foremother it is important to also recognize significant ways in which she differs from twentieth-century Chicanas, many of whom stem from working class backgrounds. Ruiz de Burton made no secret of her elite upbringing—in fact, she was rather proud of it—and her writings tend to be rather elitist. Although Chicana rhetorics also place an emphasis on space—Lisa Flores describes the way that twentieth century Chicana feminists use a rhetoric of difference (forging identities against both Anglo-American and Mexican conceptions of them) to create a discursive space for themselves—this space is discursive rather than material. Moreover, although Ruiz de Burton worked against some Anglo-American stereotypes of Californio men, she did not generally contest stereotypes—Anglo-American or Californio—of the women (who were ladylike, remained primarily in private spheres, and married white men).
war, and then in her loss of Rancho Jamul—Ruiz de Burton similarly believed in the critical importance of place for self-conception.

Yet if Ruiz de Burton’s rhetorical strategies challenge contemporary spatial norms, they often do so for potentially disquieting aims—to realign the class and racial hierarchy in ways that are favorable to Californios but exclude lower-class Mexicans and Native Americans. However, as Anne Goldman points out, historicizing Ruiz de Burton’s novels does not mean we should excuse their classism, but it should help us appreciate “the extent to which the book’s rhetorical strategies are dissonant with the discursive practices of its period, and in so doing, to work towards a more nuanced picture of nineteenth-century Mexican American literature” (75). This chapter, then, helps scholars understand the multiple ways Ruiz de Burton uses space and discourses of place for unconventional aims: elevating a marginalized people; critiquing dominant culture spatial practices and attendant social hierarchies; and ultimately revising conceptions of land and social hierarchy to make physical and social place for her people.
CONCLUSION

“Every language is located in a space. Every discourse says something about a space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space.”—Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 132

This dissertation set out to answer the question: How does place (in its material, conceptual, or relational forms) affect rhetorical performance? Although the case studies I have provided here are in no way comprehensive, they do suggest some of the significant ways that place affects rhetorical performance. First, material place (and its attendant cultural associations and expectations) both constrains and enables a given rhetorical performance by dictating what kinds of things can and cannot be said effectively in a particular place. As I demonstrated in chapter three, Sarah Winnemucca found that different kinds of spaces—like the disciplinary spaces of the reservation and military fort or the performative space of the theater and lecture hall—set up different kinds of cultural expectations for the kind of speech that was appropriate for a native speaker. Although these spaces did not necessarily determine the content of her rhetorical performances (she was, after all, free to abide by or reject these constraints, though she could not determine the cultural reception of alternative choices), they did strongly influence her ultimate choices. In some cases, as with her communication to military officials, Winnemucca’s familiarity with that disciplinary culture allowed her to manipulate her spatial position to her advantage; in other cases, as with her efforts to intervene for her people on the reservation, rules governing acceptable speech for Indians (particularly interpreters like Sarah) made it almost impossible for her to use rhetoric effectively.
Not only do discrete material places constrain the choices of rhetors, but widespread cultural discourses about geographical spaces also affect the reception of a particular rhetorical discourse. Specifically, by looking at Helen Hunt Jackson’s rhetorical strategies in her Indian reform novel, *Ramona*, I illustrated how spatial discourses function as a terministic screen. Since any given discourse about space carries with it attendant narratives and associations that give it meaning, invoking a particular kind of space also means invoking its network of associations. For Jackson, although she intended her use of domestic, national, and natural spaces to appeal to white sympathies on behalf of Native Americans, the discourses associated with these spaces ultimately allowed her readers to take away a far different reading of that space, one that confirmed white superiority and the ultimate disappearance of native tribes.

However, if material places and the discourses that surround them can function to constrain rhetorical options, they also on occasion provide rhetors with powerful resources for rhetorical action. In chapter two, I demonstrated how the experience of material place (particularly when endowed with meaning through discursive means) can be used as a powerful constitutive force for a group of people. As I have shown, Eliza R. Snow drew on narratives about Utah space to help Mormon women understand their roles within that space, and how to endow their spatial experiences with particular kinds of meaning. Ultimately, this experience of space becomes a symbol in its own right, a kind of short-hand for group identity.

