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Denying Genocide: “America’s” Mythology of Nation, The Alamo, and the Historiography of Denial

by

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requirements for the degree of

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University of California, Berkeley

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Denial

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by Robert Anthony Soza

Abstract

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History, the adage goes, is written by the victors. As a result, history represents the values, ideologies, and most importantly for this dissertation, the remembrances of the victorious. Their remembrances never remain ethereal or disembodied; they become the object lessons about the past for those living in the present. And these object lessons, the lessons of history, become the narratives and locations that transmit a nation’s idealized values and origin stories. It is in this confluence of remembrances, object lessons, values and origin stories that this dissertation examines in the Alamo. The Alamo represents a consummate site of memory for the United States. As a cultural narrative it persists from a mid-nineteenth century battlefield through the present day as a cinematic narrative. The Alamo is one of the historical watershed moments of the Westward expansion.

However, the tales of the victors (ironically, in this case, the victors at the Alamo are the Euro-Americans who died in the battle) transmit values, lessons and stories steeped in narratives of denial. They engage in what this dissertation calls the historiography of denial. Simply, the Alamo, according to the victors, represents a shrine dedicated to personal liberty, familial security, economic development, and a furthering of the best values of humanity. The victors, however, fail to acknowledge the consequences of their victory for people of color. The victorious Texans reintroduced chattel slavery, exterminated Native America, and engaged in cultural genocide against the remaining Mexican/Chicana/o population. It is these omissions that mark the Alamo as a location where the historiography of denial permits the United States to remain invested in its own belief system that genocide did not occur at the hands of “America.”

The ultimate aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate how the Alamo represents a location that both borrows from and recreates the consummately “American” historical practice of holocaust denial, a denial that stretches from the United State’s origins to the present-day.

For Francis, Gladys, John, Ramona, and Pilar

In memory of those who have yet to be acknowledged in the pages of “history”

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Introduction

“Memory and consciousness are inseparable. But language is the means of memory, or, following Walter Benjamin, it is the medium of memory.” (40)

—Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance*

“If intolerance of unorthodox views continues unabated, American will soon become adept in the art of self-censorship as the citizen’s of the world’s most dictatorial regimes. When Americans are intimidated into keeping dissident views to themselves, our public discourse is constricted, the First Amendment is diminished, and democracy itself is under attack.” (102)

—Nancy Chang, *Silencing Political Dissent: How Post-September 11 Anti-Terrorism Measures Threaten Our Civil Liberties*

This dissertation begins with the assumption that the national story exists to maintain both narrative and social order. This order informs the roles of its citizens, and assures the individual that s/he has a place in the on-going production of the nation. And ultimately, the national story provides a framework of meaning that aids people to discern right from wrong, patriotic from rebellious, and productive from disruptive. However, this national story, as will be discussed in detail below, is not an innocent narrative. The order that it instills precludes the realm of “disorder” and in fact, defines the “disorder,” as destructive, or in the case of the United States, “un-American.” The key values of the United States can easily be reduced and recited: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Subsequently, those things that are “un-American” hinder the quest for these three sacred “American” values.

Additionally, as individuals living within this society, there is an ongoing educational process that inculcates U.S. citizens in the right-minded nature of “America’s” core values. School text books, television commercials, political speeches, editorial pages of the newspaper, and for the purpose of this dissertation, museums represent platforms upon which the national story and its values are promulgated. “America” exists as a social contract where its citizens possess a series of inalienable rights, and this story is broadcast as “truth.” However, this narrative is also a narrative of power. David Theo Goldberg argues:

The social contract tradition, far from being a realist(ic) account, then, is more aptly conceived as the prevailing modern story or narrative form, a gripping and telling myth about state origins, constitution, legitimation, and justification (Taussig 1997: 124-5). It is an account modern political theory in the European tradition has fashioned for itself as a way of coming to terms with – of accounting “magically” for – such social constitution. After all, it was fifty-five men, every one white, who were party to the agreement that fashioned the United States of America, the paradigmatic case of a contractually based state if ever there was one. The constitutional contract was fashioned between thirteen states at the time, the additional thirty-seven added over roughly a century and half through seizure,

conquest, expansion, wheeling and dealing more often than not to the detriment and exclusion of those who already lived in those spaces that became states. (*Racial* 38-39)

It is the power behind the “magic” that elevates the narrative of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness over the “seizure, conquest, expansion, [and] wheeling and dealing” resulting in the destruction, displacement, and deaths of the peoples, who were almost always people of color, living on the land that would become the United States. The colonial growth and progress of the United States is rendered normal and contractual (read legal), and as a result, the expansion of democracy exists within a natural framework, a developmental framework where the civilized introduced history, law, and reason—this of course, belies the genocidal violence of this colonial conquest (Goldberg, *Racial* 87). Thus, the power of the “American” narratives exists in its centrality, normalization, and in the civic dangers of dissenting, of being “un-American.”

Speaking of museums, Donna Haraway illustrates the roles museums play in maintaining both social order and national purity; she argues museums exist to minimize the possibility of personal and social decadence:

Decadence was the threat against which exhibition, conservation, and eugenics were all directed as prophylaxis for an endangered body politic. The Museum was a medical technology, a hygienic intervention, and the pathology was a potentially fatal organic sickness of the individual and collective body. . . . Three public activities of the Museum were dedicated to preserving a threatened manhood: exhibition, eugenics, and conservation. Exhibition was a practice to produce permanence, to arrest decay. Eugenics was a movement to preserve hereditary stock, to assure racial purity, to prevent race suicide. Conservation was a policy to preserve resources, not only for industry, but also for moral formation, for the achievement of manhood. (187-188)

Thus, according to Haraway, the museum kept “America” clean, not just physically, but ideologically. The values of the ruling elite, those who funded museums, and those who benefited from the social orders that produced their wealth embedded narratives of white supremacy (eugenics) within the museum narratives (exhibition) with an eye toward teaching and replicating “America” as understood by its benefactors (conservation). Thus, the museum and its narratives represent tales that are far from innocent, or for that matter true. And these narratives, these cultural constructs, exist as lived relationships; they are not exclusively musty old stories of days-gone-by. The impact of these stories is material and immediate (JanMohamed 266). And it is in this context of half-truths that from above, the state imposes a false “harmoniousness” on society by claiming that “we” are indeed “the people” (Thomas 33). It is in this intersection of lived impacts and narrative that the museum functions as intermediary between the national population, narratives of state that deny genocide, and the celebration of the “magical” inheritance of liberty; it is within the museum that the vestiges of violence attached to its artifacts disappear and the state replicates its sanitized veneer (Goldberg, *Racist* 109, 159, and 162).

In an effort to explore the intersection of museums, national mythology, and genocide denial, I have selected to focus this dissertation on a single museum: The Alamo in San Antonio, Texas. In the hands of the museums caretakers, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT),

the Alamo can tell no other story than the one the DRT desires—they rearticulate the narrative of Manifest Destiny: the Euro-American comes to a land of disorder and chaos, imports civilization and progress, and from this arises a civilization unparalleled among nations. When called to “remember the Alamo” by the DRT, their memories invoke the deaths of heroes who fight for democracy, family, and progress—the Alamo as “medium of memory” narrowly proscribes the history of the event, its outcomes, and the subsequent meaning of a falsely harmonious America. The edifice in downtown San Antonio, Texas is as Paul G. Labadie, of *American Heritage* magazine, describes, “even on the busiest tourist days, the scene is hushed. No running children, no flashbulbs popping off (taking photographs of the chapel interior is strictly forbidden), but only quite conversation and soft footfalls, as if in recognition of the 189 men who gave their lives for Texas independence” (105). The DRT constructs this air of sacredness; men must remove their hats upon entry to show respect for the “sacredness of the [Alamo] shrine,” and flash photography remains prohibited as the building is a place for “reverence and reflection” (“Frequently”). This hushed reverence belies the intense conflict concerning the manner in which the “medium of memory” is constructed and managed (“Texas: Refighting” 25).

Lost in the DRT’s tale are the racist narratives of domination and genocide that shape the contours of the “American” experience for those peoples of color caught up in the Euro-American’s Westward expansion; their narratives endure a forced silence. Though focused exclusively on the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, Haraway’s aforementioned three pronged analysis of the museum’s function (exhibition, eugenics, and conservation) opens the possibility for analyzing the history of Texas, its crafted meaning within the Alamo, and all within the context of the silenced genocidal norm of “American” nation building. The logic of exhibition ties directly to Tony Bennett’s exhibitionary complex (to be developed in detail in chapter two), the Alamo represents a location of knowledge deemed worthy and important by the victors (the DRT), and these knowledges serve a disciplinary function on the visiting tourist. These modern messages emerged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in the United States (the era the DRT began their commemorative project at the Alamo), a time of radical change. There had to be a new accounting of what it meant to be part of the empowered classes, and the Alamo as an exhibition offered such a location. It in fact offered the newly assimilating white ethnics who migrated to Texas during both the Republic and after statehood an image of their place in Texas, just as it was instructive to those non-whites who lived in Texas. The second pillar of eugenics more overtly manifests the logic of white supremacy; the historical rationales of eugenics removed bodies and cultures of color from the spectrum of humanity and quashed moral debates on the logics of extermination as Texas “consolidated” control over its land. And finally, conservation served as a reminder from where Texas had come—by preserving the past the measure of progress established itself: civilization against barbarity, technology against primitivism, humanity against savagery, and so on. Each of the three pillars as distinct forces, and in combination, assured a façade of knowledge easing the disappearance of genocide and its body count from Texas’ past, as well as the U.S. national imaginary. The Alamo serves as a location where the racism and violence of Manifest Destiny disappears, (re)fashioned into a benevolent exhibitionary complex of national and familial unity and progress.¹

¹ Amy Kaplan accentuates the importance of clearly illustrating the linkages between historical origins and contemporary positions by tracing the genealogy of domesticity to the antebellum era of the United States in the 1830s; precisely at the time the Texans were confronting Mexico. The

It is not only the museum in San Antonio, Texas that empowers the Alamo's narrative of progress and the denial of racism and genocide. The Alamo exists as a broad, and ever-expanding, cultural icon and narrative. Film, literature, history, and, of course, the museum itself coalesce into a cohesive story; the sheer scope and volume of information related to the Alamo creates a cultural narrative so expansive and so readily accessible that the Alamo story permeates the collective consciousness of the United States. While the specific details of the Alamo's history may not permeate the public domain, the battle cry to "remember the Alamo" does. To live in the United States is to have a sense of the Alamo, to understand that it is a battle to be recalled, and to know that, at least for the United States, the outcome proved positive.

It is the contention of this dissertation, that this widely held, if not naïve, understanding of the Alamo as an absolutely positive event in the history of the United States is symptomatic of a broader amnesia that reifies the values of white supremacy, a reification that occurs behind a veil of genocide denial and a forgetting of racism's centrality in growth of the United States. Remembering the Alamo does not mean to recall chattel slavery, Native American extermination, or the murder, rape, and displacement of peoples of color across Texas. Nor does it mean to grapple with the fact that the white social order and its success was predicated on the aforementioned violence. Remembering the Alamo, at least according to the DRT is to deny what Aimé Césaire has called the fundamentals of colonization:

[To understand colonization one must] agree on what it is not: neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the

Texan War and subsequent annexation of the territory and peoples signifies the complexity of the interrelationship of the domestic and imperial: "[P]olitical debate over the annexation of Mexico hinged on what was agreed to be the impossibility of incorporating a foreign people marked by their racial intermixing into a domestic nation imagined as Anglo-Saxon. . . . [The rhetoric of domesticity] [r]ather than stabilizing the representation of the nation as home . . . heightened the fraught and contingent nature of the boundary between the domestic and foreign, a boundary that breaks down around the questions of the racial identity of the nation as home. . . . Domestic discourse both redresses and reenacts the contradictions of empire through its own double movement to expand female influence beyond the home and the nation while simultaneously contracting woman's sphere to police domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness both within and without" (Kaplan, "Manifest" 585). Victorian women govern the truths emanating from within the domestic; their main contribution to the national labor is maintaining good moral character in opposition to savageness: "The rhetorics of Manifest Destiny and domesticity share a vocabulary that turns imperial conquest into spiritual regeneration in order to efface internal conflict or external resistance in visions of geopolitical domination as global harmony" (Kaplan "Manifest" 588). Thus, the DRT's imagining of the Alamo as site of their ancestors greatest moment, a moral stand of epic proportions, as well as a political stand, continues the binaries constructed in the early-nineteenth century. As Tony Bennett points out, the liberal project attempts to use cultural practices and commemorations to transform the public and the "embroilment of the institutions and practices of high culture" (Bennett 20-22). These all converge in the Alamo, under the DRT's careful eye, to promulgate "a range of legal and symbolic resources in order to exact obedience from the population" (Bennett 20-22). Thus, the Alamo's role as "symbolic resources" positions the gendered binaries of the DRT's domestic sensibilities at the center of one of the most well known historical sites in the United States.

frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit once and for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies. (10-11)

The Texan mission, contrary to the DRT's narrative, centered on commerce; it was not civilizing endeavor, but a land-grab and an expansive search for new markets and profit. The omission of these historical facts are tell-tale markers of what this dissertation will call the "historiography of denial." They are additionally, indicators of the wide-spread and generally accepted practice of genocide denial. To buy into the false innocence of the Alamo's canonical historical narrative is to buy into a historical order rooted in the politics of whiteness and denial.

In order to better explore the question of fabricated innocence and genocide denial, chapter one, "The Origins of Denial: 'Finding' the Empty Continent" surveys the origins of the "American" mythology that the Americas represented an empty landscape, void of civilization, and that it was the Europeans and their "American" descendents who imported not only civilization, but also history. An accompanying component of this mythology is the right to destroy; Native Americans, Africans, African Americans, and all other non-whites could be destroyed, culturally or biologically, in the name of "progress." These mythologies represent the foundation of the "American" self-understanding of the both the present nation, and as importantly, its past.

The next five chapters examine the ideological management of the Alamo as a symbolic text that creates, continues and embeds the Texans' narrative of exceptionalism as a contingent part of U.S. state formation. The analysis in chapter two, "Remember the Alamo! Forget White Supremacy!" focuses on the origins of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex and its adoption of a historiography of denial. The birth of both of these can be located in the earliest accounts of the Alamo as extensions of the myth of the empty continent. These initial narratives also represent the first imaginings of what will become the "already known" facts (to be discussed below) of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Professions of patriotism, racial unity, familial security, and providence's plan for North America permeate the initial news reports and fictional representations of the fall of the Alamo. The overt championing of white justice and freedom also mark these records.² Forgotten, discounted, or simply ignored, the perspectives or issues of peoples of color do not influence these first records. It is in these genetic moments of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, which is a focus of this chapter, that its one hundred and seventy plus year story begins.

² During the nineteenth century, the imperial project did not register on a negative cultural scale; if anything the popular rhetoric manifests the highest aspects of the masculinist obligations of the "stronger race" (Roosevelt 182). Manliness, as an ideology, is a dynamic process always in flux; however, during the nineteenth century, and into the present, the flux disappeared behind "fact[s] of nature" buttressed "through a complex political technology, composed of a variety of institutions, ideas and daily practices" that normalized the patriarchal and racist constructions of U.S. imperial ideology (Bederman 7).

Chapter three, “Norming the Historiography of Denial: The Alamo’s Media ‘Blitz,’ Part I” begins its analysis with the DRT and their imbrication within the rising heritage movements of the nineteenth century. After almost seventy years of both disinterest and neglect in the site and story of the Alamo, the DRT assume oversight just after the turn of the twentieth century. Deeply invested in white supremacy, the DRT as a manifestation of the larger heritage movement adopts the earliest nationalist accounts of the Alamo’s fall, continuing the emphasis on the morality and valor of the defenders, and discounting the much more complex legal relations between the Texan “defenders” and Mexican “aggressors.” It is in this denial of complexity and the accentuation of the “valorous” Texan that the historiography of denial becomes the widely accepted historical narrative of the Alamo. Also during this heritage moment, the Alamo is transformed from static building and print narrative into a cinematic record. This transformation in 1915 is essential as the film’s creative force is the white supremacist D.W. Griffith. Thus, no longer confined to brick-and-mortar or the past, the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex becomes a cultural icon easily consumed in the new medium of film, allowing for the widespread distribution of the “already known” facts of the Alamo.

Chapter four, “Norming the Historiography of Denial: The Alamo’s Media ‘Blitz,’ Part II,” analyzes the Alamo in film from the late-1930s through John Wayne’s Oscar winning 1960 epic *The Alamo*. It is across these three decades that the resiliency of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex, and its historiography of denial, becomes more clear. From the 1930s to the 1960s, the cultural landscape of the United States radically changes. However, the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex manages to both adapt to these transformations and carry forward (in amended and often more subtle ways) the racially charged and nationalist narratives of the earliest accounts of the Alamo. In chapter five, “Norming the Historiography of Denial: The Alamo’s Media ‘Blitz,’ Part III” this transmission of values permeates the films of the 1980s and early-twenty-first century as well. These most recent films, when juxtaposed with late-twentieth century publications about the Alamo by the DRT, readily demonstrate the continuity of the “already knowns” of the nineteenth century Alamo narratives. Again, it is the cultural resilience of the Alamo as a location of the historiography of denial that remains remarkable. By the early-twenty-first century the United States had experienced the Civil Rights movement, and in some quarters is now referred to as a “post-racial nation,” yet the nineteenth century narratives of white supremacy and the denial of the Texans’ racist violence persist in the Alamo story. This Alamo chapter analyzes the continuity of the narrative of family and freedom, the near unquestioning valorization of the Texan cause, and the denial of genocidal logics in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Chapter six, “The ‘Right’ Kind of People of Color Shall Inherit the Earth” surveys the manner in which the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex addresses the roles of people of color within the Alamo narrative and the actual outcomes for these communities living under Texan rule. The DRT and the surrounding cultural narratives firmly ensconce those people of color who “know their place” into the Alamo’s narratives of progress and virtue. However, for those communities of color who failed to submit to white rule, these communities experienced a level of violence resulting in outright or near destruction. This analysis provides a window into the role of the Alamo in both complimenting and perpetuating the national historiography of denial as it relates to genocide denial in the United States.

Chapter seven, “As American as Apple Pie: Genocide and the Art of Denial” represents a shift in the dissertation’s focus and narrative. Up to this point, the dissertation focused on the construction of historical narratives, specifically the Alamo and its accompanying exhibitionary

complex, that inform the meaning of the United States. Chapter seven focuses on the outcomes of this national understanding as it relates to broader understandings of the role of genocide in the “American” past and present. The Alamo and its historiography of denial mark a practice that constructs a framework for contemporary denial. Thus, the dissertation shifts focus to Samantha Power’s *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. Power’s work represents one of the first twenty-first century studies of genocide, and what is remarkable about this study is its intellectual imbrication within the same white supremacist patterns of denial that inform the Alamo. Power argues that for victims of catastrophic violence and genocide to be “acknowledged as human beings” and experience “retribution” and justice, the displays of justice must be local, the truth must be told clearly, and with a geographic immediacy (Power, Interview by David Brancaccio; Interview by Terry Gross). Power’s work, for all its merits, fails to situate, and in fact actively denies, genocide within the “American” tradition. Her work, in essence, continues the historiography of denial central to the DRT’s construction of the Alamo and the larger historical narratives of Manifest Destiny. This contemporary denial is troublesome, and a measure of how far the United States still has to go in reckoning with its historical investment in the destruction of people of color.

Finally, chapter eight, “Toward a Strong Messianic Moment: A Historiography of Accountability,” emerges from the notion advanced by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* that for a colonized people to make actual progress the colonized must first recognize “the extent of . . . estrangement” from their history (226). The historiography of denial builds the past narratives of both the destroyers and the destroyed. The heirs of those who enact(ed) genocide find comfort in the symbols of national victory, as these symbols consistently and systemically (re)write genocide as triumph of spirit, democracy, and progress. These are the same deceptions that inform the histories of the victims of genocide. A historiography of accountability demands an unveiling of the genocidal omissions of history, but not a total reversal of history’s narratives. The Texans who died at the Alamo were indeed heroic and in search of a better life as they understood it. This is history. It is also fact that these men’s deaths ushered in an era of unfathomable horror and destruction for Texas’ slaves, its Indigenous inhabitants, and the defeated Mexicans who remained. A strong Messianic moment demands a fullness of history, and this final chapter makes the case for a historiography of ambivalence where the heroics of nation building exists side-by-side with the horrors of genocide, and we as the contemporary consumers of history must, then, make sense of how these intersect and compliment one another in the hopes that for future generations “progress” can be made without the wholesale destruction of entire peoples and communities.

Why should one care about reframing the discourse of the Alamo or Power’s discussion of genocide? Simply, these two seemingly disparate narratives represent interconnected manifestations of U.S. national identity, a sense of “our” national self, and denial of genocide is a core value of this identity. The rise of these “nationalisms,” according to Arjun Appadurai, relied on the emergent “mass literacy” of the “imagined community” to produce “ethnic affinity” central to readily identifiable nationalities, the United States in the case of this dissertation (47). Appadurai continues by noting, that whatever “imagined communities” emerged during the nineteenth century, these “were only modest precursors” to the expansion and interconnected nature of the communities that exist in today’s tightly interconnected world. This new interconnectedness produces a new set of tensions between what Appadurai terms the “McDonaldization[, read as Americanization,] of the world” and “indigenous trajectories of desire and fear” (47-8). Nowhere is this friction more evident than in “nostalgia without

memory” increasingly common among those “Others” who embrace the West—this affinity is rooted in a history of “missionization and political rape” with the result being “a nation of make-believe Americans” (Appadurai 48). This is similar to Fanon’s charge above; as the historiography of denial persists, as genocide and “political rape” remain shrouded in history, those who need acknowledgement (the victims of genocide who purportedly are central to Power’s incomplete project) move farther and farther into a world of unhealthy and ultimately destructive self-denial. This is not only a malady of the colonized—the U.S. as a cultural entity relies on a “social *imaginaire* built largely around reruns” (Appadurai 48). Nostalgia, such as that produced in the false-reverence advanced by the DRT at the Alamo, is one, if not the, political commodity of the day. Thus, the imagination, the national self-understanding of its present, past, and future—as mirror of the Other, as well—becomes more than a mere exercise, but becomes “social practice”:

No longer mere fantasy . . . no longer simply escape . . . no longer elite pastime . . . and no longer mere contemplation . . . the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of the states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, and is the key component of the new global order. (Appadurai 49)

Thus, the imagination, how we perceive ourselves and our place within the nation, represents a location upon which freedom can be secured or lost. Thus, a recrafting of the Alamo, and the surrounding narrative of genocide denial that empower its DRT crafted narrative will open the realm of imagination to new conceptualizations of the meaning of “America”; it may, in fact, allow for an understanding that is America versus “America.” We as a nation can no longer afford to assume space is simply inhabited by a group divorced from a genealogy of power; this disguises both the “topography of power” and the “biography of imperialism” behind the study of culture and difference (Gupta and Ferguson 66-67). Until there is a recognition of how we as societies arrived at our current positions in relationship to wealth, power, and privilege, there cannot be justice. Thus, in speaking of history and how it is mediated in the present, the historiography of denial and the forgetting of genocide at the Alamo, and within the entire “American” tradition must be reversed. And while this dissertation in no way will assure that this happens, it will hopefully contribute to a discussion in which the possibility of a new conceptualization of historiography can emerge. And within this revised historiography, history will be expansive enough for all sides of the story.

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Chapter One: The Origins of Denial: “Finding” the Empty Continent

“There are pages in [the] history of the killing fields of America that invite numbed disbelief. Each chapter narrates a crucial episode in the shameful story of how the white man’s voracious greed for land and gold destroyed native peoples and their cultures. The methods employed included scorched earth politics, show trials, systemic starvation and torture, accompanied by nationalist rhetoric and invocations of God. The arrogance of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny went hand in hand with duplicity . . .” (26)

—Anthony Head, *Times Literary Supplement* review of Mark Felton’s *Today is a Good Day to Fight*

“‘We are all made of essentially the same DNA, the same genetic material,’ Dr. McMinn had said. ‘In fact, women and men share about ninety-nine percent of the same genetic material.’ She’d then looked at Arthur [Two Leaf], who had a wild crush on the white professor. ‘And people of different races, such as Native Americans and European-Americans, also share about ninety-nine percent.’ That might be true, Arthur had thought, but that one percent makes all the difference.” (175)

—Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer*

Historiography plays a central role in the construction and maintenance of a nation’s identity; it essentially frames the story of a nation’s emergence from a moment of genesis to a mature nation-state. A nation’s historiography both illuminates and is illuminated within the manifest representations of a nation’s past. Historiography both creates and informs a nation’s iconic moments and their contemporary meanings: who are the heroes? What great events did they accomplish? What values propelled them forward? And how do all of these events, peoples, and accomplishments coalesce into a cohesive national identity? Thus, when looking to the past, a nation sees, crafts, and understands its roots, its heroes, and the rationales justifying the nation’s existence and its way of life. However, these meanings are not neutral or innocent; nations possess a vested interest in managing and enacting the national memories as disciplining elements of state power (Foucault, *Order* 217-221). Consequently, national historiographies eschew playful discord, or overtly negative reflections on the nation’s founding figures and mythologies. Historiography, moreover, is not simply disembodied nostalgia or reflection; a nation’s memories exist within the disciplining power of history.¹ History disciplines the

¹ According to Michel Rolph-Trouillot, historiography is a struggle on a political terrain: “The realization that historical production is itself historical is the only way out of the false dilemmas posed by positivist empiricism and extreme formalism. . . . The value of a historical product cannot be debated without taking into account both the context of its production and the context of its consumption. . . . To phrase the arguments in these terms is immediately to reintroduce history or, better, to refuse to get out of it for the seraphic comfort of the text or the immediate security of The Past. . . . Time here is not mere chronological continuity. . . . the problem of historical representation is how to represent, something that is and yet is not. . . . These relations debunk the myth of The Past as a fixed reality and the related view of knowledge as a fixed

narrative structures of national memory with a chronological framework and disciplinary legitimacy; history transforms historiography into a consumable story.