Finally, in chapter five, I illustrated how changing the terms used to describe or represent a particular place can change the way we perceive individuals in that space and their relationships to one another. In her novel *The Squatter and the Don*, María Amparo
Ruiz de Burton attempted to rewrite social perceptions of Californios by manipulating positive discourses about California space. Moreover, by challenging existing understandings of California land (and the social hierarchies required to maintain these pastoral visions), she challenges the social position of Californios in that space. Although she was not ultimately successful in changing the narrative of California history, her rhetorical strategies reveal the interconnection between place, discourse, and social position, and suggest the potential power of discourse to intervene in (or affirm) existing hierarchies.

Differing Perceptions of Western Space

This dissertation also suggests more generally the ways that individual experience of place affects both one’s perception of that space and one’s rhetorical practices. To the extent that these women experienced place differently, their aims and strategies were also different. Place is never homogeneous, even for individuals who inhabit the same physical space. Just as Eastern women might experience their place (social, cultural, geographical) in different ways from their Western counterparts, so these Western women each had distinct experiences with space that influenced how they perceived their individual place, and how they attempted to communicate to others from that place.

Helen Hunt Jackson, as an educated Eastern women who moved west upon her marriage to a Colorado businessman, had perhaps the most transparent experience of place (by transparent, I mean one colored by dominant cultural assumptions, and therefore appearing to be “natural” or unmarked by cultural bias). Her experience of California spaces galvanized her efforts on behalf of the California Indians, but she does
not appear, ultimately, to have critiqued the spatial narrative of white westward expansion that displaced Native Americans, as she herself was part of the migration westward. If she deplored the effects of greedy white settlement on Native Americans, she still does not seem to question issues of land ownership or capitalist expansion. Perhaps most importantly, her experience of Western spaces does not seem to have fundamentally changed her typically Anglo-American view that land was a commodity to be bought and sold, one often necessary for sustenance but not ultimately endowed with individual meaning. In other words, aside from the fact that certain Native American tribes “owned” specific plots of land and had already devoted time and energy to its improvement, that land was not ultimately more valuable to them than other land with similar resources. Thus, the spatial discourses she uses to talk about space are the familiar Anglo-American discourses about space, discourses that ultimately undercut her reform message.

The other three women rhetors seem to have placed a slightly higher value on the intrinsic meaning of space and one’s experience of it, largely because their individual experience of space was dramatically shaped by displacement. Eliza R. Snow belonged to a religious minority that had been driven out of settlements in Missouri and Illinois before finally settling in a region largely uninhabited except by a few native tribes. However, her religious background prompted her to see this displacement not as a consequence of political and economic factors, but as part of a divine narrative of persecution, exile, and promise that signified her belonging to a covenant people of God. Thus, her experience of Utah space was inflected by a different narrative than the one that
framed Western space for Jackson: ¹ although Snow’s narrative was also divinely
ordained, it was one that demanded the incorporation, rather than annihilation, of pre-
existing native settlers. Because she saw Utah as the site for the promised kingdom of
God, Snow tended to homogenize the landscape—what she saw in Utah was not so much
the absence of Native Americans from the landscape, but a total (eventual) incorporation
of all people into the Kingdom of God. ² Like Jackson, however, Snow was writing and
speaking to an audience with a shared cultural background and spatial vision; thus, rather
than try to establish common ground with her audience, Snow could move immediately
to her constitutive aims, drawing on this shared understanding of space to unify her
listeners.

Although Jackson and Ruiz de Burton both wrote about California space—and
used some of the same cultural myths about California as the western Eden—their
understanding of that place and its history were vastly different. While Jackson saw white
settlement wrongfully displacing Native American settlements, she does not seem
similarly moved by the displacement of the Californios, whose culture adds color to her
narrative but does not generate real sympathy. In contrast, Ruiz de Burton saw the story
of California as the civilization of Indians by Californios and the subsequent wrongful
seizure of California lands by Anglo-American settlers. Unlike Jackson, she also saw the
land as an intrinsic part of one’s cultural heritage. Because she placed a different value on
the possession of land, she attempted to actively intervene in the discourses that shaped

³ Wallace Stegner also argues that the Mormon vision of the West was a group dream, rather than the
typical American quest for quick profit.
² In fact, some historians have noted that Mormons were largely credited with more humane treatment of
Native Americans than other white settlers (Mitchell). Arrington and Bitton note that although Mormons
didn’t pay the native tribes for their lands, they generally tried to meet with local chiefs and secure their
consent for settlement; they also promised to give them whatever livestock or produce they could spare.
Stegner explains that the native tribes saw a difference between “the Mericats [other white settlers] and the
Mormonee” (62).
perceptions of California land and social relationships. However, like the others, she too believed in a narrative of land possession that justified the displacement of Native Americans by “white” cultures.

Sarah Winnemucca’s experience of land was arguably the most unique among the women. Her experience was not one of settlement of a new “frontier” (even Ruiz de Burton migrated from Baja California to southern California, and her grandfather was an important settler of Baja California), but the invasion of her homeland by an alien people. Moreover, as her autobiography makes abundantly clear, the narrative of Manifest Destiny that allowed white settlers to make sense of (and justify) their frontier experience was one that made no sense to her: her own people’s founding myth describes the separation of a white and dark nation who were part of the same family but who could not get along; the Paiutes believed “that the nation that sprung from the white children will some time send some one to meet us and heal all the old trouble” (7). This promise of familial healing proved to be a painfully ineffective explanation for the sometimes violent encounters that followed. Moreover, Patricia Clark Smith, writing with Paula Gunn Allen, suggests that southwestern American Indians understood the land as a more richly encompassing whole than Anglo-American settlers, including not only the landscape but relationships between all living creatures in that landscape. Although Winnemucca may not have belonged to the specific southwestern tribes they were referring to (they didn’t specify), it seems clear that she understood harmonious living on the land and appropriate land use in far different ways than the Anglo-American settlers who were to take control of the land. Her understanding of land—its importance not only
as a resource but as part of her tribal heritage and identity—fueled her repeated efforts to get sufficient land in traditional tribal hunting grounds set aside for reservation land.

A Grammar of Rhetorical Space

As one of the contributions of this dissertation project, I have developed a preliminary grammar of rhetorical space that sketches out some of the ways that rhetorical space—as a material, conceptual, and/or symbolic space grounding rhetorical action— influences rhetorical practices. This grammar draws both on conclusions from my own research as well as existing scholarship. Below, I offer some tentative categories for the rhetorical effects of material, conceptual, and symbolic spaces. (This grammar enhances and categorizes the rhetorical effects of space described earlier in this conclusion.) Although the effects of material spaces and discourses about spaces are often indistinguishable, for the purposes of this grammar I discuss their effects separately.

• The Effect of Material Place on Identity (Identity Effect). As has been previously suggested, material places can have a profound effect on individual identity. The local climate and topography can (particularly in the nineteenth-century, which was more dependent on natural resources) shape the options for employment in a region and thus influence the local economy and social hierarchy. These situational constraints shape the exigencies of daily life and the identities of individuals affiliated with that place. Although individual identities may be

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3 In The Female Frontier, Glenda Riley compares the experience of pioneers in the prairies (the mid-West) and the plains (the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska). She finds that the experience of place strongly affects males’ roles, which were determined largely by available resources (for instance, men on the prairies were more likely to be independent farmers, where men in the plains were more likely to be involved in mining communities). However, women’s domestic concerns were more homogeneous across region (although they were also somewhat affected by their husbands’ work).
multiple, the different identities that individuals assume include values, beliefs, and assumptions that influence what kinds of rhetorical strategies may be effective in a given situation.\(^4\)

- **The Effect of Material Arrangement on the Rhetor-Audience Relationship (Rhetor-Audience Effect).** The material arrangement of space in a particular venue affects the way that the speaker relates to her audience. As Roxanne Mountford demonstrates in her study of women preachers, the presence of a pulpit and the placement of pews often dictate the way a preacher sees herself in relation to her audience; such arrangements may also influence the way audience members understand their own relationship to the speaker and to one another. This arrangement can potentially function as a rhetorical resource or constraint for the rhetor, depending upon the nature of the relationships suggested by the space. For women who want to be seen as inhabiting the same social space as their audience, an elevated pulpit may frustrate their rhetorical approach. In some cases, the physical arrangement of space can be manipulated for rhetorical effect: Carol Mattingly describes the attention women in the WCTU gave to the physical spaces of their public lectures, often decorating the podium with flowers or otherwise creating a more inviting atmosphere to enhance the sense of intimacy between speaker and audience (*Well-Tempered*).