In the case of the United States, popular historiography establishes a teleological journey from the Pilgrims to the world's only "superpower."² Additionally, this teleological narrative also represents a narrative of salvation: salvation from a savage past, salvation from the despotism abroad, salvation from the absence of civilization and progress. Within the national historiography, the rise of the United States, its national epic, embodies the rise of the best possible alternative for humanity: an exceptional nation "under God." The blending of epic national memories with the disciplinary structures of history provides a framework of historiographic meaning that, in essence, is the canonical United States; it is what gives meaning to the past and present nation. This dissertation argues that while the epic may instill national pride, its ideological underpinnings are often insidious. What makes the insidious nature of the U.S. historiography so difficult to discern is the notion of U.S. exceptionalism. Thus, it is with a brief survey of representative thinkers who defined the U.S.'s national mythologies that this discussion of origins and the historiography of denial begins.

Empty Lands, Empty Burdens, Empty Evolutions, or How to Sublimate Extermination in the Name of Progress

One of the first, and still most noted, proponents of American "exceptionalism" was, and is, Alexis de Tocqueville. Written nearly six decades after the establishment of the United States, de Tocqueville's 1835³ *Democracy in America* articulates the profound, if contrived,

content" (*Silencing* 145-147). Furthermore, Trouillot insists that the displacement of a "fixed reality" is not a departure into post-structural play, rather it is a quest for an "authenticity" that: "cannot reside in attitudes toward a discrete past kept alive through narratives. Whether it invokes, claims, or rejects The Past, authenticity obtains only in regard to current practices that engage us as witnesses, actors, and commentators . . . Thus, even in relation to The Past our authenticity resides in the struggle for our present. Only in the present can we be true or false to the past we choose to acknowledge" (*Silencing* 150-151). Thus, historiography is best understood through its impact on present narrative and perceptions, the manifestations of past events and their ideologies as they appear in countless modern day medium. Memory is a matter of what a society willfully remembers—what the nation "choose[s] to acknowledge" and simultaneously ignores or forgets.

² There can be little doubt the economic crisis of 2008-2009 (and likely beyond) is casting a shadow across this narrative of exceptionalism. It is increasingly in vogue to speak of the decline, or at least crisis, of the American empire/century. See, for instance, Charles A. Kupchan's *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century* (2002), Gabriel Kolko's *The Age of War: The United States Confronts the World* (2006), or Kevin Phillips' *Bad Money: Reckless Finance, Failed Politics, and the Global Crisis of American Capitalism* (2008). Each of these works, though for various reasons (the rise of Europe, hubris, or debt, respectively), foresees the end of U.S. hegemony and rise of other centers of power, breaking the narrative of American exceptionalism.

³ It is worth noting that *Democracy in America* was released one year prior to the battle at the Alamo (to be discussed in detail below); thus, its worldview is arguably representative of the national *zeitgeist* just prior to the conflict in Texas.

differences between the democratic origins of the national culture of the United States compared to its European intellectual and political antecedents. The perceived differences are instructive in understanding the depth and contemporary cultural import of the U.S.'s adherence to an exceptionalist historiography:

If after having cast a rapid glance over the state of American society in 1650, we turn to the condition of Europe, and more especially that of the Continent, at the same period, we cannot fail to be struck with astonishment. On the continent of Europe at the beginning of the seventeenth century absolute monarchy had everywhere triumphed . . . Never perhaps were the ideas of right more completely overlooked . . . I have said enough to put the character of Anglo-American civilization in its true light. It is the result (and this should *constantly* be kept in mind) of two distinct elements, which in other places have been in frequent disagreement, but which the Americans have succeeded in incorporating to some extent one with the other and combining admirably. I allude to the *spirit of religion* and the *spirit of liberty*. (de Tocqueville 41-43)⁴

Whatever the United States was, and is, it is not “Old Europe”; the people of the United States represent their own special creatures steeped in, and transformed by, the nation’s double spirit of “religion” and “liberty.” The U.S., to put it a bit dramatically, represents a nation with the potential to *save* its heirs from tyranny and despotism. Furthermore, the United States, from the very moment of its origins emerged from a cultural repudiation of despotism. This repudiation developed from both a metaphysical and political liberty:

The general principles which are the ground work of modern constitutions, principles which, in the seventeenth century, were imperfectly known in Europe, and not completely triumphant even in Great Britain, were all recognized and established by the laws of New England . . . These fruitful principles were there applied and developed to an extent such as no nation in Europe has yet ventured to attempt. (de Tocqueville 39)

Accordingly, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, de Tocqueville imagines the Puritan colonies as sites of political and social freedom, a freedom marrying liberty and religion. The New England colonies, well in advance of any European nation, rose as a “light on the hill,” as described in John Winthrop’s *A Modell of Christian Charity* for all nations to see (226-233). De Tocqueville’s endorsement of the Puritan mission into the “wilderness” promotes a core belief in both past and contemporary U.S. historiography about the national origins: the national past represents an ascent into democratic religiosity from an intellectually absolutist and politically

⁴ The contrived nature of the difference between tyrannical Europe and a free United States becomes evident when the date 1650 is book ended by the 1637 Pequot Massacre and the 1675-1676 war between colonists and Metacomet (King Phillip’s War). That de Tocqueville clearly only sees the conditions and opportunities for European settlers, and easily erases the brutality enacted on the Indigenous populations as their destruction is a predicate to European opportunity, and as de Tocqueville later notes, a natural occurrence. I am grateful to Dr. Patricia Penn Hilden for this insight (Penn Hilden “Question”).

repressive Europe. From the earliest moments of the Euro-American narrative, time and space in North America evolved in a manner that jettisons tyranny and barbarism to, in this case, the time and space of Europe. At its most essential, freedom—or its perception—is a hallmark of “American exceptionalism” and a core principle of “American” historiography.

“America” as the antithesis of despotism concomitantly arose within a discourse of limitless geographic and economic opportunity, again a narrative of salvation for those entitled to the land’s bounty. In de Tocqueville’s chapter “Exterior Form of North America,” he details the near limitless resources of North America’s geography, which also shapes the time/space narrative of U.S. historiography. The vastness of the land and its natural resources astonishes de Tocqueville. The potential opportunity staggered the arriving Europeans (de Tocqueville 17-25). Within this realm of perceived new-found religious, political, and social freedoms, there also existed the material potential to build a nation never before realized among the so-called civilized nations.

However, as de Tocqueville notes, the potential coexisted with costs: “destruction was perpetually going on”—death was a constant extension of the natural cycle of abundance (23-24). And it was within this same logic of freedom and limitless possibility that de Tocqueville situates the “destruction” of the Indigenous population of North America:

Although the vast country that I have been describing was inhabited by many indigenous tribes, it may be justly said, at the time of its discovery by Europeans, to have formed one great desert. The Indians occupied without possessing it. It is by agricultural labor that man appropriates the soil, and the early inhabitants of North America lived by the produce of the chase. Their implacable prejudices, their uncontrolled passions, their vices, and still more, perhaps, their savage virtues, consigned them to inevitable destruction. The ruin of these tribes began from the day when Europeans landed on their shores; it has proceeded ever since, and we are now witnessing its completion. They seem to have been placed by Providence amid the riches of the New World only to enjoy them for a season; they were there merely to wait till others came. Those coasts, so admirably adapted for commerce and industry; those wide and deep rivers; that inexhaustible valley of the Mississippi; the whole continent, in short, seemed prepared to be the abode of a great nation yet unborn. In that land the great experiment of the attempt to construct society upon a new basis was to be made by civilized man; and it was there, for the first time, that theories hitherto unknown, or deemed impracticable, were to exhibit a spectacle for which the world had not been prepared by the history of the past. (25)

The end of an Indigenous North America, and the emergence of a national prosperity never before realized in the world’s history, results from the introduction of progress—Native America, so much a vestige of a “savage virtue,” could not tolerate civilization; destruction ensued through no fault of the Euro-American. As de Tocqueville notes, there is no point in dwelling on the demise of the pre-European past, even of its people, because emerging across the North American landscape was a “spectacle” of exceptional proportion. Furthermore, the hand of “Providence” granted the Indigenous land for only a “season,” and according to de Tocqueville, it was an ill-used gift—the Native Americans failed to develop and progress the land; they subsequently possessed no ownership claims to the land or its bounty. De Tocqueville

articulates a narrative of a divinely appointed justification for the displacement and destruction of Native America. Charged with occupying and utilizing all of nature's gifts, Euro-Americans removed the savage and non-industrious Native Americans.

De Tocqueville sets the historiographic frame, centering the promise and potential of the nascent United States while denying the less virtuous aspects of Euro-American expansion. The costs of progress—the disappearance of an entire people akin to a forest felled for timber or other changes in the “empty” landscape—are merely a sidebar, something of little consequence in light of the overwhelming political, cultural, and economic potential. The development of the United States was, and is, no Faustian bargain. The “Founding Fathers,” the colonists/settlers, and the United States’ historiography itself escape the responsibility of the destruction of entire nations by a narrative act of religiosity manifest in de Tocqueville. De Tocqueville continues the apologist’s thinking represented in the 1690 work of John Locke who articulated the definition of freedom as the necessary right to develop property:

God gave the world to Men in Common; but since he gave it to them for their benefit, and the greatest Conveniences of Life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational (and *Labour* was to be *his Title* to it;) not to the Fancy or Covetousness of the Quarrelsome and Contentious. (qtd. in Prashad 5)

De Tocqueville, along with Locke, presented the heirs of North America’s earliest colonists ironclad arguments justifying the dispossession of Indigenous Americans.⁵ They were a people already in the process of disappearing; furthermore, those not yet in decline had no right to land. The Indigenous did not develop the land; they did not fence or improve it.⁶ Subsequently, as the population of Native Americans “disappeared” and an unclaimed continent rose before the Europeans, the Founders, and Europe’s refugees took what providence willed. The construction of the U.S.’s historiography of denial, just as it displaces tyrannical impulses to other times and spaces, embraces a divine impulse that firmly situates providence’s will in the time and space of U.S. nation-building. Consequently, the highest authority justifies the wages of national expansion; the extermination of Native America becomes anything but extermination: the time and space of U.S. historiography is purged of genocide by divine fiat. The genesis story of the

⁵ It is worth noting that both de Tocqueville and Locke, though not stridently religious philosophers, were embracing a form of divine edict dating to providence’s charge to Adam in Genesis Book 2 where God gave Adam the power to name, use, and have lordship over all of creation (*New Oxford Annotated Bible* Gen. 2).

⁶ This is a patently false claim, and the European settlers, early colonists, and early citizens of the United States were likely aware of the specious nature of the claim. Francis Jennings work *Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (1975) recounts how early colonial warfare directed against Native Americans focused on the destruction of crops, as well as the fact that surplus crops are what often kept European settlers alive (19-20). Another study that speaks to the falsehood of this belief is William Cronon’s *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983). As these titles demonstrate, one from 1975 and the other from 1983, the knowledge that Native Americans were “improving” the land has long been known, yet the myth of the empty, undeveloped continent persists.

United States, then, becomes a history enmeshed with the will of providence, and a Messianic mission to save the continent from misuse and underutilization.

This Messianic impulse, rather than fading with time, continually reinvents itself in the exceptionalist narratives about the United States. For instance, over sixty years after de Tocqueville, Rudyard Kipling's instructions to the U.S. on the occasion of its 1898 invasion of the Philippines, "The White Man's Burden," offers insight into a moment of narrative reinvention, a reinvention that incorporates U.S. foreign imperialism:

Take up the White Man's Burden—
 Send forth the best ye breed—
 Go bind your sons in exile
 To serve your captives' need;
 To wait in heavy harness,
 On fluttered folk and wild—
 new-caught, sullen peoples,
 Half devil and half child.

.....
 Take up the White Man's Burden—
 The savage wars of peace— (Kipling lines 1-8, 17-18)⁷

The poem originally appeared in the popular magazine *McClure's* in February 1899.⁸ Kipling did not target a privileged coterie; he expressed the sentiment to "everyman" that colonial, that "savage," war served the needs of the "new caught . . . half devil and half child." Kipling's perspective marks a measure of cynical progress from de Tocqueville's understanding of the disappearing "savage." The civilizer, as Kipling shows, understood that the "savage" was not disappearing, and a new program to save the "savages" from themselves became necessary.⁹ Kipling charges the U.S. with exporting civilization and progress. Again, the time-space narrative of the U.S.'s historiography of denial removes the brutality of its colonial project by cloaking itself in a divine mission of uplifting the lowly and saving those who cannot save themselves. This mission, however, was deeply imbricated within a profoundly racist discourse. Gail Bederman astutely analyzes the racist logics permeating Kipling and the U.S.'s historiography of the era:

[Kipling's] . . . "white man," . . . simultaneously meant the white race, civilization itself, and white males as a group. In "The White Man's Burden," Kipling used the term in all these senses to urge the white males to take up the racial burden of civilization's advancement. "Take up the White Man's burden," he wrote, capitalizing the essential term, and speaking to the manly civilized on behalf of

⁷ See Appendix Five for the entire poem.

⁸ In 1898, the magazine boasted a circulation of 400,000. See "McClure Publishing Company Archive."

⁹ One should keep in mind that as U.S. empire spread, both in the United States and Europe a constant march of world's fairs occurred. These fairs educated the colonial centers concerning the permanence of empire, and its importance for civilizing both the colonizer and colonized (Rydell 64).

civilization. “Send forth the best ye breed”—quality breeding was essential, because revolutionary development (breeding) was what gave “the White Man” the right and duty to conquer the uncivilized races. (187)

Consequently, U.S. military aggression represents anything but aggression; instead, it is understood as an effort to civilize savages. The Messianic impulse of de Tocqueville and Locke also persisted to the end of the nineteenth century internalized within the DNA, the breeding, of the white race and rearticulated as an active “savage” war, a war of salvation. What remained consistent was the Euro-American’s primacy in providence’s order and their entitlement to all the world’s resources.

In the case of the Philippine Invasion of 1898, the re-ordering of the war’s memory occurred instantaneously. The brutal colonization of the Philippines (as well as that of Hawai’i, Guam, Cuba and Puerto Rico) barely began when the violence entered U.S. cultural discourse as a greater good, a logic of “spare the rod, spoil the child.” So, while de Tocqueville’s narrative of faultless disappearances mutated to account for the persistence of the “savage,” the continued presence of the “savage” demanded a reordering of the lesser-race as one in need of endless “savage wars of peace” to usher them into the modern age of progress and possibility.¹⁰ The United States thus expanded its divine mission beyond the North American continent; the Indigenous of North America had already been contained on reservations and were experiencing the devastating results of their own “savage war of peace.” Thus, the time/space narrative of the U.S.’s divine mission became expansive, but expansive only in-so-far as the best-of-the-breed U.S. soldiers exported it.

The righteousness inevitability of imperial expansion became enmeshed in both the language of nationhood and a white supremacist racial order. As a result, the United States’ historiography of denial was again reinvented to embrace imperial conquest and settler-colonialism as another faultless, and divinely inspired, disappearance of cultures and peoples.¹¹ Though many initially objected to this new manner of “civilizing,” the 1900 election of President McKinley, and the subsequent ascendancy of Theodore Roosevelt signaled the decline of an earnest anti-imperial movement and a widespread embrace of the policies of conquest and their racial ideologies (*Savage*). The benevolence of “liberty’s” and “religion’s” spirit, fused in a charitable “civilizing” mission, marked the professed motivating factors, and fulcrum of the U.S.

¹⁰ Mid-poem Kipling asserts: “Take up the White Man’s burden—/The savage wars of peace—/Fill full the mouth of Famine/And bid the sickness cease;/And when your goal is nearest/The end for others sought,/Watch sloth and heathen Folly/Bring all your hopes to naught” (17-24) No matter the depth of good works, the “half-devil” and “half-child” would find a way to stymie the progress of civilization and force the project of civilizing into a never ending cycle of starts and failures.

¹¹ By 1920, W.E.B. Du Bois readily identified the “gentle” preciousness of the historiography of denial: “[White supremacy] ought, at least, to look plausible. How easy, then by emphasis and omission to make children believe that every great soul the world ever saw was a white man’s soul; that every great thought the world ever knew was a white man’s thought; that every great deed the world ever did was a white man’s deed; that every great dream ever sang was a white man’s dream” (*Darkwater* 498). This is a white supremacy of blind satisfaction, and absolute innocence. Without the historiography of denial, these rhetorical transformations would not be possible in the innocent imaginary of U.S. historical and cultural narratives.

historiography of denial then and now, for the colonial projects at the turn of the twentieth century.¹²

While U.S. imperialism shifted its focus abroad and rewrote the disappearing savage into a distant “half-savage, half-child” student, anthropologist Franz Boas also (re)articulated the cultural logics of domination. From the beginning of his anthropological career in late-1880s, Boas helped usher in another “great leap forward” in Western thinking in the early part of the twentieth century. Boas’ 1901 address to the Smithsonian Institution (a site marking the maturity of the nation’s origin myth when it was founded in 1846 by President James Polk) represents this leap in thinking towards the “sullen peoples.” Boas argued to the scientific community that Africans, Native Americans, and the peoples of the Macro/Micronesia belonged in the human race; however, he maintained the assertion that these cultures remained organically underdeveloped relative to Euro-American cultures (453, 460). The “white man’s burden” could not yet be put aside; approximately four hundred years of tutelage under various colonial systems across the world had yet to advance the “savage” into civilization (Eze 2-3). That this is a “radical” reframing manifests the limits of nineteenth and twentieth century national historiography regarding race. Additionally, Boas offers a “scientific” endorsement of Kipling’s cultural representation of imperial paternalism. Thus, rooted in de Tocqueville’s insistence that the impulse toward tyranny proved distinctly un-American, Kipling and Boas articulate an earnest and “good-willed” paternalism in the domination of non-white (and thus, *not* “American”) communities. These communities remained evolutionarily underdeveloped, both culturally and in utilizing their natural resources. The trick, or at least what makes these narratives of domination so seductive, is wrapping the idea of domination as “benevolent assimilation,”¹³ as distinctly divine in its nature—thus, conquest becomes an expansion of democratic civilization and economic opportunity, not racist tyranny, because the peoples in question proved over and over again to be unable to advance without substantial help. The time and space defined and redefined as the U.S. historiographic narrative continually excludes barbarism in favor of a “rose-colored” glasses approach. No U.S. soldiers fought in the Philippines, or elsewhere for that matter, except for those invested in civilizing, uplifting, and so on—the anthropology of Boas insists a pedagogical function in empire: because the United

¹² An excellent juxtaposition of this debate can be found in the works of Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: the Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (1998) and Luis Pérez’s *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (1998). Musicant sees the U.S. adventure abroad as a “default;” it more or less had to occur in the vacuum of power being left by Spain’s decline and their soon-to-be former colonies “un-modern” status; whereas, Perez questions this very supposition and situates the war within a context a less-than-generous imperial policy of the United States. These competing positions exist as expressions of late-20th century discord over the manner of national memory in the contemporary United States.

¹³ This term is unintentionally ironic; as the works of Stuart Miller, Stanley Karnow, Paul Kramer, and Angel Shaw and Luis Franca demonstrate, there was nothing benevolent about the imperial project in the Philippines. However, the rhetoric of benevolence in the face of so much violence underscores the historiography of denial’s insistence on subterfuge as truth.

States, as a culture, is superior. It is a national obligation to educate and empower lesser peoples as much as possible, thus justifying the deploying of armies of both soldiers and teachers.¹⁴

These nineteenth and twentieth century renderings allowed for the immediate denial of racist violence of empire and its genocidal outcomes. Additionally, the legacies of these cultural and scientific ideologies fused with the national historiography of the United States. This allows for an exceptional reading of past imperial practice—in fact, it calls into question, if not silences, the possibility of the imperial project itself when conquest is not the primary motive, but exporting liberty and development shapes the historiography.¹⁵ The very “disorder” and “savagery” U.S. settlers, soldiers, and scientists confronted on de Tocqueville’s frontier, in Kipling’s jungles, and in Boas’s anthropology provided order and sense to a U.S. national historiography steeped in selfless service and stripped of genocide and ethnic cleansing.¹⁶ As Amy Kaplan argues, the teleological journey from fragile colony on the shores of New England

¹⁴ Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) offers insight into the “American” mindset toward its non-white neighbors, and explains the underlying imperial logic embedded in racial and cultural logics of Manifest Destiny: “We Westerns will decide who is a good native or a bad, because all natives have sufficient existence by virtue of our recognition. We created them, we taught them to speak and think . . . This is in effect what Americans have felt about their southern neighbors: that independence is to be wished for them so long as it is the kind of independence *we* approve of . . .” (xviii). Said’s argument captures the spirit of Hegel’s historiographic teleology (to be discussed below): the fundamental problem lays in the notion that non-Euro-Americans only advance under tutelage from Euro-Americans. Said states in reference to Western sensibility “that the source of the world’s significant action and life is in the West, whose representatives seem at liberty to visit their fantasies and philanthropies upon a mind-deadened Third World” (*Culture* xix).

¹⁵ It is important to plainly state that the exceptional rendering of the U.S. past is, generally, a false rendering. There is, by-and-large, nothing exceptional about the U.S. imperial past relative to “Old Europe.” The exceptional narrative of the U.S. is as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o reminds us, a performance: “The nation-state sees the entire territory as its performance area; it organizes the space as a huge enclosure, with definitive places of entrance and exits. . . . The borders are manned by armed guards to keep away invaders. But they are also there to confine the population within a certain territory. The nation-state performs its own being relentlessly . . .” (“Enactments” 21). The U.S. “relentlessly performs” its narrative of anti-empire in the interest of protecting its status as “light on the hill” for all the world to revere and emulate, but also to instill in its own population a national-memory rife with a progressive, democratic, and ultimately, redemptive narrative of nation building. As this dissertation will show, this narrative is patently false.

¹⁶ It is important to note that the exceptionalism of these three are not identical, but representative of the transformation of the exceptionalist narrative in the United States. As Patricia Penn Hilden states: “Tocqueville represents a naked exceptionalism where, essentially, all that exists in the sphere of humanity and progress is the white European male. Kipling combines empire and imperial primacy as a marker that whites of European ancestry are not the ‘other,’ but are in fact, responsible for minding the lesser races and managing both their bodies and resources. Finally, Boas represents a relativism that depends on recognition that we are all part of a greater, universal human race that exists on different rungs of an evolutionary ladder” (Penn Hilden “Question About”).

and Virginia to global power proves the biological prowess of the “white race” and the cultural superiority of the U.S.’s anti-tyrannical political tradition—this bifurcated world-view “proves” the exceptional nature of the United States’ national historiography of civilized progress when juxtaposed with the “savage” and “uncivilized” (“Left” 14-16). Additionally, the highly charged racial undertones become not just about selective amnesia, but about racial primacy. In every imperial instance, the white race, the Euro-American, resides at the apex well-above their savage, non-white counterpart—this hierarchy shaped, and continues to shape, the national historiography.

This idealism, this professed foundational embrace of liberty and a “no-fault” destruction of peoples of color undergird the exceptionalist narratives of a contemporary U.S. historiography of denial. However, and unfortunately, this idealism represents only a partial story—though this partial narrative tends to exist as *the* public face of U.S. historiography. De Tocqueville’s observations of justice and liberty are a story of an elite, of those who have had access to the promises of the U.S.’s double-spirit of religion and freedom from its colonial foundation.¹⁷ When one looks beyond the liberated terrain of the enfranchised, the narrative of promise, and the often submerged memories of those excluded, becomes more despotic in nature and calls into question the very premises of the U.S.’s exceptionalist historiography. However, this chain of tyrannical memory generally fails to impact the historiography that the United States publicly projects—officially, the U.S. is only invested in a historiography of progressively increasing universal freedom and democracy: de Tocqueville’s origin story of departure from European tyranny and emergence into a new “American” time and space of possibility and promise.

However, the practices of U.S. nation building when considered outside the ideological justifications of exceptionalism manifest little more than a continuation of European tyrannical ontology, though with a distinctly U.S. twist. When reading the narrative of U.S. historiography, one must be cognizant of the discourses of denial that transmit the values of the imperial masters in the guise of “America’s” providential promise: the “American Dream.” Accepting the United States’ imperial legacy, on a national level, and the resulting socio-cultural asymmetries signal

¹⁷ Consider de Tocqueville’s ruminations on slavery. It seems his greatest objection to slavery is the manner in which it affects the slave owner. The free white without slaves sees labor, his labor, as the key to prosperity and embraces a strong, arduous work ethic; conversely, the slave owner “scorns not only labor but all undertakings that labor promotes....Thus slavery prevents the whites not only from becoming opulent, but even from desiring to become so” (de Tocqueville 364). Rather than focus on the abject misery of the slave, it is the hindrance to the development of limitless potential that is North America that most concerns de Tocqueville. After all, the lot of the freeman is not one of too much concern as the freed slave simply slides back into a semi-savage state on a road to vanishing, because emancipation would be a great threat to white liberty (de Tocqueville 367-381). And rather than representing an aberrant position on the subject, slavery-as-harmful-to-the-master proved to be a widely held belief. This ideological position informed the thinking of Thomas Jefferson, the author of the United States’ most important political document: *The Declaration of Independence*. Jefferson discourses at length in *Notes on the State of Virginia* on the subject (see chapter titled “Equality”). Such sentiment, though to a lesser extent, permeates even the abolitionist rhetoric of Thomas Paine’s “African Slavery in America” (645-649). Thus, it stands to reason that this point of view informs the earliest understandings of human rights and political freedom within the United States.

an essential first step toward a reordering of the U.S.'s historiography of denial. William Appleman Williams argues in relationship to "our" founding fathers, that empire, imperialism, and conquest (and the rotten fruits for the conquered) represent central, and very public, concepts embraced by the founders:

A way of life is the combination of patterns of thought and action that, as it becomes habitual and institutionalized, defines the thrust and character of culture and society. . . . a conception of the world and how it works, and a strategy for acting upon that outlook on a routine basis as well as in times of crisis. . . . In thinking about empire as a way of life, we must consider the dynamics at any particular moment. The empire as a territory and as activities dominated economically, politically, and psychologically by a superior power is the *result* of empire as a way of life. This is particularly important in the case of the United States because from the beginning the persuasiveness of empire as a way of life effectively closed off other ways of dealing with the reality that Americans encountered. (4-5)

Because of the founder's investment in empire, Williams locates empire as *a priori* in the U.S. ethos; empire defines the U.S.'s conceptualization of freedom, liberty, happiness, heroism, progress, justice and all else that the U.S. promises to deliver; however, it does not fit into the narratives of exceptionalism articulated by de Tocqueville, Kipling, or Boas. However, because U.S. empire and imperial violence arise concurrently with the exceptionalist narratives in U.S. historiography, the violence and narratives of exceptionalism blend seamlessly as to be inseparable and indistinguishable. The divinely ordained progress subsumes the violence in a haze of righteous narratives, and alternate understandings are "closed off." U.S. imperial practice and logic, understood as non-violence and democratic, becomes the pivot upon which empire is both disseminated and denied, and are the foundation for U.S. historiography becoming a historiography of denial.

The U.S.'s historiography of denial, however, is not only an abstraction. It is a collective of individuals and institutions who, consciously or not, enact power or have it enacted on them. It is not only elected officials, but those who work to "create and sustain the climate of assumptions and opinion within which power is exercised by those who do hold it by election or appointment" (qtd. in W. Williams 10). Those individuals, institutions, and organizations that sustain the aforementioned "climate" are important "because they are, in or out of government, the human beings who order our priorities and relationships in terms of a system. They integrate the parts into a whole" (W. Williams 11). These individuals and groups sustain, through either ideological commitment or ambivalent participation, practices that enact the imperial power, the master's power, behind the U.S.'s historiography of denial, all the while denying the actual mechanisms of genocide and ethnic cleansing securing these histories of power and domination. And it is in this moment of enactment that the national idea, as a racialized, classed and gendered concept, becomes material—a lived moment, a series of moments, contained within each citizen and her/his community. Most of these reference points interconnect with those widely promulgated historiographic moments that form the core of the U.S.'s national "imagined

community”¹⁸: George Washington and the cherry tree, the Gettysburg Address, the West, the Declaration of Independence, and so on. These moments embody the best virtues and events of the nation’s past; these shared events tie the nation “into a whole” that is free and full of promise. The United States, as historical narrative, fosters an image of nation where progressive civilization and freedom represent its core values and universal tropes, and these narratives of civilization and freedom carry the weight of the nation’s power. This national historiography of denial is self-serving, omnipresent, and it reworks those things that sully its memory, or simply insists that the unfortunate events of history be forgotten because the United States is a nation formed within a framework of a divine logic of progress and, ultimately, salvation.

The Historiography of Denial: Ordering of Empire, White Supremacy, and Historiographic Amnesia

What is remarkable about the U.S. as an empire is the nearly absolute erasure of the practices of genocide and ethnic cleansing within its exceptionalist historiography of denial, at least in-so-far as the master is concerned—these historiographic erasures endure as a result of a marriage between Hegelian historiographic logic and the divine exceptionalism of U.S. historiography. De Tocqueville imagined the Native naturally disappearing from the vast, natural landscape of North America as though no one had invaded; no fault was assigned to the Euro-Americans. Kipling reordered mass murder and violent conquest as the necessarily “savage” tutelage of an inferior race by the superior white race. Boas urged recognition of the “primitive’s” standing on the human-ladder-of-being with the caveat of their evolutionary inferiority. As a result of this intellectual tradition, the U.S.’s historiography of denial contains an established racial order within its internal logic: a white racial primacy always already

¹⁸ This idea was popularized by Benedict Anderson who argues that cultural and social institutions (i.e. newspapers, museums, anything with broad recognition and distribution in society) forms the underpinnings around which a society coalesces. He states, “My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of the world’s multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts” (B. Anderson 4). And it these artifacts, transported over time and geographies, that give a community the idealized values and national narratives around which one understands what it means to belong, or not belong—these mythologies are the foundation of history, and in the case of this study, are the imagined myths of genocide denial. Anderson further explains, “Finally, [the nation] is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each [nation], the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly die for such limited imaginings. These deaths bring us abruptly face to face with the central problem posed by nationalism: what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices?” (B. Anderson 7). Simply, through a shared body of knowledge transmitted via print and television news, mass media cultural events, museums, and so on, a shared sense of nation develops that binds a cultural-linguistic group into a collective of individual willing to die and, I add just as importantly, kill in the name of a nation that under the surface is actually an utterly disjointed and economically, politically, and culturally asymmetrical heterogeneous hodge-podge. The narratives of nation are generally artifices that seduce.

established because political, economic, and social primacies are biologically predetermined before history itself.¹⁹ Hegel's historiographic certainty becomes *a priori*, but not without its anxiety. The past must validate the contemporary imperial order as *anti-imperial*; it must rightfully endow the master with his (for Hegel, the master was always a he) privilege and do so behind the façade of freedom.²⁰ Thus, a historiography of denial (as the culmination of history, racial theory, imperial practice, and philosophy) becomes a complex self-delusion for the master, and an enforced silence for the vanquished.

The Western nation-state, specifically in this dissertation the United States, understands its place in the history and historiography relative to the rest of the world as a location of order and progress; this is a strictly Hegelian rendering of the nation. Ranajit Guha's direct and pointed critique of Hegel's birthing of the West's historiography, *History at the Limit of World-History*, illustrates the interconnections of state and denial within the formative logics of the historiography of denial:

A people had to have statehood to qualify fully [for history]. Since writing to be historical needed the state to write about, it was subsumed in the latter. The Renaissance formula, "No writing, no history," so popular with the conquistadors, was updated by 1830—the year of [Hegel's] Second Draft [of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*—to read, "No state, no history. (10)

Thus, prior to the arrival of the Puritans in New England, Dewey in Manila Bay, and anthropologists among savage tribes everywhere, history did not exist until introduced by Western imperialists. So, the violent imposition of a historiography through imperial conquest represents a vital and necessary step to bring the ahistorical into a teleological history, and according to Guha, a vital step in ensuring a providential justification for domination:

¹⁹ Frederick Jackson Turner also "disappeared" the Native Americans. As one of the forefathers of American Studies, he argues, "Long before the pioneer farmer appeared on the scene, the primitive Indian life had passed away" (13). As a result of trade relations and European technological superiority, the Natives lost their ancestral traditions and became "dependent on the whites" (Turner 13). This process of forced ("benevolent"?) assimilation resulted, at least for the Natives, in "drunken and degenerate survivors" ranging from the subdued Natives of New England to the equally "dependent" Sioux Nation of the Great Plains at the close of the Indian Wars (Turner 46, 144).

²⁰ Kant, as a formative precursor to Hegel's worldview, lays the foundations for Hegel's historiographic accounting of both people of color and women in the national cultural aesthetic. In Kant's pre-Critical *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), the gendered and racial hierarchies of history are clearly delineated—the authors of history are always male and always white (Kant 76-116). This ethnocentric worldview is even more deeply interwoven into the idea of nation vis-à-vis David Hume's "On National Character," a 1741 reflection on the nature of citizenship and who is entitled to membership within the state. In this essay, Hume reflects, "I am apt to suspect that Negroes to be naturally inferior to Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation" (213). According to Hume, the most barbaric "White" was far more capable of taking advantage of, and entitled to, the benefits of citizenship than any "Negro" (213).

. . . World-history is a providential plan, Hegel insists that it is not and cannot be subject to arbitrariness, chance, or anything else that may imply contingency. . . . Accordingly, in the *Lectures on World History* [Hegel] proceeds to “eliminate the contingent” by taking his stand on what he considers “the religious truth that the world is not prey to chance and external contingent causes, but is governed by providence.” The outcome of the exercise, as noted above, was to found history on *Geist*’s design. (*History* 29)

Geist can be broadly understood to be god/the divine/a transcendent spirit—consequently, as history is an extension of a divine plan for all things, it is, in many ways, beyond question on either side of domination’s equation: the dominant *are* because *Geist* wills it; the dominated *are* because *Geist* wills it. And as good stewards of *Geist*, the dominant teach right and progress to those they control; the dominant introduce history. It is within this logic that de Tocqueville coolly justifies genocide as a natural phenomenon; Kipling sees benevolent tutelage in slaughter, and Boas recognizes the biological primacy of the white race over the lesser races. *Geist* empowers states to thrive and progress through history. The United States transported this ideology across North America, firmly ensconcing itself within its historiography as the “light on the hill,” as an extension of a divine plan to deliver humanity from the tyrannical and savage into a nation of justice and freedom.

Thus, in Hegel’s historiographic drama, the Western subject’s colonial primacy, his status as master, becomes a matter of metaphysical fact; it is *Geist*’s will; conversely, the “other” becomes fixed as a slave, or at best Boas’ perpetual subordinate, in Hegel’s primordial, and completed, battle of wills.²¹ Given its *a priori* location, it is a struggle that cannot be re-waged. It is a battle that predates the European exploration and domination of the world; if anything, it foreordained the colonial venture. Thus, matters of the historical asymmetry of colonial violence, for instance, become largely irrelevant in Hegel’s model when considering the state of humanity—the asymmetries manifest the divine superiority of the master over his subordinates; furthermore, it establishes deep-seated denial as an inherent part of recalling the past: one cannot question *Geist*’s will. Thus, a historiography of denial becomes the natural order of things; the U.S. and Euro-Americans dominate because they are meant to.

As a result, historiography written from the perspective and mentality of the master fails to fully realize the struggles and questions of the subordinate/slave, if acknowledged at all. As implied in Kipling and Boas, the questions of conquest as mediated through Hegelian historiography, arise only as by-products of the master’s curiosity and as an extension of empire as a way of life. The concerns of history become the concerns of the master negotiating his struggles with the world and its challenges towards progress. History, then, becomes the ultimate measure from where the master has come and foreshadows where he is going.²²

²¹ The classic Hegelian statement on the *a priori* nature of human power relations is “Lordship and Bondage” (Hegel 111-119).

²² Ranajit Guha’s essay “Not at Home in Empire” describes the importance of Hegelian logic and the process of defining the space of empire in order to ground the master: “The comfort of a world of known limits derives precisely from the known measure of things. It does so because measure, despite the apparent rigidity of its image in the numerical tables of school arithmetic, is a fluid and indeed necessary process which, according to Hegel, enables quantity and quality to

Thus, starting with de Tocqueville's 1835 idyllic impression of an exceptional "American" culture rooted in "spirit" (*Geist*) and "liberty," the imperial paternalism of Kipling (1898) and Boas (1901), a constructed façade of U.S. exceptionalism covers the violent imperialism at the root of the nation's expansion. The historiography of denial is, then, one of progress and constant self-, and other-, development—though the "other" is often dragged against her/his will "into" history. That which is assumed to be the "correct" model, the historiography of denial, can be read as a not so subtle white supremacist discourse upon which the national community, the "imagined community," builds itself and from which it gleans the values imposed on other "lesser" nations. Students from kindergarten to graduate school encounter this historiography, though often problematized in the higher grades, through the formative moments of U.S. history: John Smith (1580-1631), the Mayflower Compact (1620), Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), George Washington (1732-1799), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the Constitutional Convention (1787), the Federalist Papers (1788), the Gettysburg Address (1863), and so on. Half-truths inform the canonical understanding of these foundational documents and personalities. Their greatness trumpeted in monuments, memorials, and holidays—those things constituting an enacted U.S. historiography and informing the citizenry of its past and values; however the mechanisms of violence and racism necessary for these men and documents to enact the divine vision of the U.S.'s expansion through Manifest Destiny disappear.²³

Much to the chagrin of the European and North American colonialist, and only revealed when the "empire speaks back," the Hegelian-inspired historiography exists as a self-indulgent drama of privilege, rooted in a history of genocide that manifests both discursive and material consequences in the present—it was only the master who possessed the luxurious existential

'pass into each other.' As such, it stands for the essential dynamism of things and their relationships. It is only by understanding the latter that one comports oneself within a given environment and feels at home in it. [Without limits, the colonial master] *could not find his bearings in a colonial environment where the 'unimaginable' scale of things was beyond his comprehension. What made him feel so isolated was not therefore fear predicated on any given object but simply an indefinite and pervasive anxiety about being lost in empire*" (484, emphasis added). Thus, the master must have existed within a system of knowing, a history, that made sense of the world around him, a sensibility grounded in a Western way of seeing difference, progress, and civilization. That which is unknown is expunged.

²³ As Richard Drinnon reminds us: "The people of the European race in coming into the New World have not really sought to make friends of the native population,' observed [Melvin Gilmore], 'or to make adequate use of the plants, or the animals indigenous to this continent, but rather to exterminate everything they found here . . .' In the several parts of [*Facing West*] I undertake an analysis in depth of a series of encounters with 'the West,' from the Massachusetts Bay Colony and Block Islands across the Alleghenies to the Mississippi; on across the Rockies to the Pacific slope, out from there onto island stepping stones . . ." and into an analysis of "these European immigrants as they become citizens of the republic and push the American empire into the setting sun . . ." (xxiii-xiv). And Drinnon's journey through Manifest Destiny ends on a not too optimistic note: "By word and example, Native Americans have been reminding Anglo-Americans of their lack of respect for all living things, of their lost communal sanity, and lost wholeness . . ." (467). Such is the "actual" triumph of Manifest Destiny.

anxiety of historical amnesia.²⁴ It cannot be understated that the connection of Hegel's *Geist* flows directly into the U.S.'s "election" of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century Manifest Destiny—there were no nation-states to the west of the Frontier; there was no history. The white man, the American Adam, had to plant his footprint upon the savage lands through the triumph of ownership, productivity, and civilization.²⁵ This collective historiography of denial provides the basis for the self-aggrandized and supposedly just "imagined community" of the United States. It is upon the shared records of national memory (textbooks and museums, for instance), and the political mechanisms that maintain them, that the "America" of democratic spirit and liberty sustains and promulgates its historiography; of course, overt racism and genocide are scripted out, as is the victor's privilege.²⁶ However, as will be discussed below, this historiography of denial fails miserably when accuracy is at stake.

²⁴ See Fanon's *Black Skin/White Mask* (1967), "The Negro and Hegel" (216-222). Fanon's addition to this discussion is specifically raced to encompass the imperial reality of the master/slave dialectic in practice; Fanon furthermore exposes the inherent one-sided nature of the ontology as imposed by the European: "Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognized by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. One day the White Master, *without conflict*, recognized the Negro slave. But the former slave wants to *make himself recognized*" (216-217) Fanon continues his discussion by pointing out that the European in the decolonial era simply refuses to engage in the act of mutual recognition; to fail to do so renders the other, the former slave, a perpetual subject, or non-being. This non-recognition is a mixed blessing of sorts for Fanon, because it is in the struggle for recognition, the violence, that equality will be achieved: that the former slave will be recognized on her/his own terms. And such is the struggle for memory.

²⁵ R.W.B. Lewis defines the "American Adam" as, ". . . the prince or king in the long tradition of classical drama. The telling distinction is one of strategic distance: the distance from the outset between the hero and world he must cope with. For the traditional hero is at the center of the world, the glass of its fashion, the symbol of its power, the legatee of its history. But the American hero as Adam takes his start outside the world, remote or on the verges; its power, its fashion, and its history are precisely the forces he must learn, must master or be mastered by" (128). Thus, the American hero must conquer or be conquered by the savage, empty American continent.

²⁶ Jingoist and isolationist alike envisioned the American project as one of progress about both "hearts and mind" as well as "trade routes . . . markets, and . . . consumers' desires" (Rowe 11). The superiority of the "American way" was never under investigation, and thus, questions of expansion were readily sublimated within a narrative of progress. This was made possible by an immediate forgetting that, as Rowe argues: "Manifest Destiny proved to be our 'Final Solution' to the 'problem' of native peoples[, African Americans, and Mexicans], which is also relatively unique in modern imperialism: that the purpose of territorial expansion is not to subjugate native peoples for the purpose of exploiting their labor but simply to remove them and their lifeways altogether" (11). The imperial logic of the Euro-Americans focused on the acquisition of wealth—the "right" to pursue land, liberty, and happiness. As the Euro-Americans moved west, they participated in a violent relocation disguised as the glorified promise of progress. Those who sought to hinder their advancement were castigated and came to embody all that was malevolent, savage, and sought to defy providence/*Geist*.

Resisting the Historiographies of Denial, Part I: The “Disappeared” Do Speak²⁷

As noted, national historiographies reject objectivity in favor of narratives and perspectives that fit a specific political framework modeled within the ideals of the nation. Thus, the struggle for history and culture necessarily represents a pitched battle for not only the power of representation, but also political and social power. Though this may seem like a departure from the task at hand, exploring the tension between a materialist and a spirit-based/*Geist*-inspired approach to historiography remains central to understanding the U.S.’s historiography of denial, and ultimately struggles for the incorporation of genocide and ethnic cleansing into the U.S. national narrative. As such, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Walter Benjamin represent vital counterpoints to the Hegelian model of historiography and the exceptionalist impulses in U.S. historiography.

Marx and Engels challenge the Hegelian *Geist*-inspired historiography of denial in their 1845-46 work “The German Ideology” by locating history in a society’s ability to “produce [their] means of subsistence” and its own demise (149). Thus, history exists as a by-product of humanity “indirectly produc[ing] their actual material life . . . [which] determines [the] form of intercourse [among people]” (Marx and Engels 150). Hegelian historiography and its offspring, the U.S. historiography of denial, displace the material foundations of history, the “actual” relationship inherent in the specific material “means of subsistence” shaping social intercourse, to an idyllic contest where providence/*Geist* foreordained the order of things (a philosophic reworking of the Biblical curse of Ham: the dark-skinned “half-devil and half child” is eternally fallen²⁸). For Hegel, the conflict between the master and slave occurred *a priori* to history itself,

²⁷ At this point, it is both essential, and a matter of intellectual honesty, to note that this work is primarily a narrative based on the works of men and criticisms of the U.S. masculinist past. One of the first works I encountered in graduate school was Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and Sociological Imagination* (1997). The power of this book, at least for me, was to highlight how historical narrative and memory is an interwoven narrative of gender, race, and power—the nation, its historiography, is rooted in the erasure of the stories of those who are non-white and not men. What was most jarring intellectually is the concept that though these narratives are publically silenced, they still haunt the daily histories and memories of the nation. They are spectral flashes of history; the moments when the past is just *too* perfect, *too* ideal, *too* right. Additionally, bell hooks’ work is built around this concept. *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) and *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representation* (1994) are also representative works that force a consideration of the intersections of violence, gender, and race—the violent mechanisms of social control silence those who have historically been considered outside the political and cultural norm, most specifically women and men of color. So, while this work imperfectly attempts to remedy some of the sexist and racist exclusions central to U.S. historiography, I want to remind both myself and the reader that central to exposing the limits of the U.S.’s historiography of denial is to recognize and name the centrality of sexism and racism as core logics buttressing its continuity. Thus, not only implied, but central to this critique of historiography of denial is the attempt at an anti-sexist and anti-racist approach to historiography. Whatever failures are manifest in this project, they are my own.

²⁸ Ham, the youngest son of Noah, received the curse of Noah as a result of disrespect. Noah placed the curse upon all the children of Canaan, the son of Ham. (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*

essentially, an “always already” resolved struggle. Marxism’s historical materialism, in spite of its critical shortcomings, counters that the value of a human’s life, and her/his histories, are not the by-product of an ontological struggle in the preexistence of history or the will of *Geist*; instead, value and history, according to Marx and Engels, are a matter of economic and political exchange: “actual,” and *contemporary*, social positioning. As such, historical materialism demands a refutation of the historiography of denial by situating social asymmetries and historical amnesias within an accounting of economic, political, and social intercourse, and ultimately a revision of history to reveal the master’s enforced amnesias. Walter Benjamin states clearly that:

In other words, our image of happiness[, the “happy” historiography of denial,] is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption. The same applies to our view of the past, which is the concern of history. The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. (215)

Every new generation is indebted to the past insofar as its current status, its happiness, rests on the actions and material accumulations of past actors. If the past is one of wretchedness, then the inheritance is spoiled; if the past represents legitimate progress and promise, then so does the fruit. Benjamin understands that happiness as understood in the “American” West demands a “*weak* Messianic” moment where happiness trumps truth in history. The spoiled histories of genocide and ethnic cleansing are out of necessity denied in the interest of validating the exceptionalist narratives of the West, and by extension the accumulated wealth and power of U.S. nation-building. Consequently, it is “only a redeemed mankind [who] receives the fullness of the past” (Benjamin 215). A strong Messianic moment is beyond the story of momentary happiness; redemption exists beyond the facile narratives of emptiness of de Tocqueville or the sadistic justification of Kipling—these “*weak* Messianic” moments present only “happiness” to those benefactors of a historiography of denial.

Additionally, Benjamin looks beyond vulgar materialism as he also challenges providence/*Geist* by seeking a strong Messianic historiography overturning the false exceptionalism of U.S. historiography. In Benjamin’s narrative, the time and space of the United States reclaims the atrocities of genocide and ethnic cleansing—“over there” and “another time” emerge “here” and “now” in the historical record. As demonstrated by Avery Gordon, “ghosts” do “haunt” the living, serving as spectral, or unconscious, reminders of memories forcefully muted (*Ghostly* 196).²⁹ Furthermore, Benjamin and Gordon’s intervention in the immaterial

Gen. 9). This curse has historically served as a justification for slavery, as Ham cursed the sons of Canaan to live lives of servitude.

²⁹ In addition to the relatively novel approach to sociology offered by Gordon, consider the more “canonical” Adorno and Horkheimer: “The disturbed relationship with the dead—forgotten and embalmed—is one of the symptoms of the sickness of experience today. One might almost say that the notion of human life as the unity in the history of an individual is defined only by its opposite, destruction, but all harmony and all continuity of conscious and involuntary memory

offers an alternative to the master narrative of Hegelian historiography—Hegel sees triumph and the primacy of the “great” ideals of man in a teleological journey into “progress” ordained by *Geist*; whereas, Benjamin and Gordon see in “progress” the machinations of power—providence/*Geist*, like memory itself, becomes a construct of power, not an extension of a God.³⁰ The victory of a particular ideal is never simply a triumph, and certainly not without cost—it is a victory often measured in the master’s military primacy and signified by the spectral hauntings of silenced past: the unmemorialized past of the vanquished, the *un*-ideal.

Benjamin develops this notion:

And all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what this means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. . . . There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. (217)

Thus, a historiography of denial, those ideas and narratives in the service of the U.S. exceptionalist self-understanding, embraces phantoms of barbarity and its providence/*Geist* authors lies. These stories of blameless disappearance and “savage” peoples with no history

have lost their meaning. . . . History is eliminated in oneself and others out of a fear that it may remind the individual of the degeneration of his own existence . . . In reality, the dead suffer a fate which the Jews in olden days considered the worst possible curse: they are expunged from the memory of those who live on” (215-216). This “expunging” is especially acute with the victims of genocide in the Americas—as will be discussed below, there is a thriving academic field and cultural practice based largely in the denial of these people’s deaths as genocide; these ghosts do indeed haunt this hemisphere.

³⁰ Recall Ranajit Guha’s critique of Hegel’s birthing of the West’s historiographic self-understanding, *History at the Limit of World-History* (2002). The imperial state and history must work together to give meaning to the idealized self-understanding devoid of genocidal violence: “The opposition of state to time turns thus into the opposition of the historical to the unhistorical. Henceforth state and history will need each other. The former stands up to time by institutionalizing itself. This requires what Hegel calls ‘formal commandments and laws, i.e. general and universally valid directives.’ But institutionalization alone is no guarantee against the depredation of time. The state remains suspended in ‘an incomplete present’ so long as it is unable to ‘understand itself and develop an integrated consciousness’ in terms of a past. It is the function of history to provide the state with such a past as a record of its development. And historiography serves as the scribe to put the record in writing and make it as enduring as possible. The formal commandments, laws, directives—indeed, all the principal instruments of its authority and events and deeds associate with it—become intelligible in the light of this record...” (Guha, *History* 71).

represent “documents of barbarism” shrouded in the illusory happiness, the “weak” Messiahs of the heirs of victory. It is the *un*-ideal of the vanquished that, according to Benjamin, offer the fullest opportunity at a strong Messianic narrative of nation, and in all actuality, offer the only possible alternative for a national historiography of substance; the past must be wrestled from the victor. Additionally, Benjamin presses historiography out of metaphysics and into a materialism of site and object. Thus, the critiques Marx and Engels (discussed immediately below), Benjamin, Guha, and Gordon open the door to questioning the long-standing assumptions that the U.S.’s historiography of denial signifies a static, established order of things: *Geist*’s Truth.

So, in the quest for a historiography of redemption, the struggle for historiography must center a critique of social and economic power, not providence/*Geist*. Historiography is a by-product of the materiality of lived experiences. “The German Ideology” questions the relevance of an *a priori* ontology and the logic of domination underlying national historiographies (Marx and Engels 148-149). The embrace of an immaterial, Hegelian historiography disembodies the “chains of [humanity]” and locates revolutionary struggle and philosophy “against the illusions of the consciousness” (Marx and Engels 49). Hegelian historiography, and by extension the U.S.’s historiography of denial, then, becomes a struggle over ideals in competition with ideals—any subsequent primacy is simply a triumphant affirmation of an ideal’s superiority over inferior ideals—words are what are at stake. Marx and Engels deride the application of Hegel’s metaphysical historiographic fantasy as a liability for a material science of history: “. . . that to these phrases [of history] they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way comparing the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world” (149). Marx and Engels keenly challenge the social critic to use the word game not for its own self-indulgent sake, but for the sake of a better material world.³¹ Marx and Engels, and later Lenin,³² remind that empire’s subjects were enmeshed in a violent dance of work, death and resistance enforced by a genocidal order enacted on a global scale. Furthermore, and with direct relevance for this dissertation, the primacy of a Hegelian historiography ultimately empowers and privileges the narratives in which history and progress only begin with the arrival of the Euro-American; historically, it has only been those within the core of empire who possessed the ability to have their thoughts recorded, to make “history” by codifying their memories: their

³¹ One need only recall Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.” Clearly, Marx sees little value in the debates about nomenclature—theorizing and enacting social change (praxis) is the correct work of the philosopher.