- **The Effect of Material Place on Genre (Genre Effect).** Current rhetorical understandings of genre view genre as a formalized response to a recurrent rhetorical situation (Miller). However, what often gets overlooked is that these

\(^4\) Studies by Nedra Reynolds and Sidney Dobrin, described in the first chapter of this dissertation, are primarily concerned with this kind of identity-effect.
situations (particularly in the case of public speaking) are tied to specific places. For instance, the physical layout and cultural expectations associated with churches dictates the form of the sermon as an appropriate response for that time and place. As I explored in chapter three, Sarah Winnemucca adapted her rhetorical discourses not just to the different audiences she addressed, but varied her speeches and writings according to the conventions of place (such as the theatrical stage, lecture hall, and military fort) where she was currently located.

• **The Effect of Material Place on Public Identity (Constitutive Effect).** Material spaces are often constructed discursively in ways that lead individuals to experience those places in similar ways. According to Greg Clark, this shared experience of place (particularly in the case of places designated as uniquely American like Yellowstone Park or the Lincoln Highway) helps constitute individuals as American citizens.

• **The Effect of Material Place on Identity Symbols (Place as a Shorthand for Identity).** Because physical spaces can help constitute group identity for those who inhabit those spaces, those particular spaces can also function symbolically as a shorthand for identity. Consider, for example, what is implied in Penn State’s popular student chant: “We are Penn State!” Here, the physical location, with its complex ideological associations, is conflated with the identity of the students and alumni who repeat the cheer. The location then becomes symbolic of the complex of identities thus invoked. In this case, the spatial symbol functions rhetorically to constitute group identity among those who identify with the spatial appellation. In chapter two, I explained how Eliza R. Snow similarly endows the idea of Utah
with particular meaning for Mormon women, who are then able to understand Utah geography as a shorthand for their shared identity.

- **The Effect of Regional Location as a Situational Constraint (Identification Obstacle Effect).** Regional locations (urban, suburban, rural, or geographic regions, such as the Midwest, South, West, etc.) are often associated with particular kinds of identities (identities that may be rooted in the physical and material characteristics of the region, as per above) that can affect a speaker’s rhetorical stance. Regional locations may influence the ways individuals conceive of themselves and their audience, as well as the audience’s perception of the rhetor. Thus, a rhetor addressing an audience from a different regional positioning may have to work against regional differences in order to achieve identification. As I demonstrate in chapter five, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton draws on discourses aligning the Southwest with the American South in order to help her white, Eastern readers understand the culture of native Californians. In addition, the current presidential primaries are a good case in point: as a New Englander, Mitt Romney struggled to appeal to voters in southern states, like Florida (while some of this difficulty was due to racial differences between Romney and southern minorities, some of the difficulty can be attributed to region as well).

- **The Effect of Regional Location as a Situational Resource (Common Ground Effect).** In cases where the rhetor and her audience experience the same regional positioning, their location can be an additional source of common ground between

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5 Krista Comer argues that scholars from regions outside New England who approach literature or theory from a regional intellectual tradition may have to justify their approach because of a persistent intellectual bias favoring the Northeast. As evidence of this bias, Comer points to the furor raised in eastern intellectual circles when westerner John Steinbeck won the Nobel prize for literature.
them. For instance, although religion was a stronger identifying link between Eliza R. Snow and her audience than place, she used their shared location and experience of place to strengthen this unity. To borrow another example from current presidential politics, Romney succeeded far better in Michigan where he was able to present himself to listeners as “one of them” because he had been born there and his father had served as governor of the state.

• *The Effect of Regional Location as a Stylistic and Behavioral Constraint* (Behavioral Effect). Regional stereotypes may also constrain an individual’s stylistic choices and mannerisms—and thus their possibilities for rhetorical performance—because of the expectations they arouse for audiences. Whether speakers act or speak in accordance with these stereotypes or resist them, they still have to take these conceptions of space into account when developing their rhetorical strategies. Some rhetors, like Sarah Winnemucca, leverage these stereotypes to their own advantage—by responding to audience expectations about a Western “Indian Princess,” Winnemucca was able to reach a wider audience. Others, like Gloria Anzaldúa, work against regional stereotypes to suggest the both the limitations of these stereotypes and the complex variation possible within regional identifications.6

• *The Effect of Regional Location on Access to an Audience* (Audience Access Effect). Perhaps even more significant than the effect of regional location on identification and style is its effect on access to audience. Although technology currently erases many of the physical constraints of location, regional location can