³² In *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Lenin reminds us that ultimately, capitalism must work to break down its competition and exploit all the resources it can (including people). Thus, the trajectory of the modernizing Euro-American project demanded masses of labor to exploit—Lenin writes thoughtfully about the second-class, white Europeans (the Poles, for instance), but even he fails to look beyond the borders of Europe, or rather Lenin conflates the struggles of the white working class with those peoples of the Third World who also exist under the yoke of racism. This conflation ignores the peculiarities of narratives and practices of empire as it specifically impacts people of color; additionally, this omission permits another vein in which the historiography of denial can permeate the Western intellectual tradition. W.E.B. Du Bois thoughtfully articulates this friction in “Socialism and the Negro Problem” (1913) as well as “The Negro and Communism” (1931), “Karl Marx and the Negro” (1933), and “Marxism and the Negro Problem” (1933).

word-play made history by building museums, filling libraries, and scattering monuments to themselves across the “subdued” landscape. And ultimately, according to Marx and Engels, this historiography elides the lived experiences of the majority of peoples, especially the colonized; in fact, the nature of empire demands a national historiography denying the very costs of empire in historiography.³³

Responding to the philosophic idealism of Hegel, the struggle for a “material” historiography manifests both in the realm of Marxist philosophy and in decolonial critiques that address issues of imperialism and genocidal erasures. Such critiques demonstrate how, in a very material sense, the white, male Western subject achieved his primacy through systemic and sustained violence, rather than from a primordial, providential intervention. Memory of “words in the material” evinces a community’s struggles to resist extermination in the face of the overt racisms of Western nations as measured in, though not exclusively, imperial practice and historiography—it is not simply a matter, again, of a turn of phrase or primordial dramas.

Resisting the Historiographies of Denial, Part II: Naming “Whiteness,” White Supremacy, and a Historiography of Accountability

The struggle for a decolonized, anti-imperial historiography becomes a struggle to name the very oppressions that enable a historiography of denial, a struggle that reveals the machinations of power enforcing silences and omissions. In the U.S. one such mechanism is the largely unacknowledged, but omnipresent, privileging of whiteness—white ideology is the basic logic of U.S. historiography’s exceptionalism and its dominant “tradition . . . [of] conformism” from which historiography must be freed (Benjamin 217). George Lipsitz states:

Because American society has not acknowledged the ways in which we have created a possessive investment in whiteness, the disadvantages of racial minorities may seem unrelated to the advantages given to whites. Minority disadvantages are said to stem from innate deficiencies, rather than from systemic disenfranchisements and discriminations. . . . But by projecting these negative judgments onto minority individuals and groups, they evade the fact that the history of the past five decades demonstrates that the most fanatical group politics, the most flagrant violations of the law, and the vilest evasions of responsible and moral behavior have been enacted by whites. . . . The ‘disadvantages’ facing minority communities have everything to do with having been taken advantage of in the past and present. (24-25, 46)³⁴

³³ See Joy James below, chapter seven, pages 133 and 134.

³⁴ Lipsitz defines the “possessive investment in whiteness” as follows: “The term ‘investment’ denotes time spent on a given end, and [Lipsitz’s study] attempts to explore how social and cultural forces encourage white people to expend time and energy on the creation and re-creation of whiteness. . . . the adjective ‘possessive’ . . . stress[es] the relationship between whiteness and asset accumulation in [the United States], to connect interests, to demonstrate white supremacy is usually less a matter of direct, referential, and snarling contempt than a system for protecting the privilege of whites by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility [and thus power]” (vii-viii).

Lipsitz's point is simple: the U.S.'s laws, cultural mores, and social norms favor whites/white ethnics. He also notes, that though more mediated and more sophisticated in presentation, it is "innate deficiencies," the same arguments of de Tocqueville, Kipling, Hegel, and Boas, which falsely justify the centuries of political and economic asymmetries between Euro-Americans and peoples of color. Whites, again, are blameless. The time/space narrative of the U.S. historiography of denial, again, displaces racism and racial violence to other times and places. George Lipsitz continues:

As long as we define social life as the sum total of conscious and deliberative individual activities, we will be able to discern as racist only *individual* manifestations of personal prejudice and hostility. Systemic, collective, and coordinated group behavior consequently drops out of sight. Collective exercises of power that relentlessly channel rewards, resources, and opportunities from one group to another will not appear "racist" from this perspective, because they rarely announce their intention to discriminate against individuals. Yet they nonetheless give racial identities their sinister social meaning by giving people from different races vastly different life chances. . . . This view never acknowledges how the existence of slavery and the exploitation of black labor after emancipation created opportunities from which [white] immigrants and others benefited, even if they did not personally own slaves[, kill Native Americans, lynch Mexicans, and so on]. (20-21)

Reconsider de Tocqueville's creation myth that suggests Native Americans simply disappeared because progress demanded it, or his claim that slavery's most negative impacts harmed whites' characters.³⁵ Kipling argued that "savage war" benefited its victims and represented a necessary sacrifice for the finest Anglo-Saxons. Guha reveals how the formative, Hegelian understanding of the interrelationship between state and history necessarily negated the pasts, and autonomous futures, of all people of color in the face of Euro-American historiography. Marx and Engels observed how the denial of economic determinism in history allows for a meaningless word play benefiting the master. Benjamin stresses how power relationships and distribution of economic wealth directly relates to how the past barbarism of the master emerges from history as present happiness to sustain and placate the powerful's social order. Lipsitz enters this discussion and names the ideological praxis of whiteness under which the complex interplay of "American exceptionalism," Hegelian-inspired ontology, and a historiography of denial coalesce in the contemporary denial of racism as one of the key social manifestations of power.³⁶

Where the historiographic drama of whiteness becomes even more complex is at the level of representation. Representation manifests the historiography of denial and provides the victors with a platform for enacting their ideologies that justify national progress and prosperity as

³⁵ See chapter one, pages two through six, and footnote sixteen, page nine respectively.

³⁶ Though this dissertation is not without the voices of women of color, men of color, and white women, it is worth noting that the majority of authoritative voices in the academy, even those critical of the imperial legacies of whiteness, are, generally white and male. Thus, even in the struggle for dissent, it is imperative to acknowledge that the academy still has a long way to go to embrace and promote voices that have historically been silenced or vanished from the historical record.

defined by the victors. It is through representation that memory is enforced through mechanisms of violence, both rhetorically and on individual bodies. Thus, the narratives of the historiography of denial are narratives of violence, and in the context of the United States, one must never stray too far from the concept that the U.S. is a nation on a “civilizing” mission—its history portends to be one of delivering to the world ideas and practices that elevate the standing of humanity, not furthering the practices of genocide or tyranny. The absence of a historiography of the vanquished in the representational practice of the United States serves a profoundly important function in the maintenance of the U.S. as Messianic nation. Joy James notes:

In discourses of denial, dominance reinvents itself. Americans’ cultural reluctance to talk about racism, mirrored by an eagerness to talk about race as spectacle, performance, hybridity, or imaginary, suggests a disinterest in discourse on racist U.S. foreign and domestic policies and their relationship to systemic discrimination and genocide. Likewise, to restrict the discourses on race and racism to mere speech, social manners, or the incivility of aberrational minorities or a white fringe ignores the intersections of racist state rhetoric and violence and white-supremacist hate groups. Irrespective of the allegedly disappearing racist and racism in language, law, and society, institutional dominance remains, while white supremacy and its attendants—genocide and fascism—are rendered social fictions. (46)

With no alternative discourse, a historiography of denial allows for an unfettered rendering of the past with the interests of racism and white supremacy unchallenged and hidden.³⁷ This does not take place in an absence of any discussions of race; race is a central concern of de Tocqueville, Kipling, Boas, and countless other voices in the U.S. cultural and political canon. However, it is a concern, as James argues, of “speech, social manner” or in the cases of rebellion as

³⁷ These imperial narratives also permeated the “progressive” minds of the periods being discussed. Not that this should be a surprise, Guha has clearly shown that within a historiographic practice emerging from a Western paradigm, the history of the “other” is always only an extension of the history of the West. As will be discussed in later chapters, the Mexican response to the Texan and U.S. incursions into Texas can only make sense when seen from the U.S.; it is the only “reasonable” position for assessment. Under Anglo domination the only logic that “makes sense” is that of the liberal narratives of progress. Mexican desires to expel the Texans represent the illogic of anti-progress, a move to maintain a “primitive” existence. Furthermore, by dismissing non-Western narratives that challenge this innocent Euro-centeredness, colonial cultures internalize the rhetoric enabling oppression: “The result has been to produce a [historical] literature still incarnadine with the glow of imperial ‘achievements,’ a language that permits racist insults to pass in everyday use as harmless jokes, a pervasive and often violent discrimination . . . It is a culture which has iron deposited in its soul, and not all the vigor of a minority of truly anti-imperialists has succeeded in dissolving it” (Guha, *Dominance* 95). Guha must unfortunately restate what W.E.B. Du Bois observed nearly a century before in *The Souls of Black Folk*: contact between the so-called “civilized” and the so-called “undeveloped” nations carries a legacy of shame; this results even from “civilized” interventions motivated by the best of intentions (185).

“aberrational minorities.” Additionally, racist violence that exists outside the well-worn tracks of the historiography of denial, or are acts that are so egregious they hearken back to a less refined era, is easily dismissed as the acts of “a white fringe.” Whatever the case, race, racism, and white supremacy are trivialized and conversations about anything-but-race thrive in the midst of a historiography of denial.

Another important commentary on the interplay of historiography, political ideology, memory, and white supremacy is Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s work *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. Omi and Winant argue:

From a racial formation perspective, race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation. Too often, the attempt is made to understand race simply or primarily in terms of only one of these two analytical dimensions. For example, efforts to explain racial inequality as purely social structural phenomenon are unable to account for the origins, patterning, and transformation of racial difference. Conversely, many examinations of racial difference—understood as a matter of cultural attributes *à la* ethnicity theory, or as a society-wide signification system, *à la* some poststructuralists accounts—cannot comprehend such structural phenomenon as racial stratification in the labor market or patterns of residential segregation. . . . Racial *projects* do the ideological “work” of making these links [between structure and representation]. *A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along racial lines.* Racial projects connect what race *means* in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially *organized*, based upon that meaning. (56)³⁸

Omi and Winant, like James and Lipsitz, articulate the interconnectedness of the historiography of a society, its cultural legacies and “signification systems,” as both precursor and result of the social structures, those institutions and practices that impact the distribution of resources and power, of the United States. The commingling of culture and structure, as they note, is especially relevant concerning the issue of social asymmetries—the United States, as a self-promoting nation of anti-tyranny and freedom for “we the people” must necessarily justify its histories of slavery, Native American extermination, and imperial conquest across what became the United States (and beyond the national borders, as well). In the naming of the fallacious historiography of denial lies the necessary step in Benjamin’s, Marx’s and Engels’ reordering of the social order—the materiality of history and the contemporary social order begins to develop a strong Messianic possibility in the naming of tyranny, genocide, and ethnic cleansing as the normative experience of the dispossessed in the U.S. nation and its historiography as opposed to exceptionalist liberty and spirit as the norm.

³⁸ As noted earlier (see footnote twenty-seven, page seventeen), Lisa Lowe’s work *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996), notes the omission of gender in Omi and Winant’s discussion of race, nation, and state power (21-22). Consequently, it is this dissertations intention to situate its discussion of power within a context that is mindful of race, gender, nation, and state power.

The historiography of denial, an amnesia enabling the “signification systems” of de Tocqueville, Kipling, and others is shrouded in the “whiteness” of U.S. society—a whiteness that insists in the centuries old narrative of assistance and benevolence, of *Geist*. There is an emphasis on only one side of the U.S. narrative of meaning when accounting for the past: as the armies of settlers and soldiers of the U.S. marched west, they did so with a democratic ideal unparalleled anywhere in the world and on providence’s behalf. De Tocqueville reminds us that the democratic experiment of North America represented a novel effort deploying freedoms unheard of. Kipling mindfully notes that the “savage wars of peace” uplifted and saved the savage from *itself*. Whatever happened to those impacted by these efforts, whether it be disappearing in the course of natural development or dying to save themselves, it occurred within this democratic, heaven-sanctioned ideal. Within the current U.S. historiography of denial, the Hegelian impulse of words-against-words carries the day, and the incongruities of power disappear behind Oz’s curtain of deception. Without the corrective intervention of a critical ontology of whiteness within the interplay of culture and structure, the facts behind the meaning of the U.S.’s historiography of denial will never come to light.

To return to this dissertation’s critical entry point to the subject of genocide, the Alamo, Patricia Penn Hilden reminds us that alternatives to selective amnesia and outright denial exist:

For many post-1960s academics, their disciplines rendered moribund by shifting racial demographics and the consequent decolonization of minority minds, cultural studies offered new vistas and potentially fresh, politically unsuspect methods. . . . I do know that “we” [decolonizing scholars of color] speak of these things from a different space, Gloria Anzaldúa’s “space in-between, *from where to think.*” Beth Piatote calls this Indian place “the Red Zone,” from which we speak when we are speaking our collective hypersense of our “we-ness.” It is from that Zone that I spoke about “our” museum, from inside, seeing behind the museum’s many disguises, all those forms and shapes and positions that have so long hidden the genocidal colonial project at the heart of U.S. museum narratives. Several academic disciplines are implicated in this and similar projects of national obfuscation, though anthropology and history (including their hybrid, ethnohistory) have long prevailed as scouts. (*From 19-21*)

The concept of the “Red Zone” and the “space in-between,” or Benjamin’s strong Messianic alternative, opens an avenue to understand and articulate what the U.S. historiography of denial insists remains silent in the name of a “democratic” ideal. It is from these spaces that this dissertation mounts an assault on one of the foremost and elusive principles of U.S. historiography: a genocidal impulse. And it is at the Alamo, a site representative of the intersection of genocide denial and the historical museum, that this conversation will take place.

Chapter Two: Remember the Alamo! Forget White Supremacy!

“The wall behind which people were imprisoned was made entirely of verse, and in front of the wall there was dancing. No, not a *danse macabre*. Here innocence danced! Innocence with its bloody smile.” (363)

—Milan Kundera, *Life is Elsewhere*

The previous chapter serves as an introduction to what this dissertation calls the historiography of denial. In this case, the United States’ historiography of denial defines “America” from its imagined origin as isolated colonies on the Atlantic Coast to the present. The power of this historiography is its omnipresence—what “America” means surfaces through a representational presence in countless historical accounts of people, places, and events. The representational presence transmits the narrative discussed in the previous chapter: the narrative of the United States as a journey from a savage, empty land to a nation called upon to “export” civilization. For the purpose of this dissertation, the Alamo represents the exemplary event. As a monument defining the past, the Alamo’s focuses on the “positive” aspects of the national progression—the narrative from savage to civility exists at the Alamo’s core. The downsides of national growth, namely genocide and chattel slavery, fail to meaningfully impact the representational narrative of the Alamo as a component part of the U.S.’s national mythology. It is this absence that constitutes the central omission of the U.S. historiography of denial. The narratives excluded from the Alamo’s historical record remain outside the representational record in the interest of power, and in the United States, their absence serves the interests of a white supremacist historiographic record.

The white supremacist historiographic record thrives within the Alamo’s complex matrix of denial. From the earliest moments of Euro-American nation-building on the North American continent, a narrative of providence/*Geist* dominates the national story, and the Alamo story is no exception. De Tocqueville’s twin spirits of religion and liberty shape(d) the formative logics of the nation, and consequently, justified the processes involved in expansion and development into, specific to this dissertation, Texas. The “ascent” into democracy manifests a fulfilling of providence/*Geist*’s plan for North America. The complimentary limitless economic potential represents providence’s gift to the industrious Euro-Americans who save the fallow land from those races incapable of realizing the land’s potential. And finally, the destruction that accompanied the growth of the Euro-American paradise mirrors the “creative” destruction so common in Biblical narratives: the righteous need not worry about destroying the unholy or godless. Very simply, the Texans on god’s errand possessed a holy obligation to occupy, destroy, build, and prosper.

This progressive narrative, already outlined in the previous chapter, persists in the “American” story into the present, and the Alamo specifically as an exhibitionary complex.¹ Its narrative complexity enables it to reorder itself to suit its time and place, to account for the specific cultural nuances and incorporate contemporary cultural meanings within a disciplinary framework that instructs the museum visitor of their place in both past and present social orders.

¹ This concept will be discussed in detail below, also see *Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 59-88.

This mutability endows the Alamo's historiography of denial with a timeless quality; it speaks to its age while continuing the historiographic denial necessary to promulgate the white supremacist values upon which Texas was founded. The culturally relevant shifts reframe, to suit the age, the narratives of universal progress and development. The Alamo as an exhibitionary complex of the nation perpetuates a narrative of a people always moving forward toward a better tomorrow through a repetition of its historical players and acts. This combination of providence/*Geist*, cultural repetition, and narratives of progress leave little room for alternative narratives undermining the nationalist celebrations of god and country. Dissent becomes a matter of calling into question those things that represent long-standing "truisms" or sacred beliefs. The Alamo exhibitionary complex recasts extermination and dehumanization as the good works of good men for a good country. Ultimately, the U.S.'s historiography of denial as manifest in the Alamo maintains the Hegelian historiographic model that asserts that the master is always right, and in fact, prior to the arrival of the master, nothing existed.

This and the following four chapters explore the embeddedness of the historiography of denial in the Alamo as exhibitionary complex. This embedding is reinforced through representational repetition of the images and narratives of personal liberty, familial bonds, protection of the weak, and the display of an upright morality appear over and over as cornerstones of the Alamo's cause. As will be explored below, these narratives reappear in both the historical and the pop culture texts concerning the Alamo. The sheer weight of the repetition endows these constantly repeated Alamo narratives with the status of "facts." These become the primary images of the U.S.'s divine inheritance and the hallmarks of its right to ascendancy. The providential narratives of the early colonialists and, later, Hegel's *Geist*-based historiography must therefore be true.

This chapter examines the historiography of denial as it veils the genocidal impulses central to U.S. national expansion behind narratives of personal valor and collective heroism. The exhibitionary complex of the Alamo, managed from 1905² to the present by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), embraces a historiography of denial that proclaims only a glorious past.³ This "innocence" can only be fact if chattel slavery was *really* just a form of

² See Appendix Three for detailed timeline of the Alamo and its surrounding history.

³ As caretakers of the Victorian traditions and ideals of nineteenth century imperial age, Amy Kaplan's article "Manifest Domesticity" provides compelling argumentation that the role of Euro-American women, the DRT in this case, as agents of "civility" and preservers of "custom" carefully erases the imperial violence of "crass capitalism." As matrons of the civilizing mission of Anglos' in Texas, the DRT "violently reinforce the very class hierarchies that sentimentality claims to dissolve"; their brand of maternalism embodies all the problematics of patriarchal culture if not more, so given its veiled position behind a collective of genteel daughters (Kaplan, "Manifest" 581). The historical memories of the DRT "play a key role in imagining the nation as home, then [Euro-American] women, positioned at the center of the home, play a major role in defining the contours of the nation and its shifting borders with the foreign" (Kaplan, "Manifest" 582). Domesticity—the home and family—should not be seen as apolitical. The DRT are not just a social group; the role of this organization must be implicated in the projects of nation building and imperialism. If one reads the DRT outside the relationship with the imperial past from which their organization emerges, then as Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues, the historical narrative would be "inauthentic." The inauthentic's failure to acknowledge the past allows for a

benevolent paternalism, if Native America *really* just disappeared; if the darker races *really* needed “savage wars of peace”; if whites *really* imported a higher form of civilization to Texas. The following chapters are not going to reprise the many histories of the Alamo; this is not this dissertation’s purpose.⁴ Rather, this chapter will mine the continuity of the historiography of denial in the cultural narrative of the Alamo, a narrative that cleanses the racist discourses from the actions of the Texans in Mexico and their heirs in both the Republic of Texas and, then, the United States. An exploration of the narrative construction of the Alamo will reveal how denial is a constant backdrop to the deracialization and the strategic gendering of history in the United States. This denial constitutes a logic of whiteness that, in part, erases both past acts and present day continuations of cultural and social violence.

(This argument is not an effort to assert that cultural and social representation are the lynchpins upon which justice turns; rather the white mythologies of the Alamo are both causes and effects, existing in a dialectical relationship between materiality and cultural discourse.⁵ Each reflects and constitutes the other in a never ending cycle that both empowers and creates the historiography of denial necessary to suppress the legacy of the whiteness and violence at the core of U.S. national expansion.⁶)

cultural and historical practice that does not “engage” but rather allows for ignorance about the “presence of the past in the present” (Trouillot, *Silencing* 150-1).

⁴ For a chronology of the Alamo’s history, see Appendix Three. It is also important to acknowledge the development of the Alamo’s historical narrative. There are a number of periods that represent this development. The first period is in the immediate aftermath of the event, the primary materials dealing with the Alamo (representative texts will be discussed in the chapter below) define this period a moment of “mythologizing” the Alamo. Following this period, is a remarkable period of silence; the Alamo gets lost as a historical site and story. In the early-twentieth century, the Alamo reemerges as a site of local importance and Texan Heritage. Again, texts representative of this era are discussed below and are represented by the 1915 film *Martyrs of the Alamo* and the 1916 tract *The Alamo: A Memorial to Texas Heroism*. However, it is important to state that this dissertation is *not* a survey of the historical record or historiography of the Alamo *per se*. Rather it is an interrogation of how the Alamo is a representative text for the national mythology of the U.S. that recrafts its expansionist violence in terms favorable to the victors. The works of Richard Flores, especially *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol* (2002), “Memory-Place, Meaning, and the Alamo,” “Private Vision, Public Culture: The Making of the Alamo,” as well his introduction to his edited volume *Histories and Legends of the Alamo and Other Missions In and Around San Antonio* (1996) thoroughly charts the shifts and periods in Alamo historiography.

⁵ This notion of collapsing the Humanities with the Social Sciences, or culture and structure, is keenly argued by the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences (1993-1995); the commission, consisting of six social scientists, two “hard” scientists, and two humanities scholars, essentially advocates for a shared knowledge base that brings together the knowledges historically siloed within academic disciplines. The bleeding together of the qualitative and quantitative will, ultimately, produce sharper, more critical scholarship with a greater potential for compelling social argument and power (Wallerstein).

⁶ Stuart Hall, illustrating the interrelationship of economic and class structures with cultural production/meaning, claims: “Certainly, it is not necessarily a form of vulgar materialism to say that, though we cannot ascribe ideas to class position in a certain fixed combination, ideas *do*

“Reading” the Alamo as an exhibitionary complex requires disrupting the silences that privilege the heroic nation and family—the silences that enable the historiography of denial and obscure the power of whiteness. In a historiography of denial, power “precedes the narrative proper, [and] contributes to its creation and to its interpretation. . . . In history, power begins at the source” (Trouillot, *Silencing* 28-29). The public discourses of the Alamo, those which one must consume over-and-over again while walking the grounds of the museum or viewing a century’s worth of Hollywood films, the sources of its story, are generally “product[s] of power whose label has been cleansed of traces of power. The naming of the ‘fact’ is itself a narrative of power disguised as innocence” (Trouillot, *Silencing* 114).⁷ Trouillot asserts that the physical locations where a historical narrative becomes concrete or lived are not merely a byproduct of providence/*Geist*; rather, in this case, the Alamo is a carefully managed production constituted through acts of violence and ideological power enacted by those benefiting from the narrative—memory, history, and the nation privilege selective “facts” as are others denied. The Alamo represents what Benjamin calls the “weak Messianic” moment in history, a history that favors the false narratives of the victorious as a means to comfort the victor’s tainted inheritance of power and social privilege. The Alamo, and its past, represents one exhibitionary complex where the U.S. historiography of denial reaches into the present with its disciplining power and obfuscates the nature and practice of white privilege, and it is this naming, a naming that, again, happens over-and-over, of the power behind the artifice of the current representational politics of the Alamo that creates the possibility for a strong Messianic moment, a reckoning with the nature of genocide in the Americas and a liberatory historical moment.⁸

Why the Exhibitionary Complex?

Returning to the genocidal amnesia central to the U.S.’s historiography of denial, the erasures that constitute not only the historical and cultural narratives discussed above, but also the numerous related disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology (for example) all inform this historiography. The cultural and historical historiographies of nation and the interests of the wealthy and powerful both meet and blend in the museum.

However, the Alamo is not only a museum; it is a cultural narrative that exists as a part of the broader U.S. historiography and is also a unique component of the historiography of denial. It exists as both a physical location and idea that embodies and transmits the principles and

arise from and *may reflect* the material conditions in which social groups and classes exist. In that sense—i.e. historically—there may well be certain *tendential alignments* . . . [Marx] suggested, some relationship, or tendency, between the objective position of that class fraction, and the limits and horizons of thought to which they would be ‘spontaneously’ attracted. This was a judgment about the ‘characteristic forms of thought’ appropriate as an ideal-type to certain positions in the social structure. . . . The tendential lines of forces define only the *givenness* of the historical terrain. . . . These associations are not given for all time. But they are difficult to break because the ideological terrain of this particular social formation has been so powerfully structured in that way by its previous history. . . . Ideas only become effective if they do, in the end, *connect* with a particular constellation of social forces” (42-43).

⁷ See note one, pages one and two, in the previous chapter for a more informed summary of Trouillot’s understandings of power and the past.

⁸ See the discussion of Walter Benjamin in the previous chapter, pages seventeen through twenty-one.

practices of heroism, patriotism, and freedom. The location, thus, is much more than the remains of an old battlefield. It is a place where the public, tourists who flock to the Alamo to consume it,⁹ receive an education in the past values and actions of those who fought, died, and inherited all that was at stake at the Alamo; this stake extends well beyond the walls of the brick-and-mortar museum as an exhibitionary complex. In *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Tony Bennett argues that museums, and their complimentary disciplines, shape the modern social subject into nationalist citizens who willingly embrace a distinct power/knowledge framework:

Libraries, public lectures and art galleries thus present themselves as instruments capable of improving ‘man’s’ inner life just as well laid out spaces can improve the physical health of the population. If, in this way, culture is brought within the province of government, its conception is on par with other regions of government. The reform of self—of the inner life—is just as much dependent on the provision of appropriate technologies for this purpose as is the achievement of desired ends in any other area of social administration. (18)

The normalizing experience of the museum, the Alamo in this case, and its carefully selected collections and their meanings, inform the viewer of her/his social status and political place. The included and *excluded* historical narratives of the Alamo teach the visitor the values of heroism, fidelity to nation, and their opposites. Though each visitor’s experience is ultimately unique and subjective, ideological trends informed by the larger national historiography behind the displays privilege select subjectivities, or what one must believe to fit into the narratives on display. The historic museum in the United States, in general, serves as a focal point for commemorating U.S. greatness, the nation’s culture, history, and heroes. Furthermore, historic museums like the Alamo take their place as functionaries in the larger cultural project of disciplining individuals, classes, races, genders into their respective social roles, both past and present, and the relative value of their histories. The Alamo develops into a location where Euro-American values become universal values. The Alamo then teaches its visitors through persuasion and not physical violence—the museum represents history enacted and becomes a location of its consumption. History as told by the Alamo represents an additional keystone in both *Geist*-mandated introduction of history into the “American” West.

Bennett describes this process as a public disciplining perpetrated through acts of preservation and narrativization as extensions “of a more general set of developments through which culture, in coming to be thought of as useful for governing, was fashioned as a vehicle for the exercise of new forms of power” (19). Bennett places the key historical moment in rise of the political function of the museum in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, “. . . the relation between culture and government [came] to be thought of and organized in a distinctly modern way via the conception that the works, forms and institutions of high culture might be enlisted for the governmental task in being assigned the purpose of civilizing the population as a whole” (19). Thus, during the nineteenth century, the ruling classes both capitalized on and reordered cultural narratives, educational materials in essence, as additional mechanisms of social control.

⁹ The Alamo has been called Texas’ “premiere tourist attraction. In any normal year, more than two and a half million visitors come from all over the world to stand before those old stones and honor the courage and sacrifice of the defenders” (“Alamo Visit”).

These mechanisms proved more effective than the scaffold. The Alamo as representative of heroism and bravery seduces with repetitious fantasies of the epic in lieu of government-imposed fear. The citizen-subject ideally sees her/himself in the role of Alamo defender and aspires to that level of loyalty, choosing to embrace the nation and values of the defenders. The overseers of the Alamo, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (to be discussed in more detail below, and hereafter referred to as DRT), as members of the upper-class, capitalized on this politicization of culture; the Alamo becomes both museum and narrative to represent themselves and their political interests as universal values emerging from the events during the Texans' war with Mexico. Thus, the Alamo, as constructed by the DRT in the early- to mid-twentieth century, teaches Euro-Americans, and all who consume the Alamo, of the "American" values of the Texans and the anti-"American" values of the Mexican attackers. The DRT deploy the museum and its surrounding cultural narratives, its exhibitionary complex, as a mechanism of "civilizing"; the values of the defenders, according to the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, are values to be emulated and celebrated. Simultaneously, the exhibitionary complex reinforces the perception that the Mexican cause is not to be valued; in the seduction of the museum visitor there must be a negative pole to reject. In the Alamo's case, the biologically inferior, tyrannical, and non-white Mexican represents this negative pole. The choice for the visitor is easy: the negative values of the Mexicans exist so far beyond the pale of the Texans' positive qualities.

The continuity of the sacred discussed in chapter one also facilitates the ease of choice for the citizen-subject/Alamo visitor. The Alamo, as exhibitionary complex, embodies a narrativized sacredness that marks both the defenders and the building itself. According to the DRT, the "truth" is told within the sacrosanct historical space of the museum and fits easily into the already existing narratives of "America." Tony Bennett explains:

As educative institutions, museums function largely as repositories of the *already known*. They are places for telling, and telling again, the stories of our time, ones which have become a *doxa* through their endless repetition. If the meaning of the museum artefact seems to go without saying, this is only because it has already been said so many times. A truly double-dealing rascal, the museum artefact [the Alamo, in this case] seems capable of lending such self-evident truths its own material testimony only because it is already imprinted with the sedimented weight of those truths from the outset. (147, underline added)

The Alamo then, as exhibitionary complex, builds on already existing cultural and political ideas, ideas that already permeated the self-understanding of nineteenth and early-twentieth century United States. The Alamo as exhibitionary complex did not emerge in a vacuum, or create a new narrative of "America." When the DRT assumed control of the Alamo, after years of both local and national disinterest in the building and the event, the DRT integrated the Alamo's story into what was already being said throughout the United States concerning both national expansion and conflicts with other races/nations. The DRT participated in the creation of an exhibitionary complex that incorporated the cultural and historical narratives dating back to the Texans' war of secession and into the more distant origin stories of the "American" Revolution and Classical Antiquity. From the original news and cultural artifacts (this chapter and chapter three), through a century of cinematic representation (chapters three, four, five, and six), to modern day popular histories self-published by the DRT (chapters five and six), the Alamo's "factual" narrative rests on a network of ideas, images, and values that always already existed in the public domain. And

as will be shown below, within the Alamo's cultural record a series of constantly repeating events and tropes emerge that become the Alamo's unique "already knowns"—as an exhibitionary complex itself, the Alamo tells the same stories over-and-over as a means to reinforce its "facts" as "truths." With so much material espousing the heroism of the Texan defenders, a wall of "truth" buttresses the DRT's assertions about the Alamo's history and outcomes. More importantly, these assertions and outcomes intimately link with the providential/*Geist*-based understanding of Manifest Destiny—the Alamo becomes another necessary stepping stone in god's plan for the Euro-American in North America. Additionally, as the heirs of victorious, the power to craft the initial historical meanings and subsequent outcomes of the Alamo belonged to the DRT; thus, the narratives of the Alamo are, to put it mildly, biased. This narrative of power, for reasons to be discussed below, is omitted.

As noted briefly above, the Alamo's narrative of power serves the interests of those groups given voice; of greater interest to this dissertation are those groups silenced in the narrative. The breadth of the historiographic erasures that define both place and social order for communities of color in the U.S. must be exposed, and the Alamo is no exception. Bennett argues the state employs museum exhibitions in the cause of indoctrinating the nation's citizenry. Bennett thus furthers Foucault's analysis of the asylum, clinic, and prison¹⁰ "as institutional articulations of power and knowledge relations" and applies it to the museum (81). He clarifies this:

The exhibitionary complex was . . . a response to the problem of [socio-political] order, but one which worked differently in seeking to transform that problem into one of culture—a question of winning the hearts and minds as well as disciplining the bodies. . . . through the provision of object lessons in power—the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display—they sought to allow the people, and *en masse* rather than individually, to know rather than be known, to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge. (Bennett 84)

In the case of the Alamo, the institutionalized representation of an exceptionalist U.S. historiography teaches the approximately 2.5 million yearly visitors to the Alamo what constitutes a national/"American" subject: what racialized, gendered, and classed categories represent the heroic histories and fables constituting the Alamo's narrative. Once enshrined in the exhibitionary space of the Alamo, the narrative places the national citizenry, or colonized citizenry, "as both subject and beneficiary of power." The Alamo and its cultural messages, unlike Foucault's readings of the asylum, clinic, and prison, constitute a "rhetoric of power . . . —a power . . . not . . . to inflict pain but . . . to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order" (Bennett 89). There is no public scaffold to enact a physical disciplining at the Alamo; rather the reverence of museum, and its role as arbiter of knowledge disciplines with "fact." The Alamo's narrative of epic heroes who died for a glorious cause disciplines with the fantastic. This epic rendering is the seduction; the citizen-consumer learns the values of sacrifice, freedom, and so on as they walk the grounds of the Alamo—the power of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex is what it asks the viewer to believe

¹⁰ See Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1967), *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1973), and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977).

about the past and present of Texas as a democratic and just stepping-stone on “America’s” Frontier. Remember, Davy Crockett died here and, as will be discussed below, as the Disney-fied representative hero of the Alamo, who wouldn’t want to be the epic hero Crockett over the demonic Santa Anna? However, this disciplining narrative possesses a subterranean narrative about race. Those communities of color who survive as witnesses to America’s genocides are rendered officially hysterical or reactionary. Crockett and his co-defenders represent the “true” American, and this “true” account constantly reemerges in the fictional, mass-media accounts of the Alamo. Crockett’s goodness counters the constant presence of the alleged villain Santa Anna, the tyrant who oversees hordes of nameless and faceless Mexicans seeking to destroy the liberty of Texas. The Alamo as exhibitionary complex relies on a strong, and constant, juxtaposition of a profoundly raced concept of good and evil, not to mention the denial of the legacies of the Texans’ victory for the nearly invisible Native America and slaves.

The U.S.’s ruling class both enacts, perceives, and displays their “public” historiography in these sites of enacted cultural memory. When such biased, at best, attitudes are enshrined in sites of “public” memory a repetitious normalizing process begins that in-turn, both constitutes and reinforces the “public” sensibility of the communities in which the site is located. The powerful market their self-interested representations as the universal values of the nation. Given its broad public dissemination and international consumption the Alamo is exemplary of this phenomenon. The museum, the cultural icon, and constantly repeated national myths (of the Alamo) are central tools of teaching a community who and what constitute both its past and present—and more importantly, what these mean. Furthermore, the museum participates in the establishment of the parameters of who has the right to claim the national mythology and its meaning. The anti-nation and values antithetical to the enshrined understandings of nation are excluded.¹¹ Museums, like churches, corporate high-rises, school curriculums, and so on, reify the self-understanding, and self-justification, of entire communities. What follows is an attempt to situate the historiography of denial within the exhibitionary complex of the Alamo in an effort to reveal its praxis of denial, its “weak Messianic moment.” This exploration begins with a history of the events surrounding the battle at the Alamo and then the contemporary accounts of the battle and the fall of the Alamo.

Remember the Alamo!

Prior to any analysis of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex, a brief accounting of the timeline of the events surrounding the battle at the Alamo will set its historical context. The Texan “Odyssey” begins in 1820 when Moses Austin traveled to New Spain to secure permission from the Spanish authorities for the immigration of three hundred families into the northern part of the Spanish province of Coahuila y Tejas. Moses’ son, Stephen F. Austin, aided his father in this colonial project. Their argument to the Spanish authorities was simple: the Northern area of the province of Coahuila y Tejas remained empty and unproductive. The

¹¹ Edward T. Linenthal’s study of the political journey to build the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is instructive regarding the politics of historical inclusion and concerns over “revisionist” dilution of history. Linenthal describes in great detail the painful, and seemingly contradictory, justifications used to exclude any mention of the Armenian genocide as precursor to the Shoah. Some justifications were rooted in external, international political pressure; others, however, were rooted in an interest in preserving a particular and distinctive ethnic narrative (48, 229).

introduction of colonists would facilitate trade, economic development, and provide a measure of security for the area. However, Moses Austin died prior to the endeavor's beginning. After his death, Stephen Austin became the driving force behind the project. By August 1821, Austin received authorization to colonize the region under terms extremely favorable to the incoming Euro-American colonialists (primarily no federal taxation and well-under-market value land prices). By December 1821, the first of those who would become Texans began to arrive. While the Texans built their initial settlements, Mexico experienced tremendous internal political upheaval. In August 1821, Mexico declared independence from Spain, and in 1823, Mexico adopted a federal government favoring the Texan colonists because it emphasized local governance over central authority (Barker; "Texas Revolution: Timeline").

On this shifting political landscape, Austin negotiated with the newly independent Mexico for the continuation of the immigration agreements and the land grants issued by Spanish authorities. Once secured, from 1821 to 1828 Austin negotiated multiple contracts and legal agreements allowing the original three hundred families to remain and an additional fifteen hundred families to colonize Texas. Additionally, Stephen Austin exercised complete civic and military control over the Texans until 1828. Austin possessed this control, in part, because he committed himself and the Texans to follow Mexican law—in the interest of perpetuating the favorable terms of colonization, Austin consistently reminded the Texan colonists of their legal obligations to Mexico (Barker).

However, Mexico's domestic upheaval changed both the structures and philosophies of internal governance in Mexico. Initially, Mexico adopted the Federal Constitution of 1824, protecting both individual liberty and land rights—this Constitution benefited the Texans. In 1829, however, a civil war erupted in Mexico and Centralist forces won, relocating governmental and economic controls to Mexico City. Once this occurred, serious tensions arose between Mexico and the Texans. The Central Government of Mexico exercised greater authority over Texas and began to enact policies that contradicted the initial colonization agreements, specifically the leveraging of federal taxes and controlling local political and military affairs. Because of increasing instability in Mexico and tensions with the Texans, in 1830 the Central Government of Mexico halted Euro-American immigration from the U.S. By 1832, the Texans engaged in a bifurcated approach toward Centralist authority in Mexico: they engaged in minor military confrontations with Mexican troops, as well as sending Stephen F. Austin to Mexico City to negotiate with Santa Anna for greater local control of Texas. In 1833 Austin was arrested and jailed. In 1834, Mexico's President Santa Anna divided Texas into three federally administered districts, further eroding local control. Texans declared this act illegal, and at this point, the Texans all but embraced war ("Texas Revolution: Timeline").

By 1835, across Mexico, numerous revolts erupted against Santa Anna's rule. On Santa Anna's orders, General Martin Perfecto de Cos proceeded to Texas to subdue the Texans' revolt; also, Austin, having been freed from jail, returned to Texas calling for separation from Mexico. Cos issued arrest warrants for the Texan rebels, but was trapped in San Antonio de Bexar in November 1835. The Texans defeated Cos and allowed him and his army to retreat from Texas. Meanwhile, Austin traveled the territory organizing both a provisional government and a militia. On February 23, 1836 Santa Anna arrived in San Antonio de Bexar with an army. On March 1, 1836, the Texan Constitutional Convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos began its deliberation; on the 2nd, the Convention declared Texan independence. At the same time as the Convention, the thirteen day siege at the Alamo occurred and concluded when Santa Anna's forces finally overran the Alamo fortress on March 6th. After the defeat at the Alamo, both the Texan army

and its provisional government began a six-week retreat from Santa Anna's army. Finally, on April 21, after a series of tactical mistakes by Santa Anna, Sam Houston's army defeated Santa Anna's forces at the Battle of San Jacinto, and on the 22nd, Houston's forces captured Santa Anna. The saga of the Alamo ends, in essence, on May, 14th 1836 when Santa Anna and Texan officials signed the Treaty of Velasco, granting Texas its independence from Mexico, "avenging" the deaths at the Alamo ("Texas Revolution: Timeline").

It is important to briefly address the issue of survivors and the deaths of the Alamo's defenders. A number of the non-combatants in the Alamo survived the battle. Most were women and children. Relatively little is known about the lives of these individuals after the battle. Additionally, their testimonies seem to register very little in the formation of the Alamo's mythology (Groneman). The most famous survivor is Susanna Dickinson; as will be discussed below, as a character in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, she recurs in different iterations throughout the cultural representations of the Alamo. What is of greatest interest to this dissertation is the careful management of Dickinson's moral imagery in the films, especially in light of the hardships and difficult choices she had to make as a widow living on the "Frontier" of the United States. Her life, by all accounts, was difficult and morally ambivalent. After the Alamo's fall, the illiterate Dickinson reportedly made a living as a prostitute. She also married and divorced four times after the death of her husband at the Alamo. Additionally, both the Republic and State of Texas seem to have forgotten the price her husband paid at the Alamo; on multiple occasions, Dickinson petitioned the state for assistance, and on multiple occasions, Texas denied her succor (Henson). Thus, Texas, heir to Dickinson's husband's epic sacrifice, scorns the "first widow" and witness to the birth of Texas. Neither valorized nor elevated into the pantheon of Texas heroes, Dickinson becomes a prostitute and struggles for survival as a forgotten artifact of the Alamo. Her importance, unfortunately for her, only emerges in the twentieth century narratives of the Alamo well after her death and with no hint of her life's subsequent difficulties. The final survivors of note, again of note because they consistently appear in the cultural record of the Alamo, are two slaves, Joe and Sam. Sam, Jim Bowie's slave, disappears after the fall of the Alamo. Joe, William Travis' slave on the other hand, is escorted to Texan government officials where he provides an account of the Alamo's fall. He is then returned to servitude as the property of William Travis' heirs. He eventually escapes slavery, fleeing the very institution reintroduced in Texas by the victorious Texans (Thompson). The question of chattel slavery in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex matters; the scope and nature of chattel slavery fails to impact the historical narrative of the Alamo as "shrine of Texas liberty" (as does the fact the Mexico had long abolished chattel slavery).¹² The roles of these survivors provide curious points for juxtaposition with the cultural record that would become the Alamo. Dickinson and Joe are ultimately betrayed by the Alamo's victors, and they also ultimately betray the values espoused by the Alamo.

In addition to the question of survivors and their histories, the building itself belies the current epic rendering of the Alamo exhibitionary complex. After the end of the war with Mexico, the Alamo fortress remained in ruins. In 1841, the Republic of Texas returned the Alamo to the Catholic Church, and the Church left the former mission in disrepair. Following the annexation of Texas in July 1845, the United States government claimed the building, and from 1848 until 1876 the Alamo was a run-of-the-mill military supply depot. From 1876 to

¹² This labeling is presented to each visitor as s/he enters the Alamo; it appears on a donation box outside the Alamo's front doors.

1883, the grounds, again, were neglected. In April 1883, Texas purchased the Alamo and placed it in the custody of the city of San Antonio; it was agreed that the city would maintain the building. This arrangement continued until 1905 when the state of Texas purchased the building and placed it in the charge of the DRT (A. Williams). It is in 1905, after nearly seventy years of either general neglect or use as a warehouse, that the Alamo is “remembered” as a site of sacred and historic importance. Under the care of the DRT, the Alamo as narrative becomes both a museum and exhibitionary complex.

White Makes Right: Texan Land Grabs, “Those Damn Dirty Mexicans,” and Other Reflections on the Alamo’s Historiography of Denial

At this point, this chapter shifts from the general historical facts of the Alamo and to the struggle for its meaning, the struggle for the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. The ultimate focus of this dissertation is an interrogation of what are the costs of denying the genocidal events of the post-Alamo Republic of Texas and then Texas as a state within the United States. How does the denial of chattel slavery and Native American extermination within the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex further sanction the U.S.’s understanding of the twentieth century as “*the age of genocide*”¹³ and provide an additional vehicle for the dismissal of the symbiotic relationship between the formation of the United States and five hundred years of imperial/genocidal violence? Why, in the U.S., is twentieth century genocide the ultimate marker of U.S. indifference to genocide when the Alamo represents a cultural marker with over a hundred year investment in its denial? These questions do not understate the horror of contemporary genocides and their legacies in the lives of those who experienced them. Nor is this an attempt to dismiss all claims to the historic import of twentieth century genocide and its role as signifiers of crisis within Western history and in the unfolding of the U.S. as a nation.¹⁴ Ultimately, these questions are framed within what is an undeniable history of racism in the United States; a history, that not unlike the twentieth century genocides discussed by Samantha Power below, remain enmeshed within the lives of ethnic minorities in the United States and are systemically denied in countless sites as represented by the Alamo in this dissertation. Thus, it is an “American sensibility” of denial that this work seeks to understand—why is the United States’ so unwilling to deal justly with its own genocides? Furthermore, these questions must be situated within the assertions of providential exceptionalism surrounding the formative mythologies of the Alamo and the United States and their “weak Messianic” moments; the prevailing national attitudes concerning genocide insists that twentieth century genocides represent the most egregious manifestations of inhumanity (and importantly, from some other time and place that is not “America”). Whereas, those events of the past are rendered as something else, and in the case of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, disciplined right out of history. As discussed above an exhibitionary complex arises from that which is “already known,” the oft repeated narratives.

¹³ This tag will be discussed in great detail below in chapter seven.

¹⁴ Paul Gilroy states: “It bears repetition that exploring these relationships [between the transatlantic slave trade and the Jewish Holocaust] need not in any way undermine the uniqueness of the Holocaust. It is therefore essential not to use the invocation of uniqueness to close down the possibility that a combined if not comparative discussion of its horrors and their patterns of legitimization might be fruitful in making sense of modern racism” (214).

Thus the birth of the Alamo and its “already knows” begins with the initial accounts of the battle, its fall, and the contemporary cultural responses to the Alamo.

This section surveys the initial English language record of the Alamo as a location of Euro-American resistance against a “lesser” race (Mexicans) and tyranny. The survey of nineteenth century attitudes toward racial “others” and imperial expansion embedded in the primary materials concerning the Alamo demonstrates the inheritance of the “American” exceptionalist narratives that justify the Texans’ actions and silence alternatives.¹⁵ These exceptionalist discourses provide the “already known” facts at the root of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. For over one hundred and seventy years, the Alamo’s “others” (Mexicans, African Americans, Native Americans) both complemented and defined de Tocqueville’s disappearing savage, Kipling’s “half savage, half child,” and Boas’ child-like relative of the superior Euro-American. This framing of the “other,” especially in the context of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex, focuses the consumer’s attention on the civilizing mission and lofty aims of the Euro-American defenders furthering “American” liberalism.¹⁶

¹⁵ John Carlos Rowe’s *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (2000), incorporates a useful critical commentary on American ambivalence towards imperialism as a by-product of democratic liberalism. Applying Rowe’s ideas, it is clear that the rhetoric of the defenders of the Alamo, and their allies in Texas and the U.S., self-consciously manipulate “cultural and social psychological territories,” not to mention national geographies (as the conquest of Texas demonstrates) to further their economic interests. Most significantly, “democratic institutions and values” (the best of the liberal tradition) generally embodied the ideologies of “free-trade imperialism”; free trade, after all, is the sign of “individual and national mettle” (Rowe x-xi). Thus, insidious economic interests (slavery, for instance) hid behind the rhetoric of liberalism, and certainly never appeared in written accounts. In 1823 the Mexican Congress acted to attract settlers to Texas to foster development, and poor Anglo-Saxons from across the United States welcomed the opportunity to build a better life. This project became unpopular in Mexico City because the population of settlers arrived almost exclusively from the United States. Mexico attempted to restrict the influx of Euro-American immigrants and issued more restrictive laws on the settlers already living in Texas—thus, the revolt. The arguments forwarded by the Texans at the Alamo that Mexican “misgovernment, corruption, and tyranny in Mexico . . . produced the revolt” became the central justification for their actions (Merk xi). Economic interests, slavery, and so forth did not take center stage in either the rhetoric around the battle for Texas or the project of annexation (Merk 47-51). The loftier claims for freedom and justice, not to mention protection from exploitation and tyranny, better justified the connections between the U.S. founding mythologies, as well as offering excuses for waging war against a sovereign nation simply protecting its own territory.

¹⁶ My usage of the terms “liberal” and “liberalism” have no relation to the popular usage in contemporary U.S. politics as an opposite to “conservative.” Rather, I borrow David Lloyd’s and Lisa Lowe’s definition: “Liberalism [as an] . . . emancipatory discourse of modernity [with] . . . a foundation in what Walter Benjamin refers to as ‘historicism,’ that is, the conception of history as the narrative of the development of modern subjects and cultures. For liberalism, historicist temporality entails the gradual emergence of civil society and the citizen-subject of the state out of the barbaric prehistory of human society . . . Modern colonialism involved the extension of historicist logic on a global scale: colonized societies were assigned to the prehistory of the West . . .” (3-4).

Simultaneously, the racist aims and outcomes of the Texan victory in its war against Mexico disappear, furthering the historiography of denial. The initial reports of the Alamo's fall portrayed the Texans as victims of unwarranted Mexican aggression; this became a key "already known" of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. What is left out is the ensuing brutal displacement of the Mexicans/Tejanos and of Native Americans, as well as the reintroduction of chattel slavery. The conquest of Texas and the defeat of Mexico facilitated the *return* of slavery to Texas and marked an expansion of the Euro-American war against Native America in the West and Southwest. These omissions become another "already known" in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Removal of people of color and slavery represented a natural order of things on the U.S.'s Western Frontier during the nineteenth century. The Alamo's "already known" facts embody the white supremacy of the era veiled behind a rhetoric of honor and democracy.¹⁷

As an exhibitionary complex steeped in the historiography of denial, the Alamo emerges in the immediate aftermath of the Texan defeat as a site of nationalist fervor. Written accounts of the event, read within the complementary nineteenth century political and racial discourses, shaped the context of the national perception of the event and the subsequent DRT projection. Most importantly, perhaps, they situate the event within a narrative construction that lent support to the notion of the United States as the divine heir to the entire continent.¹⁸ Additionally, these

¹⁷ One need look no further than to the still-prominent attitude of "America—love it, or leave it." Michael Parenti describes the "superpatriot:" "The superpatriots tell us that in many countries people do not have the right to criticize their governments. Presumably, we should show gratitude for our freedom to dissent by refraining from dissenting; and if we speak freely and critically, we are proving ourselves ungrateful and therefore unworthy of the right to speak. It seems we 'abuse' our rights by simply using them. To repeat, the only thing to match the superpatriots' celebration of our freedom in the abstract is their intolerance toward anyone who actually puts that freedom into practice" (17). In the current post-9/11 political and cultural climate, to expose the U.S. for the imperial nation that it is, is to encounter claims that to do so is unpatriotic, cynical or too dark. Lynne Cheney one of the most vocal "superpatriots" argues: "I think when people were talking about moral values they were talking about patriotism, they were talking about love of country. I think, to put it even more generally, they were talking about an uncynical approach to our nation and to our national story. There is in the mainstream media—there has been, I think, in our political life, a real corrosive kind of cynicism, a notion that anytime anything goes right you have to sort of turn your nose up at it and say, 'Well, it really wasn't all that great,' a kind of undercutting cynicism. And I think part of that moral-values question related to that, related to the idea that we ought to be able to say, this is a great country. We have made amazing progress in achieving human freedom for ourselves and for people around the world." In other words, telling any other story about the nation than the one in almost every museum, monument and text book in the United States detracts from the undeniable growth in liberty—however, in the debate about values, I have always been under the impression that dishonesty is not a family value. So, what is wrong with calling the U.S. genocidal when the national histories reveal as much to those who care to see?