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6 It should go without saying that these stereotypes—although centered around spaces—are not purely about physical place. They also have to do with the social position of an individual, which is shaped by a complex interaction of regional placement, gender, race, social class, and so forth.
limit one’s ability reach an audience in person, particularly for individuals who live far from urban cultural centers. This was particularly true for nineteenth-century women, whose domestic duties often kept them place-bound. For Sarah Winnemucca, her distance from her primary audience (benevolent-minded New Englanders) was a real obstacle to her rhetorical success. Although she enjoyed a moderately successful Eastern tour (if you discount her husband’s misappropriation of funds!), her inability to return East in later years hampered her efforts to revive flagging interest in her cause. And even today, some graduate students and untenured faculty members are prevented from attending national conferences because of geographical distance.

- The Effect of Conceptual Spaces on Emotional Appeals (Affective Response Effect). Discourses circulating about spaces and places provide individuals with interpretive frameworks for viewing and understanding those places. In cases where these discourses allow rhetors to establish common ground with audiences, they can serve as a positive resource for the rhetorical situation. In addition, because many places carry with them distinctive emotional connotations (often discursively reinforced), references to these places and their attendant discourses can evoke an affective response in readers. For instance, in chapter five, I illustrated how Ruiz de Burton draws on popular discourses about California as a Pacific Eden to positively shape readers’ responses to her people.

- The Effect of Conceptual Spaces as a Situational Constraint (Terministic Screen Effect). Although spatial discourses can provide positive resources for identification and powerful emotional appeals, such discourses can also constrain
an individual’s rhetorical situation, precisely because they are so ideologically laden. Because spatial discourses are part of particular terminologies, or terministic screens, they carry with them a constellation of ideologies (ideological baggage, if you will) that limits the rhetorical choices available to a rhetor by determining what strategies are most effective in a given situation and by influencing how such discourses will be understood by audiences. Thus, by invoking a particular set of spatial discourses, the rhetor automatically excludes certain options for argument even as she invites others. As I demonstrated in chapter four, Helen Hunt Jackson undercuts her own rhetorical purpose by drawing on specific discourses about domesticity and wilderness that allow readers to understand her narrative in ways other than the one she intended.

- The Effect of Conceptual Space as a Situational Resource (Space/Place as Topoi Effect). Spaces and places can serve as common topics that provide resources for the ideas and appeals rhetors use in their work. For one thing, spaces and places can supply metaphors for understanding complex relationships between ideas and individuals. Spatial metaphors also help individuals understand their relationship to significant figures around them; in her study of Christianity and geography, Ellen Ross notes that many women “use geographical categories and vocabulary to express their concrete, physical, landed encounters with the sacred” (94). In addition, narratives about particular spaces also serve as resources for invention; Richard Marback explains that Robben Island becomes a rhetorical space as narratives about the place endow it with symbolic meaning and offer other rhetors

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7 For instance, as Nedra Reynolds has noted, spatial metaphors of the frontier, city, and cyberspace “have served to establish composition’s disciplinary status; the other two [borderlands and travel] work to shape notions of discourse and difference within composition and literacy studies” (27).
writing about that space a framework for their own experience. Similarly, as I
described in chapter two, Snow uses narratives associated with Utah landscapes to
constitute her audience of women as particularly Mormon women. Finally,
conventions about space also function as a resource for invention; for example,
Ruiz de Burton draws on conventional understandings about social location and
freedom of movement to signal to readers the upper-class status of her Californio
characters.

Some Important Questions for Rhetorical Scholarship and Pedagogy

Because material places and their attendant discourses can have profound effects
on the practice of rhetoric, they need to be more closely attended to in both our
scholarship and our classroom practices. In what follows, I offer some potential questions
that scholars might use in their own work, as well as in classroom discussions with
students, about the ways that space influences the rhetorical practices of historical rhetors
and our own practices.

• What geographic, social, and cultural locations does this rhetor come from? How
do these positions affect her ethos and the way she is perceived by outside
audiences? Does this location seem to influence in any way the language, phrases,
gestures, etc., with which the rhetor communicates with her audience? What
values, beliefs, and assumptions associated with this particular location might
influence the rhetor?
• What geographic, social, and cultural locations does the audience come from? What values, beliefs, and assumptions associated with these locations might influence the audience in their response to the rhetor?

• Where did a particular rhetorical event occur? What do you know about the spatial arrangement of the site? What kind of relationship does this arrangement establish between the rhetor and his audience?