¹⁸ Consider the above discussion of Hegel's *a priori* construction of history in an already concluded struggle over meaning, and the historical materialist critique of this "words against words" approach to the construction of history. See pages twelve through sixteen, chapter one.

early narratives became the foundational histories upon which all subsequent histories and cultural representations of the Alamo are based.

One such primary accounts is Hugh Kerr's 1836 epic poem *Texas*¹⁹:

The Alamo, brave Travis had—
 More valiant men they could not find.

 Extremely vex'd at this reverse,
 The Mexicans again prepare
 A larger force, which should coerce
 And drive the Texans to despair.

 Santanna musters all his force,
 He then assumes the chief command;
 And comes with thousands, foot and horse,
 To drive the Texans from the land.
 Brave Travis, in the Alamo,
 Is soon surrounded by a host;
 But nothing daunted by the foe,
 Each man with him defends his post.

 They yet maintain a constant strife,
 Though long protracted, day and night,
 Resolv'd to sacrifice their life
 Before they would attempt a flight.
 Santanna, chagrin'd at his loss,
 A final effort then commands,
 Assisted by his kinsman Coss,
 They muster all their convict bands.

 Extermination there commenc'd
 With fire and sword, in savage mirth:
 Such deeds will yet be recompens'd
 In scenes to come, if not on earth.
 (Kerr 9.3-4, 9-12, 17-24, 37-44, 88-91)

Thus Kerr recounts the battle and fall of the Alamo. The full title states that the poem is an *Appeal to Those Who Oppose the Union of Texas with the United States*. Kerr aspires to provoke “moral and political impressions” that fosters the support of the reader skeptical of the Texans’ cause. As a representative foundational text of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, the establishing of an organic link between Texans and the United States binds people, histories, and

¹⁹ The full title is as follows: *A Poetical Description of Texas and Narrative of Many Interesting Events in that Country: Embracing a Period of Several Years, Interspersed with Moral and Political Impressions: Also, an Appeal to Those Who Oppose the Union of Texas with the United States, and the Anticipation of that Event: to which is Added, The Texas Heroes.*

causes. The Alamo, within this framework, becomes “America.” Framed by the ideological charge of the title page, the poem exalts the Euro-American defenders of the Alamo (“more valiant men they could not find”) and denigrates the Mexican Army (“convict bands”) whose actions stymied the promises of civilization and progress (Kerr 9.4, 44).²⁰ Kerr centers on the imagined valor and strength of the Texan defenders. While this is a highly politicized poem, the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex focuses on affect, not context. The defender’s imagined acts become an “already known” fact from the Alamo’s past that emerges, and will reemerge, as a fundamental, recurring focal point. The geo-political complexities and Austin’s treaty obligations to Mexico do not matter in this, or other, foundational “already known” moments of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. The foundation of the exhibitionary complex becomes apolitical and value driven. Additionally, Kerr’s poem defines the battle at the Alamo as a war of succession wherein a superior Euro-American race refused to be ruled by cultural and biological inferiors.²¹ The overtly racialized language represents an additional foundational logic

²⁰ Kerr asserts early on that “Santanna” was “cruel” and because of Texan prosperity “This bigot,—Mexico,—had seen /, And soon her hatred did avow. / To curb that rising infant state, / Her abject convicts there did send,” (5.2-5). Kerr renders the Mexicans as the cruel and ignoble bigots who resent Anglo prosperity—the Mexicans rather than embrace the work ethic and ingenuity of the Texans seek to destroy the prosperity of Texas. Richard Slotkin clarifies the rhetorical disavowal of imperial violence in the popular construction of the West: “The accusation [of ‘savages’ instigating wars against U.S. security and sovereignty] is better understood as an act of psychological projection that made the Indians [and Mexicans] scapegoats for the morally troubling side of American expansion: the myth of ‘savage war’ became a basic ideological convention of a culture that was itself increasingly devoted to the extermination or expropriation of [peoples of color] . . . What is distinctively ‘American’ is not necessarily the amount or kind of violence that characterizes our history but the mythic significance we have assigned to the kinds of violence we imagine or invent, and the political uses to which we put that symbolism” (12-13). The ideological formation of the Alamo and its accompanying iconography attempts to provoke admiration and respect—the defenders do not represent thieves, slavers, or imperialists. Those roles are reserved for the Mexicans as agents of “savagery.” The promise of progressive liberalism is personified in the Alamo’s martyrs and pre-sages Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden.”

²¹ This racial theory represented a central belief of the emerging “American” nationalism. In fact, these early victories against racial others shaped the sense of the national self by the end of the nineteenth century as the U.S. emerged as a global power, and this racial mythology was used to justify its imperial expansion and to deny any aspect of negativity under an ideology of “right.” Speaking of Teddy Roosevelt, one of the U.S.’s first imperial presidents, Gail Bederman writes: “. . . the American race was a brand new race, but it shared both ancestry and ‘blood’ with the English race. Long after he wrote *The Winning of the American West*, Roosevelt continued to insist that Americans were a separate race. Yet although the manly American race was forged of various immigrant races, all of those contributing races were European. Black Americans played no part in TR’s frontier history, nor did he consider them part of the American race. . . . The inferior ‘negroes’ could live peacefully with the superior whites for generations, unlike the Indians who picked fights with the white man and thus could be killed off. In short, constructing his racial hero, TR envisioned an American race that was exclusively white” (179-180).

of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Not only is the Alamo "America's" history, "America's" values, but is also racially "America" in its purest form. The poem forges a familial bond between the Alamo's Euro-American defenders and the Euro-American readers in the United States. Thus Kerr articulates a racially connective logic uniting both Texas and the United States in a moral cause, and demonizing the Mexican, and begins to lay the foundational logics of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex that perpetuate the U.S.'s historiography of denial.

In addition to Kerr's poetic rendering, newspapers, as anchors of the "American" imagined community, also furthered the logics of racial and familial allegiance between Texans and U.S. citizens.²² One of the earliest reactions to the Alamo's fall appears in *The Mobile Daily Commercial Register and Patriot*.²³ A letter from a Mrs. Keller to the editor dated April 12, 1836, begins with an editor's preface that announces the letter's content as a "clear and authentic" account of the disastrous state of affairs in Texas.²⁴ The voice of despair is that of a woman. The editor(s) portrays the Mexican forces as barbarians juxtaposed against the distressed and anxious Euro-American women-and-children-made-refugees flooding into Mobile:

The others[, the men,] were in arms resisting the approach of the remorseless tyrant, while their helpless families, tender females and children, are driven from their homes, and from their country, and thrown upon strange shores destitute of the very means of subsistence. Most of them were but a few days since in comfortable, if not affluent circumstances; all were safe, and free from want.—No livelier image of the horrors of war can be presented to us, than the spectacle of fugitives, landing among strangers, in a state of utter want, and racked with the

²² See note eighteen, page twelve in the previous chapter.

²³ In turning to the news reports, an attempt has been made to survey information from as wide a geographic area within the United States as possible. One of the shortcomings of this chapter is the lack of reference to the Spanish language bibliography concerning the Alamo; Mexican perceptions of the event likely differ significantly from what the English language sources reveal. This point is raised to acknowledge an interest in not blindly repeating the same mistakes of previous academics who have "derived [their critiques] from and based on a literal if uncritical reading of the dominant historiographical narratives" of the past (Perez 47). Furthermore, many of these monolingual histories "pretend to represent the [voices and concerns of non-U.S. citizens] without even the pretension of examining [their] sources" (Perez 55). *It is not intention of this dissertation to be a history or an account of the cultural responses of Mexico*; rather the interest is in addressing the behaviors of the U.S. Still, the absence of Spanish language sources will be addressed in the manuscript.

²⁴ News of the defeat at the Alamo barely began to circulate outside of Texas by April. The earliest reports appeared around the second week of April; just over a month after the end of the siege. The sources reviewed were: *The Scioto Gazette*, *Cincinnati Advertiser and Ohio Phoenix*, *Mobil Daily Commercial Register and Patriot*, *The New Yorker*, *The Albion*, *The Globe*, and *The Federal Union*. Though not a comprehensive review of the dailies in circulation at the time, this represents an adequate geographic sample.

thought of husbands and fathers, still exposed to all the terrors of uncertain warfare, with the emissaries of the murderous Mexican despot. (Keller)²⁵

The root of Texans' cause arises from a struggle to rekindle hearths made cold and homes made barren through the acts of a "remorseless tyrant" and his "murderous" Mexican agents. The voice of a displaced and victimized woman, the "fairer sex," enters the Alamo's historical record at its inception; Keller's rendering of the siege at the Alamo is important for several reasons. The editors of *The Mobile Daily Commercial Register and Patriot* selected a woman's voice to present the image of poor, defenseless widows and fatherless children streaming out of Texas.²⁶ Dispossessed of their men, the domestic world of the family collapses. The Mexicans violated the domestic realm, the sacred space of home.²⁷ Thus, at the birthing of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex the language of racial superiority, masculine heroism, and feminized victimhood shape the Alamo's discourse and become foundational "already knows."²⁸ These

²⁵ The fleeing women and martyred men represents a common gendering within both the historiography of denial and U.S. history. Women and children were always vulnerable; where as men, real men, never fled—at the Alamo, the women abandoned the fort (or were at least given quarter by Santa Anna) while the men fought and died. Jane Tompkins in her essential historiographic work on the "American" West states, ". . . the Western naturalizes a certain racial, gender, and ethnic type as hero. There is no need to say that men are superior to women, Anglos to Mexicans, white men to black . . ." (73). Because of long standing and culturally omnipresent stories about who were heroes, the rule, and cultural assumption, states that white men, and only white men, act heroically.

²⁶ The feminine voice in the project of nation building cannot be understated. Amy Kaplan's work *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (2002) recounts the thinking of Sarah Josepha Hale, a prominent nineteenth century editor. Hale began advocating for Thanksgiving as a national holiday during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848); her logic was to "'unite our great nation, by its states and families' from 'St. John's to the Rio Grande, from the Atlantic to the Pacific border'" (Kaplan, *Anarchy* 35). Kaplan argues this is significant as the kitchen table, heart of the domestic world, becomes the focal point around which to organize the nation (and importantly Hale's conceptualization mentions nothing of the Native Americans) in celebration of the founding moments of Anglo-Saxon domination of the North American continent. There is an explicit endorsement of Manifest Destiny as Hale expands the national border to the Rio Grande and the Pacific; two geographic markers that were not yet part of the U.S.

²⁷ While the violations recounted in the letters and editorials were strictly byproducts of war, the invocation of violence against women cannot be disassociated from the intense concern regarding sexual violations directed against white women by non-white men (Young, *Colonial* 144-149). This theme appears as a central issue in D.W. Griffith's *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas* (to be discussed below).

²⁸ There can be little doubt that this narrative of endangered women and children builds on the long-standing tradition of victimized, at-risk women of the early-American captivity narrative. Thus, these accounts of the Alamo stand upon another series of "already known" facts of the "American" experience, and further empower the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. See June Namias' *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (1993) or Andrea Tinnemeyer's *Identity Politics of the Captivity Narrative after 1848* (2006) for a brief discussion

ideological renderings create both a foundational legacy of pride, and one of contempt: pride sealed in the blood of prodigious martyrs, and contempt for an enemy who violates family and destroys progress. It is on these foundational “truths” of the Alamo, that a historiography begins an almost undisturbed two century narrative. Thus, the idea of the Texans’ defeat resulting in the victimization of women and children becomes a core “already known” element of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Subsequently, the exhibitionary complex develops as a moral struggle, not a political or economic battle between nations. The historiography of denial demands a forgetting of the legal and political complexities of the Texans’ position as immigrants in a foreign land or Mexico’s right to suppress rebellion. The ascendancy of the moral and familial over the legal and political in these foundational narratives crafts an exhibitionary complex and narrative of denial unconcerned with the legal rights of the Mexican state. The “already known” facts established in these contemporary accounts erase any claim Mexico may have to the Alamo, Texas, or any moral authority of its own. Furthermore, Keller’s letter also reminds that the Texans and U.S. citizens share Anglo Saxon bloodlines—Keller and editor(s) compliment Kerr’s invocation of the familial unity between the Texan and American, just as the schism between the Anglo and Mexican, the anti-Anglo Saxon, is reinforced.²⁹ Keller recounts the intense bravery and regal defense of the Alamo. As though unwilling to concede the Mexican’s victory, she conjures the severe losses suffered by the Mexicans as they overwhelmed the mission:

There were one hundred and forty Texians in the *Alamo*, commanded by Col Travis of San Felipe. The number of Mexicans commanded by Gen. Santa Anna himself, is variously reported from five to eight thousand; of these, one thousand were convicts who served as the advance and protection of the besieging party.

of the role of the captivity narrative in the construction of race, gender, and the frontier in U.S. culture and history.

²⁹ Amy Kaplan, writing about the U.S. of the 1880s in “Romancing the Empire,” argues that nation building and manhood converged in the rhetoric of expansion and development of the “Wild West.” Though she is primarily concerned with the shift from Manifest Destiny to overseas colonial adventure during the War of 1898, Kaplan traces the root of imperialism abroad to the actions of those who “tamed” the Frontier out of existence. What is most relevant to this study is her emphasis on the normalizing power of romanticizing imperialism: “Critical treatments of the romance resemble historical approaches to the [War of 1898] as a nostalgic escape from modernity to the hardier life of the chivalric warrior . . . Yet such an approach reproduces [or simply continues?] the terms of imperialist discourse itself while ignoring how nostalgia can abet modern imperial force and how an outworn genre can be refurbished to represent a new political context” (Kaplan, “Romancing” 660). The historic and cultural rhetoric constructed the Texans as both victim and vanquisher; whereas, the Mexicans embody both victimizer and vanquished. The war in Texas, as already mentioned, looks forward into the present as an epic—the U.S.’s “Thermopylae” as termed on the first Alamo monument in Austin, Texas (Raines). Thus, the defenders parallel the splendor of Greece and the regality of what that era represents. The superiority of “our” way was assumed. The primary materials discussed never questions the imperial logic of the liberalism that shaped the actions of the Texans; in fact, the arguments, whether for or against the Texans, furthered the project of Manifest Destiny by constructing the Mexicans as a hindrance to progress and civility.

No history, either ancient or modern,—neither the pass of Thermopylæ, nor the battle fields upon which our progenitors have fallen, presents the remembrance of a more unequal and obstinate engagement. Of the Texians, not a man survived to tell the news. They knew the conditions under which they fought:—“Victory or Death” was before them. Unable to obtain the former, . . . [the defenders] submitted to the latter. Of the Mexicans, fifteen hundred shared the same fate. (Keller)

Like Kerr, Keller draws attention to the virility of the Texan defenders and the frailty of the Mexican attackers—the implication being if the Texans had had only one or two hundred more virile Euro-Americans on the wall, the Alamo may never have fallen. Lending itself to this logic, Keller additionally situates the battle at the Alamo within the “already known” pantheon of Classical antiquity and the U.S.’s revolutionary “progenitors”—whatever those battles were and meant, the Alamo’s symbolic meaning is every bit their equal if not more. Future chroniclers of the Alamo wholly embrace this “already known.” The primacy of Texan strength, honor, will, and sacrifice become a hallmark of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex—these moral “truths” and emotional affect emerge as the key historical markers of the event; again, treaties, legality, none of these seem to impact the moral clarity with which the Texan cause is enshrined at the Alamo. What matters, what is essential to the historiography of denial, is the purity of the emotional and moral appeals. Politics, legalities, seemingly confuse the purity of the actions of these “American” heroes.

A day earlier, on April 11, 1836 a Washington, D.C. daily, *The Globe*, published an editorial of a similar temperament. The editor(s) preface all the material from Texas with a brief paragraph lamenting the “melancholy” reports from Texas.³⁰ Like Keller, *The Globe*’s editor(s) rely on the “already known” fact of a familial bond between the Texans and US: “[our] relations and friends, kin and countrymen, are now victims of Mexican barbarity” (“Important”). Following the editor’s remarks, Sam Houston, a highly-biased voice to be certain, imagines the fall of the Alamo, highlighting the cruelty of Santa Anna and his troops:

After the fort was carried [by the Mexicans], seven men surrendered and called for Gen. Santa Anna for quarter. They were MURDERED by his order. Col. Bowie was sick in bed, and also murdered. . . . The bodies of the Americans were burned after the massacre—an alternate layer of bodies and wood, underlaid and set on fire. Lieut. Dickinson, who had a wife and child in the fort, after having fought with desperate courage, tied his child to his back, and leaped from the top of a two story building—both were killed in the fall. I have little doubt but the Alamo has fallen. Whether the above particulars are all true may be questionable... (“Important”)

³⁰ These editors went so far as to urge those returning from the Second Seminole War in Florida (1835-42) to move quickly to defend Texas (“Important”).

Houston's rendition, in spite of its final qualification that it may be pure myth, along with other imagined narratives, becomes the narrative shaping the exhibitionary complex of the Alamo.³¹ The Euro-American heroes fought with honor in the face of certain death, and as men of honor, exercised the right of honorable surrender, which was dishonorably denied. The right of proper burial was also denied the Texans. This highly un-Christian act further castigates Santa Anna and his troops. While this account also embeds the familial and moral values present in Keller's account, Houston's description additionally embeds the racial attitudes of the nineteenth century in the "already known" facts of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. The moral rightness of the Texans remains unquestioned in the face of a barbaric attack by lesser men, and again, Sam Houston as one of the key architects of the Republic of Texas also focuses the reader's attention on the moral and emotional (imagine Lieutenant Dickinson leaping to his death with his infant child strapped to his back) aspects of the fighting: good Texans, "devil-child" Mexicans. Political and economic aspirations, of which Houston had a significant stake, again are erased from the record.

In the same April 1836 issue of *The Globe*, Richard Ellis, President of the Texas Convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos,³² further advances the racial hierarchy of the Alamo's nascent exhibitionary complex. Ellis argues that the Texans faced both military and Catholic "despotism" in a struggle akin to the U.S. Revolutionary War. He makes plain Kerr's poetic connections between the U.S. and Texas. Many of the rights Ellis cites as lacking while Texas remained a part of Mexico were the very rights the "American" colonists sought in their war with England ("Important").³³ However, Ellis carefully reminded his readers that the English are fellow Euro-Americans and a "comparatively Christian and magnanimous" foe; whereas, the Mexicans are "semi-civilized, infuriate and merciless," a barbarian race, forefathers of Kipling's "devil child" ("Important"). Ellis' article exudes the biological and cultural superiority that permeated Texan and U.S. attitudes toward Mexicans whom are defined as racial others, and embeds these characteristics in the Alamo narrative. The racially superior Texans' struggle to secure sovereignty represents the noblest struggle:

The descendants of Pericles lifted up their voices to supplicate the aid of strangers in their struggle for liberty, and you, Americans, responded to their call by a zealous, active, and efficient succor. . . . Friends and brothers! we, the citizens of Texas, threatened with an indiscriminate slaughter by the Mexicans, of a complicated and cruel disposition, now in this hour of trial turn our thoughts and

³¹ Both historical and cultural texts will be discussed below that are based purely on speculation; however, the speculative has, in the case of the Alamo's fall, evolved into a generally accepted truth.

³² This was a gathering of leaders of the Texan cause where the initial documents declaring Texas' freedom were drafted; it is analogous to the U.S. Constitutional Convention in the Texan national origin story (Matovina 119).

³³ The most extensive list of grievances appears in April 9, 1836 *Albion*, a weekly tailored to British subjects living in New York City. *The Albion* reprinted Texas' Declaration of Independence—the Declaration list the following as the grievances against Mexico: no trial by jury, no public education, no state of Texas apart from Coahuila, lack of free commerce, no right to bear arms, limits on Protestantism, and limited protection from Native Americans ("Texas Declaration").

our hearts with an unwavering confidence to the land of our common nativity, and we ask you for assistance. Our numbers are few but our hearts are firm, and our nerves are strung to the high resolve of *liberty or death*. Will you, brothers and friends, refuse to do us as in the hour of your calamity was nobly done for you? and will you calmly witness the destruction of your kindred, and triumph of tyranny, and make no effort to save the one or arrest the other. It cannot, it will not be. The sainted spirit of Washington would rebuke your apathy, and could pain invade the beatitudes of heaven, would warm over the recollections of '76. ("Important")

Again, the Texan struggle rests on the "already known" facts of Classical antiquity, the forefathers of democracy and the republic, founders of Western culture. The Texan cause mirrors that of George Washington's, and Ellis implies that Washington, had he been alive, would have been on the walls of the Alamo. Embedded in the birth of the Alamo as exhibitionary complex, the revolutionary values of the U.S. comingle with the logics of Euro-American racial superiority. The Alamo, then, becomes a location of "already known" facts representative of a democratic revolution, but one by and for Euro-Americans only.

Another example of the "already known" logics of the Alamo's historiography of denial appears in an article in the April 2, 1836 *New Yorker* that also accentuates the generally accepted biological superiority of the Texan army against the Mexican forces: "These 7,000 [Texans] ought to have no great difficulty in sustaining themselves against 8,000 Mexicans. . . . [The] editor seems to think so, for he affirms 'were the number of Mexicans doubled, they will be prey to the Texans;' and triumphantly asks, 'What cares the wolf how many sheep there are?'" ("From"). The Texans possessed not only stronger moral spirits, but stronger bodies as well. Texans, like their Euro-American counterparts in the United States, were by all measures superior. The Alamo's exhibitionary complex, then, imagines its origins well-into the European past and connects itself with the origins of democracy and against barbarism. The "already known" facts of the Alamo, at least in the Alamo's narrative, connect seamlessly to Western Civilization's origins. The Mexicans become the barbarians at the gate of the West. Family, liberty, and morality constitute the Texan battle cry; these reside at the foundation of the Alamo's struggle, and it is these nationalist fantasies that become the core narratives of the "already known" public facts of the Alamo's historiography of denial.

The narrative of Euro-American superiority and honor embedded in the Alamo's "already known" facts subsequently, and quickly, comingled with the long-standing narrative of U.S. exceptionalism and expansionist politics. This sense of racial superiority, of a "natural" entitlement to land, and to the certainty of victory are the corporeal manifestation of the ideology of Manifest Destiny, an ideology that brought together Hegel's *Geist*-driven determinism of history and the sense of ownership of the land expressed in de Tocqueville's recognition of undeveloped, empty landscapes. A consistent element is the struggle of a superior nation to master both wild lands and lesser peoples (Slotkin 51). In line with this, John O'Sullivan, writing in 1845 concerning objections to Texas' entrance into the United States argues:

Why, were other reasons wanting, . . . it surely is to be found, found abundantly, in the manner in which other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves into it [the union between Texas and the United States], . . . in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and

hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.

O’Sullivan, who is credited with coining the phrase Manifest Destiny, plainly states that god wants the United States to possess Texas. Just as Kerr, Keller, and the editorial in *The Mobile Daily Commercial Register and Patriot* before, O’Sullivan invokes the familial relations between Texas and the United States, and argues to thwart this union is to thwart god’s plan for the continent and the “American” people. The Texans’ war against Mexico was a revolution for right, and subsequently provides the basis to dismiss Mexico’s claim to Texas (O’Sullivan). O’Sullivan’s addition to the Alamo’s “already knowns” is “making plain” Texas’ divine connection to the United States. The Texans themselves accentuated familial and cultural bonds; here O’Sullivan argues that the Texan cause is a natural outgrowth of the United States, a divine outgrowth. Additionally, those objecting to the annexation of Texas violate both the political and divine progress of both nations. In the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, O’Sullivan continued:

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest . . . to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High—the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere—its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens, and its congregation an Union of many Republics, comprising hundreds of happy millions, calling, owning no man master, but governed by God’s natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood—of “peace and good will amongst men.” (qtd. in J. Pratt)

O’Sullivan here mirrors John Winthrop’s earlier notion of Euro-American North America as a “light on the hill” and intermingles the Texan cause with the U.S. national narrative of providence/*Geist*-ordained transcontinental expansion. The founders of the Republic of Texas, their sympathizers, and those who have inherited its legacies, see the work of providence, a Manifest Destiny, and above all, resistance to a tyrannical and racially inferior enemy as a shared familial imperative between Texas and the United States. It is this shared legacy of individual rights and the sanctity of family that provides a complimentary narrative and seamless integration of the “already known” facts of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex into the larger U.S. historiography of denial.

A sense of divine entitlement, an unerring vision of right, and racial superiority are the markers of the foundational “already knowns” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. As already discussed, in the aftermath of the Alamo, the fortress is largely forgotten. Is it not until the nineteenth century that interest in the fort and its history reemerge. In this reemergence, however, the “already known” facts persist largely unchanged, though within the specific cultural contours of the time. It is to this Alamo Renaissance that the dissertation now turns.

Chapter Three: Norming the Historiography of Denial: The Alamo's Media "Blitz," Part I

“The West is the best.
The West is the best!
Get here, and we'll do the rest.”

—The Doors, “The End”

The initial nineteenth century historical record discussed above constitutes the roots of the Alamo's “already known” facts. The narrative of national progress and familial security readily fit within the growing, both physically and as a narrative, U.S. Additionally, the years of neglect quickly fell from memory as the Alamo emerged as a site of historical importance. Out of its era of neglect, the Alamo's narrative management and cultural dissemination occurred under the oversight of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT), an organization arising within a flurry of emerging commemoration movements across the late-nineteenth century United States.

The following chapter will offer a brief history of the DRT. Additionally, it will contextualize the DRT's role in commemorating a shared “American” and Texan identity and history. In other words, the DRT, as a representative “heritage” organization, crafts the Alamo to serve both a cultural and political end. This too will be discussed. Finally, the chapter will analyze D.W. Griffith's film *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas*. The initial historical accounts, the DRT's commemorative efforts, and Griffith's cinematic representation both deepen and perpetuate the “already knowns” constituting the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. The increasingly reified narrative repetition, cultural circulation, interconnection with U.S. narratives of family and progress, and a shared history of denial create an increasingly complex web of cultural representation solidifying the “facts” of the Alamo. It is through the oversight of the Alamo by the DRT, its crafting into an exhibitionary complex of “American” heritage, and the broad appeal of Griffith and his film, that the Alamo begins to emerge as one of the transcendent “American” icons, solidifying the broad reach of the Alamo as a location of the historiography of denial.

The Birth of the Alamo: The DRT, Heritage, and White Supremacy

As the organization responsible for the official memorialization and preservation of the Alamo, an understanding of the DRT and its origins is essential. The DRT was founded on November 6, 1891, by Miss Betty Ballinger,¹ Miss Hally Bryan,² and Mrs. Andrew Briscoe,³ all

¹ Born February 3, 1854, Ballinger descended from William Houston Jack, a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto and the recipient of the first licenses to practice law in the Republic of Texas. At the first gathering of the DRT she articulated the role of the DRT: the future of Texas “is in the hands of her sons [who,] dazzled by the splendor of the present...have forgotten the heroic deeds and sacrifices of the past. But it is not so with woman. . . . Surrounded by the history of the family life, it is her duty to keep alive the sacred fire of tradition. . . . Daughters of the Republic of Texas, our duty lies plain before us. Let us leave the future of Texas to our brothers, and claim as our province the guarding of her holy past” (qtd. in Hayes Turner). Hayes Turner goes on to state: “These were the words of a woman born in the antebellum South,

three members of Texas's aristocracy. The three founders were direct benefactors of the Texan victory over Mexico and of the system of Jim Crow. Not surprisingly, then, their organization began work to craft the history of Texas as a nation with its own revolutionary heritage. The DRT, open only to lineal descendents of individuals who served Texas prior to its admission into the United States in 1846, also imposed a morality clause for admission. The young female applications had to be "personally acceptable" to the DRT ("Mission"). Implicit, or maybe obvious, in the admission requirements blood, class, and community standing were key requirements for entry into the organization; presumably, only the finest women of Texas were admitted. Initially, the work of these women consisted of the gathering and preservation of archival materials and testimonies of the surviving founders of the Republic of Texas, including their own grandfathers, uncles, cousins, brothers, and so on (Rash). One can assume a sympathetic handling of the stories of their ancestors, those who had secured both the class and cultural privilege of these women and their families. Soon, however, their archival preservation effort became heavier. In 1894, at the Texas Veterans Association Waco Reunion, the surviving veterans of the war of 1835-1836 passed to the DRT the obligation to preserve all the Republic's memories ("Our History"). These last survivors of the war with Mexico praised the DRT:

Resolved, that one of the greatest pleasures we[, the veterans,] have enjoyed during our present reunion is the presence of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas; that we approve and admire their noble efforts to perpetuate the memories of the patriots of Texas and to prepare and preserve data for the correct history of Texas; and that we exhort them to persevere in their laudable enterprise and pray them God's help. ("Our History")

As their children, the DRT possessed the obligation to keep the "correct" history of the "revolutionary" events in Texas.

In the context of the commemoration movements of the era (discussed in greater detail below), "correct" meant sympathetic, nationalist, and in-line with the "already known" facts of the Alamo's initial historical record. It is at this point in the evolution of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex that the accounts crafted in the 1830s and 1840s reappear; the racialized

where cultural proscriptions confined 'ladies' to the traditions of family, children, domesticity, and church. Ironically, however, such women's organizations as the DRT, whose purpose was to perpetuate domestic values, encouraged women to participate in the future of Texas primarily through emphasis on improvement in education for Texas children and the maintenance of historic sites such as the Alamo and the San Jacinto battlefield" (Hayes Turner). Unmarried, Ballinger dedicated herself to the project of Texas and its "glorious" past for the entirety of her life.

² Born January 10, 1868, Bryan was grandniece of Stephen F. Austin, and her father, Guy Morrison Bryan served in both the House and Senate of Republic of Texas, as well as the U.S. Congress after statehood. She served as an early officer for the DRT and was an honorary president for life (Jones).

³ Briscoe was born August 17, 1819 in Missouri, and being from an upper-class family, she was educated in New York. She joined her family in Texas in 1836 and associated with Sam Houston. As a woman of means, she was instrumental in the establishment of the DRT (Connor).

and nationalist rhetoric of these early accounts becomes the doxology of the DRT's initial efforts at preservation, a preservation effort meant to elevate their ancestor's "accomplishments." And as noted in the previous chapter, the DRT by decree of the State of Texas became the sole overseers of the Alamo in 1905. Thus, their aging veterans/family and the State of Texas endowed the DRT with the maintenance of the history of the foundational narratives and locations of Texas. The above charges gained more solemnity when in 1907, the final six Texan "patriots" of the war with Mexico:

. . . unanimously voted for the dissolution of the [Texas Veterans Association]. But before adjourning for the last time, it was resolved that '[sic] the holy memories clinging around it should be merged into the patriotic association, The Daughters of the Republic of Texas. Upon motion, they repaired to the Presbyterian Church where without the furling of a banner or the strain of martial music these old heroes laid aside forever their badges of membership and bequeathed their memories and their deeds with an 'Undivided Texas' as a precious legacy to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, by them to be held in trust forever. ("Our History")

In essence, the dying wish of these men was for the DRT to maintain the "facts," to keep their "holy" legacies "correct" forever. The DRT become both the moral authority (as charged by the veterans in 1907) and the legal keepers (as charged by the state of Texas in 1905) of the legacy of the Alamo.

Out of this charge the DRT developed three key missions:

1) To perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved and maintained the independence of Texas. 2) To encourage historical research into the earliest records of Texas, especially those relating to the Revolution of 1835 and the events which followed; to foster the preservation of documents and relics; to encourage the publication of records of individual service of the soldiers and patriots of the Republic, and other source material for the history of Texas. 3) To promote the celebration of Texas Honor Days. To secure and memorialize all historic spots by erecting markers thereon; and to cherish and preserve the unity of Texas as achieved and established by the fathers and mothers of the Texas Revolution. ("Our Mission")

Through its project of commemoration, the DRT maintained the "already known" narrative of the war in Texas. This was not then and is not now a cynical organization, or one given to so-called revisionist history; from its founding moments to the present, it is an organization deeply committed to the preservation of Texan heritage as understood from the victor's perspective. By maintaining the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, that this is accomplished. In fact, since the DRT's initial renovation efforts, attendance at the "shrine of Texas liberty" has grown steadily. Today the Alamo is the most visited tourist destination in the state of Texas; approximately 2.5 million people annually consume the DRT's "correct" narrative of the Alamo ("Alamo Visit"). To understand the Alamo as an exhibitionary complex and site of denial, the interests of this highly-biased organization must be accounted for. The DRT "cherished" their ancestors; these patriots and author's of Texas' freedom are the George Washingtons and Thomas Jeffersons of

Texas. These are *the* founding fathers, and literally their fathers. While the project of Alamo commemoration begins here in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century, the DRT continually layers the Alamo narrative. Their linking this site to the very “American” trope of democratic progress provides a firm anchor in the emergent commemoration movement, but also the narrative elasticity to remain relevant beyond this specific historical moment (this elasticity will be discussed in later chapters). And while the DRT is the preeminent “heritage” organization in the state of Texas, for the DRT’s narrative to be fully understood, it must be contextualized within the national commemoration movements of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

Heritage

This section will discuss how the Alamo as an exhibitionary complex under the care of the DRT emerges within the U.S. commemoration movement of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. The DRT’s process of commemoration serves the purpose of integrating the Alamo as both narrative and museum into the larger U.S. nationalist framework of nation-building: the progression from “savage” to civility, the divine right to expand, and the accompanying denial of the genocidal violence. Additionally this narrative commemoration, some seventy years after the actual battle, marks the initial step in the narrative transformation of the Alamo from a static, and forgotten historical event, into a flexible, constantly transforming cultural symbol of both Texas and the United States. Kirk Savage, writing about the commemoration of the U.S. past, argues that during the late-nineteenth century, the preservation of “American” heritage fell largely to women, women very much in the service of white supremacy (139, 150). The DRT became the organizational caretakers of Texas’ cultural and historical past, a past of imperial warfare and slavery. Additionally, this is the task the dying veteran’s passed on to them with the added admonition of valorizing these men and their victories. Rather than seek out a radically distinct history of Texas and the Alamo, this section will discuss how the DRT sought to replicate the “already known” facts of the event, albeit with a special emphasis on the domestic. Speaking of the logic of the exhibitionary complex Tony Bennett states: “Yet what else do practices of historical restoration aspire to but the production of a site – a building, say, or a township – which will coincide as closely as possible, brick for brick and paling for paling, with an earlier model?” (128). The DRT, as they took over the restoration and perpetuation of the long-neglected Alamo fortress, sought not only to rebuild it “brick by brick,” but also to endow the building and its history with the pre-existing stories told by the Texan veterans, stories of honor and patriotism. The DRT saw no need to reinvent an ancestral history that, for them, already existed; they turned to narratives and records discussed in the previous chapter in the interest of preserving their ancestor’s “correct” history.

The DRT emerged at a time when the United States busily invented a historical narrative for itself. The late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century marked the end of the transcontinental expansion and the beginning of the United States as a foreign imperial power. The continental Frontier had closed, and an interest in what made the U.S. distinctly “American” began to emerge. Shari Huhndorf has explored this period:

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Michael Kammen writes, ‘American memory began to take form as a self-conscious phenomenon.’ The production of memory and the creation of tradition during this era, prompted in part by the

dislocations and losses of the Civil War, showed the dominant American culture struggling to define itself as a unified entity. . . . The history of America, a nation born from the genocide of Native peoples and built on slave labor, undermined the values of liberty and equality the nation claimed to hold dear. A presence that haunted (and continues to haunt) the American cultural imagination, Native America challenged European's occupancy of the continent and, thus, threatened the legitimacy of the nation itself. . . . To answer these questions, the dominant culture first had to recognize that European America had a particular history. In 1895, a government report urging the protection of antiquities, titled 'What the United States Government Has Done for History,' began by lamenting that 'it was not until about 1875 that the Government and the people of the United States seemed to realize that our country has a history.' The manifestation of this new realization included increasing numbers of public historical displays as well as large-scale commemorations of the white nation's foundational events. (23-24)

The military project of Manifest Destiny was concluding; god's plan for the continent was coming to fruition. And evidently the question of "what's next?," or "what's it all mean?" entered the public imaginary. In the interest of answering this question, commemorative groups like the DRT, as well as the government, began crafting a public record in the form of monuments and public events. The DRT, for example, quickly embraced the "self-conscious" project of preserving the event and narrative called the Alamo and Texas' "white foundational events." Kirk Savage additionally argues that the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century process of commemorating the "American" past stumbled upon a newly expansive "We the People." The Civil War had ended with emancipation; the West annexed from Mexico included a sizeable population of Mexicans. In theory, "We the People" now included a new population of non-white citizens (5).

Regardless of the new demographic realities of the U.S. population, Huhndorf stresses above that "objective" or ambivalent renderings of the meaning of "America" was not the aim. Just as the broader nation sought to deny the guilt of conquest, the DRT claimed an equally heroic narrative of revolution and progress (and ultimately exclusion). This mollifying played out in the appropriation of the narratives of Kerr, Keller, and the other champions of Texas, the "already known" facts of civility's triumph over the savage, of prosperity over poverty, of white over black/red/brown. The racial violence of the nation disappeared or was recast as the nation was memorialized: slavery, for instance, came to be seen as "kind of golden age of race relations, built on intimate bonds between blacks and whites: the bond of mammy and child, of young master and his black playmates, of soldier and body servant" (Savage 5,157). This narrative of tranquil race relations defies the realities on the ground; this is the era of some of the most extreme racial violence in the history of the United States. Thus, to maintain narrative purity, the "already knows" of the United States, as well as Texas, required the evacuation of the grotesque acts of violence that permitted the transcontinental expansion. The DRT embraced this historical amnesia and displayed no compulsion to call into question the origins of Texas.

This crafting of an origin myth cannot be separated from the DRT's status as a woman's organization in the late-nineteenth century. "Personally acceptable" middle- and upper-class women operated in the sphere of what was collectively defined as the domestic. In a white, patriarchal world, women were allowed to be the keepers of culture and managers of the private realms of family. This logic, the need to observe the rules assigning them to a domestic realm,

this interest in national domestication, permeates the DRT's justification for its work preserving the Alamo, the battle, and the contours of Texas' heritage. Thus, the DRT imbued the Alamo's "already knowns" with the importance of Euro-American women's roles in empire building, values and practices shaped along side the military conquests of the Southeastern and Western United States during 1830s to 1850s. In other words, it was their obligation to refine the protective military actions of their men (Kaplan, *Anarchy* 24-25). Amy Kaplan cites an essay, "Life on the Rio Grande," that appeared in an 1847 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*. The essay, set after Texas' entry into the United States, depicts an idyllic, pastoral rendering of a prosperous white family. The family represents both the successful outcomes of the men's military conquest (both the 1830s Texan conflict and the 1846-1848 Mexican-American War) and the women's transmission of civil society into what had been an untamed land. The scene, "represents U.S. imperialism not through war and conquest" but through the:

. . . especially important role [of women] on the frontier, where "liberty is ever degenerating into license and man is prone to abandon his sentiments and follow his passions. It is woman's high mission, her prerogative and duty to counsel, to sustain, ay, to control him." *Godey's* happily concluded that if these "sentiments of a Texan" are "acted upon . . . that state (or states) will soon be among the brightest in our galaxy." (Kaplan, *Anarchy* 23-24)

Thus, the role of women in conquest of Texas is, according to Kaplan:

. . . complexly intermeshed [with the masculine role of military conquest]; that "woman's true sphere" was in fact a mobile and mobilizing outpost that transformed conquered foreign lands into the domestic sphere of the family and nation. At the same time, the focus on domesticity could work to efface all traces of violent conflict, as the foreign qualities of the Rio Grande magically disappeared into the familiar landscape of New England [or anywhere Euro-Americans built their homes and raised families]." (Kaplan, *Anarchy* 24-25)

In the case of Texas, the DRT as proprietors of the Alamo's and Texas' "already knowns" introduced civil society and the domestic into the emergent civilization. Harnessing the baser compulsions of their men and completely erasing the vestiges of Mexicans and Native Americans, the DRT managed Texas' cultural heritage with an eye toward the domestic benefits of the conquest. Families would be safe. Society would be stable so homes, schools, and churches could thrive. The victorious Texans now rooted in a genteel narrative of moral restraint and benevolence rather than violence, became the heroes of the DRT's commemorative imaginary. This erasure of violence and accentuation of post-conquest prosperity, according to Kaplan, exists in a shared framework where women domesticate the land men have violently conquered: "The rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and that of domesticity share a vocabulary that turns imperial conquest into spiritual regeneration in order to efface internal conflict or external resistance in visions of geopolitical domination as global harmony" (*Anarchy* 31). The DRT did not need to look very far to find a language of progress denying the role of violence and questionable legal tactics deployed by the Texans. The "already known" facts created by the editorials, news reports, and fictional accounts of the Alamo from the 1830s and 1840s provided the historical basis for their work. Having been charged by the state of Texas and the veterans of

the war to manage the Alamo, the DRT picked up this language of destiny and religiosity as they capitalized on the national craze to commemorate the nation's genesis to create their exhibitionary complex. Thus, the DRT continued the sanitizing of Texas' histories of conquest by repeating the rhetoric of "American" progress and development that began with the Puritan's "light on the hill," framed the American Revolution, then marched West, up to the walls of the Alamo. The DRT's rhetoric reassured the displaced Kellers of the previous chapter that they could now safely return home. The anxiety of violence, displacement, and the threat of war disappears behind a rhetoric crafted by the gentle hands of demure women who safely populate and prosper upon the Texan landscape. Their homes and bodies are no longer under threat. This domestic logic becomes foundational to the "already knowns" of the Alamo's growing exhibitionary complex.

Additionally, the DRT's privileging of the spiritual aspects of the Texan conquest of Tejas served a fundamentally important purpose in the recrafting of the commemoration of Texas. Reconsider the rhetoric of war discussed in the previous chapter: the Texans fought for the preservation of individual rights, the protection of family, and ultimately the furtherance of god's plan for North America. These lofty values represent the most humane aspects of people. Add to these the DRT's crafting of a "correct" history of their forefathers, the establishing of their own lineal right to the land, and the imposing of democratic and Christian values becomes the paramount to the Alamo commemoration efforts. The Alamo specifically, and Texas in general, become "both historically and symbolically [locations that provide] the ideal site for staging" the "fantasy of white racial regeneration" (Huhndorf 146). Again, reconsider the sorry account of Keller as she flees Texas; the sacrifice of the Alamo's defenders and the final victory at San Jacinto permitted not only Keller, but every Euro-American immigrant in Texas, the possibility of personal and familial prosperity, no matter the previous losses. Texas secured open pathways for returns and new arrivals to fulfill god's Manifest Destiny. However, as Huhndorf writes, these values, this regeneration, sprang from a deep commitment to one of the most virulent forms of white supremacy practiced in the United States. Huhndorf writes about Forrest Carter's *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (later re-titled *Gone to Texas*). In this novel, Texas represents the ideal site for both white racial regeneration and a historiography of denial given its unique racial history in the formation of the United States:

Texas, of course, was acquired by the United States in an imperial war against Mexico, and for many this victory seemed to demonstrate white superiority. In the following decades, Texas remained remote from the American establishment. Through the late 1860s, vigilantism served as the primary mode of social control. Here, guerrilla bands held sway, and the Klan found a stronghold; both groups kept nonwhites in check through violent terrorist campaigns. For these reasons, during the postbellum years, Southern nationalism reemerged and flourished in Texas. Equally important, though, is the mythological significance of the state, including its identity in the American cultural imagination as the quintessence of the West. (146-147)

Despite continuing acts of racist violence across turn of the century Texas, the DRT's project was undeterred. The Texans fought, both in the past and present, to create and then sustain the ways of life that benefited the DRT, their children, grandchildren, and so on, and answered providence's/*Geist's* charge for both the continent and history. This is a case of the ends

justifying the means. Violence, especially violence directed at people the DRT likely viewed as merely servants, or, more ominously, violence excused as necessary for the greater good of civilization. Robert Rydell argues that in this era to satisfy the public required only an emphasis on progress and a warning of the dangers of the alternative: “the turn of the century was obsessed with demonstrating the distance travelled from ‘savagery’ to ‘civilization’” (19). For the DRT the possibility of Texan defeat promised only terror for the families of Euro-Americans, a return to the frightful flight of Keller. Subsequently, subduing Texas’ enemies, both during the actual battle and in its aftermath demanded celebration. The reframing of the violence against Texas’ enemies as regenerative violence becomes another fundamental “already known” in the developing Alamo exhibitionary complex.

The DRT’s narrative control of the Alamo story was not a disembodied practice—they possessed the museum, a physical space in which to ground their story. As an organization committed to commemoration and education, the DRT built on the emergent practice of the public museum serving as a location that defined “America” and provided a visible measure of progress. In fact, the late-nineteenth century in the United States saw a broad expansion of public displays of “America.” The DRT joined this move toward public displays that defined “America” within the distinct end-of-the-century cultural ideas of “progress” and “success.” As Rydell notes above, each was defined in terms of what it was not. Writing about the World’s Fairs of 1876 and 1893, Huhndorf thus argues that these events self-consciously defined the U.S. as a nation by and for Euro-Americans while concealing the very problematic and bloody racial history of the nation’s birth. The constructed distinction between Euro-American progress and the “primitive” nature of the non-Euro-American “served to glorify the accomplishments of a technologically inventive European [American] society celebrated throughout the fair” (Huhndorf 30). While on a much smaller scale (at least in terms of physical footprint, though it can easily be argued the Alamo survives and thrives in ways that *no* World’s Fair has), the Alamo museum arises in this context. And like the World’s Fairs, the Alamo served a disciplining function specific to the Texan (DRT) cause:

For most viewers, these [World’s Fairs] carried profound political implications reflecting on the relations between Native American and European America. In the 1870s [and earlier in Texas in the 1830s], European America remained immersed in wars of conquest in the West. To those few who questioned the justice of this conquest, the exposition promised the dominance of (white) civilization over (Native [, Mexican, and African]) savagery was an inevitable part of the ‘universal law of progress,’ the ‘manifest destiny’ of white Americans. By indicating the progress (rather than European-American acquisitiveness) underlay the conquest, the exhibits also conveniently deflected difficult ethical questions about centuries of slaughter of Native peoples [Mexicans, Africans, and many other groups to come] and usurpation of their resources. (Huhndorf 31)

The Alamo exhibitionary complex, like the World’s Fairs, disciplined the viewer to believe in the “already known” facts of the natural and divine right of Euro-American conquest. Thus, rather than an actual conquest, the events that expanded the United States from Atlantic to Pacific were the result of “universal laws.” The Alamo and the Texans’ struggle represented providence’s hand on earth. Additionally, once grounded in the exhibitionary complex these universals become seen as proof-positive of the natural order of Texas. The progress of Texas,

the introduction of democracy, modern industry, and social stability all “proved” the facts argued by the DRT.

In addition to creating the Alamo museum, the DRT provided multiple narratives that shaped the Alamo’s meaning. Thus, they perpetuated the “already knowns” of the exhibitionary complex. Their constant retelling of the Alamo story added additional layers and weight to the Alamo’s “historic” record, the “proof” of the DRT’s story. One example is the DRT’s 1916 tract *The Alamo: A Memorial to Texas Heroism*, a tract published to “perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved and maintained the independence of Texas” (Winkler 3). The DRT asserts that the Alamo represents “one of the world’s glorious monuments to Anglo-Saxon courage and devotion to duty” (Winkler 4). Here again, their narrative centers on the values of the defenders, their personal acts of courage, and the progress secured by the Texan victory. The political and cultural contexts of their actions, and the eventual outcomes for *all* white Texans, are *all* that matter. The accounts from Mexico, or the legacies of a reintroduced slave trade,⁴ the consequences of Euro-American expansion on the Natives of the Southwest,⁵ and the displacement of Tejanos⁶ did not merit consideration in the DRT’s narrative of the Alamo, and as a result disappear from the “already knowns.” The DRT’s exhibitionary complex

⁴ In 1829 Mexico outlawed slavery; however, as early as 1829, Stephen Austin negotiated with the Mexican government a compromise allowing families from the U.S. South to immigrate with their slaves intact. Rather than calling it slavery it was termed “permanent indentured servitude” (Clark and Hewitt 315). By the 1840s and 50s, Texas was viewed as one of the most barbaric places for a slave (Clark and Hewitt 583). Thus, only twenty years after Texas’ freedom, the liberty of Africans and African Americans had all but disappeared, casting a shadow on the universal value of the Alamo as “shrine of Texas liberty.”

⁵ In *Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers* (2002), Robert M. Utley adroitly captures the racial attitudes imported into Texas as a result of the Euro-American victory: “In his inaugural address, [President of Texas M.B.] Lamar had called for a war against the Indians ‘that will admit of no compromise and have no termination except in their total extinction or total expulsion.’ . . . ‘Extermination or extinction’ had been Lamar’s war cry” (24). This resulted in what essentially became a war of extinction waged against Indigenous cultures by the Texans (and later the United States) (26-36). Utley continues: “For all their preoccupations with Indians, Rangers never freed themselves of the old animosities toward Mexicans. The Alamo and Goliad dimmed somewhat from the Anglo Texan memory, but racial and cultural prejudice remained as strong as ever. Stephen Austin’s immigrants had brought intolerance with them nearly three decades earlier. People of color, whether Indian or Mexican, were inferior, their lives of less worth. The Rangers embodied the values of Anglo Texans, and when they encountered Indians or Mexicans they carried them into effect” (94).

⁶ Gary Clayton Anderson concludes in *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (2005), by recounting the estimated numbers of Native Americans in Texas prior to its war with Mexico: approximately 35,000; he also estimates the number of Tejanos and Mexicans as well: around 18,000. By 1875 most Native Americans had been killed or forced out of Texas. The Tejano/Mexican community had also been displaced by the 1860s. This was the result of a the long-standing tradition in Texas of unchecked racialized violence, a violence justified by the rendering of people of color as the cause of trouble, and their removal the only solution (G. Anderson 359-361). As Anderson concludes: “This violence, or the fear of it, was the tool used to cleanse Texas of unwanted ethnic groups” (G. Anderson 360).

consistently reinforces this. The Alamo's moral and civic import is reduced to individual choices and actions (bravery, sacrifice, and love of nation); the discourses of race and other meta-level questions are written out of the record.

This 1916 tract, with its overt racial overtones, remains the cornerstone upon which the DRT built the contemporary narrative of the Alamo. It is nearly impossible to miss the perceived sanctity of the Texans' struggle and sacrifice. Walking into the Alamo building today, a visitor is greeted by the text on a donation box: "The Alamo receives no tax money, neither do they [sic] charge admission to the Shrine of Texas Liberty. We appreciate your donation." The sign on the front door reads: "Be silent, friend, here heroes died to blaze a trail for other men." A final reminder then greets visitors at the front desk just beyond the front door: "This is a shrine. Be quiet please." The message of the museum is clear: what happened at the Alamo over the course of thirteen days in March of 1836 was a holy war, a crusade, for liberty. Those who fell at the Alamo were holy warriors on liberty's mission. The grounds of the museum are thus sacred grounds; the dead martyrs, and their cause righteous. The DRT's accentuation of the positives, at least from the Euro-American perspective, marks a continuity of the historiography of denial.⁷ The "shrine of Texas liberty" embraces the divine rhetoric of Manifest Destiny as a means to both forget and justify the horrific violence against people of color that occurred in Texas. It is in this context that the Alamo's exhibitionary complex next emerges in the nascent mass media format of film.