• What kind of space is the site for the rhetorical performance (i.e., disciplinary, performative, pedagogical, etc.)? What kinds of behaviors and rhetorical expression are permitted in this type of space? How does this particular rhetorical performance conform to or resist these expectations? What effect might that have? On the rhetor? On the audience?

• What kinds of constraints does this space present for the rhetor? What kinds of resources are available in this space?

• What kinds of spatial references does the rhetor include in her address? How are these discourses being used? What effect do these spatial discourses have?

• Do these spatial discourses have any unintended consequences? That is, are they associated with discourses that might compromise the rhetor’s intended purpose?

• What kinds of social hierarchies are invoked in the rhetor’s discourse? How are these hierarchies established and maintained in space? What effect does the rhetor’s discourse have on these hierarchies? (I.e., does his discussion intervene in or affirm these social structures?)
Although these questions are by no means comprehensive, attending to these kinds of questions in both our own scholarship and our teaching can help us more fully understand the profound role of place in rhetorical performance.

Some Final Thoughts

Because all human interactions and social networks unfold in a particular space, because all discourse originates from some space, and because our experiences of particular places are inevitably influenced by cultural discourses about that place, place and space are crucial to the study of rhetoric. Like other socially constructed factors (race, class, gender, sexuality), place demands our critical attention if we would not be unthinkingly influenced by it. In a world where individual experience of place is becoming increasingly shaped by an expanding global economy and access to other spaces, it is becoming ever more crucial to ask questions about how individuals are positioned in both material and cyber spaces, what kinds of social hierarchies are being (re)constructed in these spaces, and the nature of the human relationships that are unfolding in these spaces. What does it mean to be a citizen in a “global” village? Who gets to participate? In what ways? How is rhetorical discourse shaping the perception and experience of this global community?

Perhaps more importantly for rhetorical scholars, asking questions about who can freely speak in particular places, to what audience, using what means, and for what purpose, can help us better understand the ways that rhetorical practice is rooted in space. As Lorraine Code argues, rhetorical spaces are not constructed evenly to allow uniform access to the resources of rhetorical performance. Close attentiveness to the role of space
in rhetoric—whether that means the way a physical place affects the relationship of the rhetor and her audience, the way spatial discourses get mobilized as rhetorical appeals, or the way individuals use rhetoric to intervene in the spaces that support particular social hierarchies—helps us better understand the uneven construction of rhetorical spaces. Ideally, with this knowledge, we become not only better equipped to understand the rhetorical practices of others, but we are able to extend this understanding to our students, who can then become more successful rhetors in their own right, negotiating to their best ability the particular constraints and resources of their own rhetorical spaces.
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Rosalyn Collings Eves
Curriculum Vitae
rmc216@psu.edu/ rosalyn.eves@gmail.com

Education
M.A., English (Rhet/Comp), The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, May 2003
B.A., Honors English, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, summa cum laude, April 2001

Selected Publications

Selected Presentations
“Constructing Community: Memory, Rhetoric, and Composition Praxis.” Presented at the Annual Conference on College Composition and Communication, Chicago, IL, Mar. 2006.
“‘Dreaming of This Fair Land’: Rhetorics of Space and Place in Helen Hunt Jackson’s Ramona.” Paper presented at the Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) conference, Michigan Tech., Houghton, MI, Oct. 2005.
“A Recipe for Remembrance: Locating Memory and Identity in African-American Women’s Cookbooks.” Presented at Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s), Ohio State University, Oct. 2003.

Teaching and Research
Summer Teaching Fellow, Brigham Young University, Summer 2006 (two upper-division courses)
Teaching Assistant, Penn State, 2001-4 (seven sections of freshman and advanced composition)
Research Assistant, Penn State (Professor Cheryl Glenn) 2003-4, 2005-6
Course Assistant for Freshman Composition, Penn State, 2002-3 (designed curriculum, taught teaching practicum)

Honors and Fellowships
Kenneth Burke Prize, The Pennsylvania State University, 2007
Humanities Initiative Award, The Pennsylvania State University, 2006
Summer Teaching Fellow, Brigham Young University, 2006
Wilma R. Ebbitt Graduate Award in Rhetoric, 2006
University Fellowship, The Pennsylvania State University, 2001-2002

Professional Affiliations
National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) 2003-present
Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) 2005-present