The Alamo in Popular Culture: D.W. Griffith and the Birth of the Alamo as Pop Culture Icon

Just as the DRT cemented the place of the Alamo in its Texas, home, so the new medium of film began to establish the Alamo as a part of the national exhibitionary complex. The 1915 film *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas*, conceived and produced by D.W. Griffith,

⁷ Uncritical commemoration represents what Ranajit Guha calls "bad faith historiography." This "bad faith" manifests in two distinct ways, though both are contained within liberalism's narrative of improvement, and key to a historiography of denial. Cultural practices that "document and display" colonial domination as a force of improvement, modernization, and civility converge with the colonialist's assertion that "pre-liberal" societies (nineteenth century Mexico in this discussion) lacked the fundamental idiom of improvement: liberal governance (Guha, *Dominance* 80-82). Thus, within the Texan model of the 1830s, the settlers represented individuals importing a measure of civilization to a desolate landscape—the "empty wilderness" of de Tocqueville's, and later Perry Miller's, imaginary colonial American landscape (P. Miller 11-15). Texans sought to continue the progress upon which the U.S. thrived and codified in its Constitution. Texans brought modernization, not imperial violence, and liberal government, not conquest. These two imperial perspectives converge within historiography, cultural texts, and so forth in a dialectic relationship maintaining the image of Western innocence and non-Western need: both Hegel's historiography and Kipling's "White Man's Burden." The Alamo as a national symbol, then, possesses the capital to always remind individuals of the price Americans must pay and the effort the U.S. must expend when threatened from abroad—even though, the Alamo was more about an internal threat to Mexico's sovereignty. However, the story of Texan heroism and superiority is the innocent narrative created and re-created by the Alamo in the historiography of denial of the United States.

promotes the narrative of Texan glory and Mexican savagery that is “both history lesson and rousting entertainment” (*Martyrs* VHS box). Griffith’s images created a new, visual lexicon for the Alamo’s fall, a lexicon that would be replicated in form, if not content, across the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. Griffith endows the film with the “already known” historical fantasies of empire that compliment the DRT’s emerging local exhibitionary complex. These images then, added themselves to the established, indisputable “facts” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas (1915) Précis

(Before shifting to the specifics of the film’s Précis, it is important to justify the detail with which this, and the following films, are summarized. The exhibitionary complex builds on established “already knowns” of an event. In the case of the Alamo, as a subject in at least four Hollywood films and numerous made-for-TV docudramas and documentaries, these accounts represent key vehicles that perpetuate the “already knowns.” Additionally, the films also allow for the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex to accommodate the specific historical and cultural concerns of the era of the film’s release. The detailed summaries establish the repeating tropes of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex and provide for an informed discussion of their culturally specific meanings, meanings that enable the Alamo’s persistence as one of the key cultural icons of the U.S.)

Griffith’s film begins with a statement of the immediate cause of the war: Santa Anna ignoring the Constitution of 1824 and circumscribing the rights of “liberty loving” Americans; additionally, Santa Anna “failed to reckon with the undaunted valor of the hardy American pioneers of that age—an age that wrote large on the pages of history the names of Crockett, Bowie, Travis, Dickinson, Houston, and ‘Silent’ Smith” (*Martyrs*).

After the introductory text, the film’s first images reveal the “despotic and vain” Santa Anna (Walter Long) quartered within the walls of an ahistorically Baroque Alamo surrounded by Mexican soldiers (*Martyrs*). A text panel informs the viewer that “under the dictator’s rule the honor and life of American womanhood was held in contempt. Continued insults of Santa Anna’s troops caused constant rebellion among the few American colonists” (*Martyrs*). The film verifies this on the streets of San Antonio, streets filled with drunken, loafing Mexican soldiers. These soldiers accost a Euro-American man identified as an “old Irish veteran” of the War of 1812 and his young, blond daughter. After this affront, an extremely tall, much taller than any of the Mexicans, Euro-American male confronts the offending Mexicans; he must, however, back down given that the Mexicans are both armed and outnumber him almost fifty to one. The film moves to the somber home of the Old Irish Veteran; he unfurls an American flag and laments how the flag used to provide a measure of protection, but not in Mexico (*Martyrs*).

Next the film introduces the Dickinson family. Mrs. Dickinson (Ora Carew), while walking the streets of San Antonio, suffers indignity after indignity at the hands of a Mexican officer. She shoves him aside. Goaded by his subordinates, the officer follows Mrs. Dickinson through the streets. He corners her in her home’s doorway, makes a suggestive remark, and Mrs. Dickinson slaps him. Once freed from the unwanted attention, she enters her home, and a text panel states, “Chivalrous Tennessean blood was up” (*Martyrs*). Captain Dickinson (Fred Burns), Mrs. Dickinson’s husband, plans to avenge the insult by making an example of the offending Mexican officer. As the discussion between Mrs. and Captain Dickinson transpires, the film cuts to one more scene of insult: a company of Mexican soldiers harass a Texan woman out walking

her newborn baby. After this scene, Captain Dickinson grabs his pistol, assures his wife that nothing will happen, and then leaves the house over the strenuous objections of Mrs. Dickinson. Captain Dickinson leaves and cautiously pursues the Mexican officer. As he searches the town, he confronts groups of Mexican soldiers, who in spite of their superior numbers all stop their festivities and skulk away. Dickinson eventually locates the officer, and publically kills him. After his arrest, as punishment Santa Anna orders the seizure of the Texans' weapons. The Texans perceive this as a serious provocation (*Martyrs*).

As this drama is unfolding for Dickinson, Davy Crockett (Allan Sears) and James Bowie (Alfred Paget) conclude a meeting where they resolve to "stand by the cause" of Texas (*Martyrs*). Meanwhile, "Silent" Smith (Sam De Grasse) reads Santa Anna's decree concerning the disarming of the Texans. While reading a Mexican soldier also reads it, and laughs at Smith. Immediately after this scene, Mexican troops begin searching every "American" home for weapons. The veteran of 1812 is again shown; the much younger Mexicans shove the aged-veteran around his home. As they approach the room where Crockett and Bowie reside, a warning concerning the approaching Mexicans arrives. The men rush to hide their weapons; the Mexicans enter and are easily duped, leaving the hidden cache in the possession of the Texans (*Martyrs*).

After the weapons confiscation, "Silent" Smith informs the old Irish veteran and his daughter that once Santa Anna departs San Antonio, the Texans have a plan. Both the veteran and his daughter jump for joy over the news. Meanwhile on the streets of San Antonio, a Euro-American couple is harassed—the male punches a Mexican who refuses to leave his female companion alone. A text box informs that the "Americans," now unarmed, remain indoors in the interest of avoiding "insults" (*Martyrs*). At this point in the film, Santa Anna departs San Antonio believing the Texans to be "overawed" with his military power (*Martyrs*). Santa Anna leaves San Antonio under the command of General Martin Perfecto de Cos. And almost immediately, the Texans revolt and quickly defeat the Mexican forces. A text box recounts the "American magnanimity": the Texans allow General Cos to depart with his sword so long as he never again takes up arms against Texas (*Martyrs*). However, a significant number of the Mexicans remain in San Antonio after Cos' defeat. In the aftermath of the defeat, the Mexicans demonstrate a new understanding of their place in the social order: they step aside when the Texans walk by, they bow respectfully for the women, keep their hands to themselves, and are generally subdued (*Martyrs*).

Subsequently, Cos reports the defeat to Santa Anna, and Santa Anna vows he will "crush" Texas (*Martyrs*). "Silent" Smith, acting as a spy, overhears Santa Anna's proclamation. Meanwhile back at the Alamo, Bowie falls ill, and Colonel Travis (John Dillon) arrives to assume command. This shift in leadership produces some discord among the Texan defenders. It is Davy Crockett who bridges the discord, reminding the factions that they share the cause of Texan liberty. This resolves the discord. Suddenly, "Silent" Smith returns to the Alamo and informs the defenders of Santa Anna's pending attack. Upon hearing the news, they resolve "in the name of liberty to never surrender" (*Martyrs*). The film recounts the arming and fortification of the Alamo, as well as heartfelt embraces between husbands, wives, and children. Santa Anna arrives with this message: "If you refuse to surrender the Alamo, every man shall be put to the sword" (*Martyrs*). Travis' response is a cavalier, "If Santa Anna wants the Alamo, let him come and take it" (*Martyrs*).

As tension builds at the Alamo, the film jumps to the "Texas Convention many miles away" (*Martyrs*). Sam Houston (Tom Wilson) has just signed the Texas Declaration of

Independence, signaling Texas' official separation from Mexico. The film then returns to the battle at the Alamo. Santa Anna's hubris is evident at the battle's outset. The first day of battle ends with astronomical Mexican casualties; inside the Alamo, the men kill with great skill as women work in the background reloading rifles. At the end of the day, the Texans celebrate the Mexican retreat. The film jumps to the tenth day of the siege. Travis informs his men that unless they surrender or attempt escape, death is the only outcome for the Texans. Travis delivers his "line-in-the-sand" speech, and all, save one, of the Alamo's defenders cross the line, choosing death. Santa Anna's attack resumes. The Texans repel the Mexicans who suffer significant casualties. Travis sends "Silent" Smith on a desperate mission to Sam Houston seeking reinforcements. Smith makes his rounds wishing the defenders well, knowingly saying his final good-byes (*Martyrs*).

Then according to the film, four thousand additional Mexican forces arrive to aid Santa Anna. Meanwhile, Smith makes his escape and meets Houston advancing on the Alamo "in defiance of the Texas Convention" (*Martyrs*). Houston and his soldiers resume their march for the Alamo. Back at the Alamo, the situation takes a turn for the worse. The Mexicans locate a secret passage into the Alamo and secure their artillery batteries, beginning a constant bombardment of the Alamo. The final Mexican assault advances under duress; Mexican officers shoot men trying to retreat. As the Mexicans breach the walls, a mother is killed as her two small children watch; the remaining women and children rush inside the Alamo. The Mexicans overrun the Alamo, and slaughter ensues. Men, women, and children all fall under the Mexican sword. A young blond-haired child is pulled from a hiding spot and impaled on a sword. Bowie dies with this black-faced slave sitting on the floor reloading his rifles. Santa Anna and the Mexicans finally triumph, though at great cost to the Mexican army (*Martyrs*).

After his victory, Santa Anna takes great interest in the surviving daughter of the veteran of 1812. He takes her as his personal prize. Santa Anna releases Mrs. Dickinson and her child, ordering her to "Go tell the rebellious ones what happens to traitors" (*Martyrs*). Mrs. Dickinson delivers the news of the Alamo's defeat to Houston; less than a day's march from the Alamo, Houston orders his forces to San Jacinto to confront Santa Anna. Meanwhile, Santa Anna engages in an orgy and drug binge. He attempts to seduce his white female captive; she resists. Also at this time, "Silent" Smith arrives in the Mexican camp, pretends to be deaf, and proceeds to spy on the Mexicans. He learns their plans of attack, escapes with Santa Anna's female captive, and takes his news to Houston. With the Mexican battle plan in hand, the Mexicans engaging in their afternoon siesta, and Santa Anna continuing in his orgy, Houston attacks to "avenge the Alamo" (*Martyrs*). The Mexican army collapses. Santa Anna briefly escapes disguised as a common soldier. "Silent" Smith recognizes him and turns him over to Houston. Houston offers Santa Anna his life in return for Texas. Santa Anna agrees to the Texans' terms. One of the final scenes shows Santa Anna signing away Texas to Houston. The film's conclusion juxtaposes the joy felt by "Silent" Smith and his wife-to-be with the heartache of the widow Dickinson. The final text box concludes that "on the martyrdom of those fallen heroes was built the 'Lone Star State'" (*Martyrs*). The final montage reviews the flags that have flown over the state: the 1824 Flag, the Lone Star flag, the battle flag of the Confederacy, and finally the flag of the United States (*Martyrs*).

Analysis

Griffith comes to his Alamo film already well-situated as an advocate of Manifest Destiny and Euro-American racial superiority. As a film maker, Griffith is best known for his other 1915 release, *The Birth of a Nation*. The film *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas* represents a minor film within his oeuvre. However, as an early entry into the mass marketing of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, and as a work furthering the historiography of denial, *Martyrs* embodies the values of the turn-of-the-century United States. The film addresses the anxieties of a growing empire as the U.S. expanded beyond North America; the film also answers those who would look back into the U.S.'s past and perceive racist policies in national expansion. Additionally, *Martyrs of the Alamo*, given its concluding homage to the Confederacy, shares the racial logics of *The Birth of a Nation*. *The Birth of a Nation* reveals much about the national discourse of race in the early-nineteenth century, as well Griffith's racial ideology. Clyde Taylor argues:

If *The Birth of a Nation* is an epic, it is an epic of White supremacy. As propaganda, *The Birth of a Nation*, accomplished the significant feat of transposing the natural myth of the South into terms congruent with the mythology of White American nationalism. In Griffith's inscription, this myth rehearses Christian eschatology in national terms. Its basic narrative rhythm is this: Eden established, lost, and restored. From the opening title, the Edenic scene is established, as well as its fundamental threat: "the introduction of the African to American shores laid the seeds of national tragedy." (19-20)

The United States, like the DRT's Texas, represented the promise of Eden temporarily disrupted by a "savage" other. Robert Lang offers this: "Griffith proposes the idea that the unity of the country is the most important thing, and this is to be bought at the price of subordinating the blacks" (11). Thus, Griffith's work casts the non-white as the catalyst of national decline, and their subordination as the pathway to a more secure nation; in *The Birth of a Nation* the focal point is on the African/African American subordination. The root of "tragedy" is recast as the Mexican in *Martyrs of the Alamo* and vanquishing them is the solution. In both texts, it is the Euro-American and, quite literally, *his* domination of the lesser races that ultimately saves both nation and family. It is this logic that is (re)embedded in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex.

Martyrs of the Alamo echoes the narrative of white fear that is omnipresent in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. Like the Alamo's historical record before, and what would come after, the film introduces the viewer to the putative causes of the war: Santa Anna rejects democracy in favor of dictatorship and thwarts the progress of "liberty loving Americans who had built up the Texan colony . . ." (*Martyrs*). Even though Santa Anna proved victorious at the Alamo, the ultimate greatness of the Alamo's defenders, men with an "undaunted valor," shows through as Texas ultimately carries the day (*Martyrs*). These men at the center of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, fight for virtue and honor, again centering these moral values over any geo-political concerns of the Alamo's actual history. Griffith's film even implies that the Mexican forces under Santa Anna violated the honor of "American" women, thus threatening the sanctity of marriage and family. Questions of the legality of the Texans' actions under Mexican law recede behind scenes of implied rape and threat to the virtuous white women, a threat leveled by non-white men (*Martyrs*). As briefly discussed in the film's Précis, a father, the "old Irish Patriot of the War of 1812," cannot protect his daughter from the lascivious Mexican. In one of the film's earliest scenes, this man, a veteran of a war that ultimately secured the U.S.

independence from European powers (and an elderly man, to boot) must submit to young Mexican soldiers who shove the aged-veteran around his home and grope his daughter. The “old Irish Patriot” reflects on an earlier time, when the American flag provided “Americans” with respect and protection; Griffith makes clear, such is obviously no longer the case. Additionally, Mrs. Dickinson, of “chivalrous Tennessean blood,” also must submit to unwanted attention from Mexicans (*Martyrs*). To be very clear, both the young daughter and Mrs. Dickinson dress conservatively and act with proper decorum. Griffith, through the medium of film, introduces to a wider audience a visual representation of the Alamo’s history, a history that had only existed in print and had been largely forgotten. The Alamo’s exhibitionary complex “went” mass media, and the first cinematic representation of the film introduced the U.S. to the notion that the defenders of the Alamo fought to protect the most defenseless: the elderly, women, and children. Under Mexican rule, Texas represents a place where the threat of rape permeates the daily lives of Euro-American women; familial security proved impossible. The Texan war against Mexico restored the security necessary to introduce both progress and civilization into a dangerous and savage land. Thus, the motive for the Texan rebellion and the immediate cause of the battle at the Alamo lies in the protection of Euro-American womanhood. The film, like Mrs. Keller’s post-defeat letter, is an additional text that shifts the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex to a moral register, away from politics or economics and into the private realm of the domestic—the racism of the Texans and the political complexities, as in the earliest news accounts of the battle, are buried within the historiography of denial.

Building the moral case against Mexico, Griffith’s Alamo narrative shows both run-of-the-mill Mexican soldiers dishonoring Euro-American women, and Santa Anna displaying his character as “an inveterate drug fiend, . . . also famous for his shameful orgies” (*Martyrs*). After the fall of the Alamo, and in “keeping with his character,” he takes the young daughter of the now dead “old Irish Veteran” and attempts to seduce her. She, of course, resists (*Martyrs*). Santa Anna’s, and the rest of the Mexicans’, behavior represents an additional buttressing to the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. Santa Anna represents the Mexican aristocracy; he is in, theory, from the finest class of Mexicans. His attempts to rape Euro-American women, his possession of a harem, and his drug use are all in sharp contrast to that of the honorable Euro-American men. The film reinforces the exhibitionary complex’s logic that the most common, working-class stock of Euro-American men possess finer moral characters, and are more fit to rule, than the best of Mexican society. The film reinforces this when prior to the siege at the Alamo, the Texans defeated Cos’ garrison in San Antonio; the Texans allow the defeated Mexicans to choose either to depart or remain. A significant number of Mexicans remain; however, the film makes clear that once under white rule, the lascivious Mexican behavior ceases. As the Mexicans are subdued, the rule of Anglo law, both moral and political, radically changes the social order (*Martyrs*). Like the emerging historical narrative under the care of the DRT, Griffith assures his viewer that the Texan victory promises security and morality; the repetition of this message ensures its centrality at the heart of the growing Alamo exhibitionary complex. A Mexican victory promises the overthrow of a moral society, and this threat also emerges as a key “already known” fact of the war and exhibitionary complex.

This is the heritage the DRT sought to enshrine: heroism, valor, defending women and children, confronting tyranny, and so on. Their ancestors, the men who fought for the Republic of Texas, to secure the future prosperity of their descendents, fought to extend the promise of “America” to the Euro-American colonists seeking opportunity in Texas. These values receive the greatest reinforcement during the penultimate battle at the Alamo. By the tenth day of the

siege, it is clear to Colonel Travis that death is inevitable; surrender or escape, however, remain options. Travis, in the first of many cinematic “line-in-the-sand” speeches, insists he will stay and challenges those men with him: “Those who wish to die like heroes and patriots, cross the line to me” (*Martyrs*). All but one of the men cross the line. This action reinforces the convictions of the Texans; earlier in the film these men defend the honor of their wives, and with their final choice, they elect to die in order to secure a better future for their families and other Euro-Americans, as Huhndorf argues above, to “regenerate” Euro-American society. Again inscribed in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, the heroic character of the Texan defenders becomes the fundamental “already known” shaping the facts the film’s audiences consume.

The final battle takes place as the defender’s wives and daughters witness the actions and choices of their men. These heroes willingly accept the fate of death to ensure the proper order of their nation, a nation where those within the Alamo are free to move about their community, holding their heads up, knowing their families are safe and prosperity ensured. The justification for the fight against Mexican savagery becomes more clear through Griffith’s depiction of the storming of the Alamo. Once the Mexicans breach the walls, they massacre not only the soldiers, but also defenseless women and children (*Martyrs*). Thus, Griffith’s narrative of the Alamo strictly reinforces the notion of the Texan defender as righteous and the Mexican as ignoble and semi-savage. Mexico represents the time/space of barbarism. The Texans represented by the Euro-American defenders, are men of honor who create Texas as a time/space where dignity and virtue rule—they are the “best ye breed.” This cinematic narrative further buttress both past and future records of denial.

In conclusion, it is this interest of advancing the Alamo as a moment in “American” history that Griffith crafts his version of the Alamo’s history. He links it with his racial project from *The Birth of Nation*. Both films center the threat against white womanhood as the causal agent for violence against people of color—in *The Birth of a Nation*, the Klan answers the call; in *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas* (note both films include the notion of “birth”) it is the settler, the common man, who reinforce the color line. Griffith shares the DRT’s concern that centers the protection of the domestic as the Alamo’s ultimate prize. Griffith, together with the DRT, accomplish the double-edged project of empire discussed by Kaplan above—the men of Griffith’s film exercise the violence necessary to subdue the Mexican and protect the “American” family; the women of the DRT capitalize on this protection by promoting the memory of these men and ensuring the continuation of Euro-American civil society. Together, Griffith and the DRT address the turn of the century anxieties about American Empire, and do so through the Alamo as exhibitionary complex. The Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, as a reminder of the legacy of its defender’s values, assures its consumer of both the past of the nation, the current prosperity, and their role as inheritor of these benefits. The film’s viewer, then, will approach the building and history of the Alamo with the images of the film in mind; they will be predisposed to see the events there as an epic endeavor in the interest of individual, familial, and community security. Of course, this assurance is based on the legacies of denial, and at least, cinematically Griffith represents only the first of many cinematic renderings of the Alamo.

Chapter Four: Norming the Historiography of Denial: The Alamo's Media "Blitz," Part II

"John Wayne slaughtered our Indian brothers.
 Burned their villages and raped their mothers.
 Now he has given them the white man's lord.
 Live by this, or die by the sword."

—MDC, "John Wayne was a Nazi"

The foundations of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex established by the DRT's enmeshment within the heritage movement of the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century and D.W. Griffith's (re)introduction of the Alamo into U.S. popular culture promote a narrative of U.S. nationalism that is both built on and builds a narrative of progress from "savagery" to civility, the divine right of conquest, and a rhetoric that denies both the racist politics and violence enabling the national expansion. From the immediate reports of the Alamo's fall through the DRT's and Griffith's renderings, the Alamo evolved into a persistent and malleable signifier of "American" morality, family values, and the enduring mission to extend freedom. The "already knowns" necessary to maintain and expand the Alamo's exhibitionary complex gradually proliferated throughout U.S. popular culture on the coattails of the expanding film industry. After Griffith's 1915 film, the next entry into the Alamo's cinematic record is *Heroes of the Alamo* (1937). This film entered U.S. popular culture at a time of significant national anxiety. The Great Depression had been shaping the "American" political and social landscape for nearly a decade. Fascism transformed the European and global political landscape, not to mention the rise of Japan as a force in the Pacific. Like Griffith's 1915 film, Harry Fraser's 1937 entry into the Alamo's narrative addressed and assuaged each of these concerns, assuring the viewing audience of the primacy of "American" values and the ability of the "American" family to engage and overcome whatever challenges emerged, all-the-while maintaining the silences of the racist national past.

The popularity of *Heroes of the Alamo* pales in comparison to the 1955 Disney classic, *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*. Though not explicitly an Alamo film, Norman Foster's vision of the early-nineteenth century United States addressed the questions of post-World War II "American" culture. Situated at the start of the Cold War and the still nascent Civil Rights Movement, *Davy Crockett* centered the representation of the All-American hero who, in every circumstance, invoked the best liberal ideals of both the past and present United States. Additionally, this Alamo narrative appeared on the "American" cultural scene as access to pop culture images exploded. This made-for-TV mini-series spread the Alamo's exhibitionary complex more broadly than any previous cultural texts. It also attached the Alamo to the legacy of one of early "America's" most revered archetypes: the noble, honest frontiersman. The Alamo's exhibitionary complex, through its politically sanitized representation by Disney, emerged even more isolated from its complex history.

Capitalizing on the success of Disney's Alamo narrative, John Wayne, a profoundly important cultural icon himself, adds to the Alamo's exhibitionary complex with his 1960 Oscar-winning film *The Alamo*. Like the Disney film before it, Wayne's film enters the U.S. cultural record at a time of domestic and international upheaval. What had been a nascent Civil Rights Movement in 1955 was now a full-blown national movement centering the legacies of "American" racism. Also, the Cold War influenced nearly every aspect of U.S. political life.

And access to pop culture images and commodities surpassed the ease of access in 1955. The United States represented the anchor of the West and its democratic and economic ideals. Wayne enters this political context as both director and star of his epic rendering of the Alamo. He, like those before him, uses the Alamo exhibitionary complex as both foil and foundation to reinforce the positive values of the “American” way and respond to its critics. Wayne’s vision of the Alamo manifests a purity of patriotism that readily denied the more troubling aspects of the U.S.’s past.

All three of these films pick up the themes of domesticity and nationalism established by the earliest accounts of the Alamo and subsequently promulgated by the DRT and Griffith. However, each narrative adaptation accounts for, and responds to, the cultural anxieties of its particular historical moment. Each of these films both reinvents and reinforces the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex and the inherent historiography of denial permeating its historical record.

*Heroes of the Alamo (1937) Précis*¹

Twenty-two years after *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas*, the 1937 film *Heroes of the Alamo*, directed by Harry Fraser begins with this epigraph:

American history holds no more heroic chapter than the gallant Martyrdom of one hundred eighty-three Americans massacred within the Alamo, an old Franciscan mission in San Antonio (then called Bexar), Texas on March 6th, 1836. Their courageous fight against tyranny and oppression gave birth to the State of Texas. To the memory of these immortal Texans this motion picture is respectfully dedicated. (*Heroes*)

After this dedication, the film’s first image is of a makeshift sign marking the “Texas—U.S.A.” border; the year is 1833 (*Heroes*). Nearby a cabin accommodates a few Mexican Border Patrol Agents guarding the border. There are no U.S. soldiers on the U.S. side—it is an open border. A wagon full of Euro-American colonists approaches the border; they present the Mexican commander with a written contract entitling them to land in Texas. The Mexican Border Patrol Agent informs the group, regardless of the written contract entry into Texas is prohibited on account of Santa Anna (Julian Rivero) ending Euro-American immigration into Mexico. The Euro-American colonists lament that they have no where to go; they sold everything to relocate to Texas. The Mexican soldier remains unmoved, denying the Euro-Americans entry. The colonists-to-be forcibly cross the border and are nearly shot by the Mexican border guards; however, a sympathetic Texan intervenes and persuades them to return to Arkansas pending news (*Heroes*).

The film shifts to Stephen F. Austin’s home; Austin (Earle Hodges) sits at a desk about ten feet from his door when he hears a knock. Austin’s slave Luke (Fred “Snowflake” Toones) descends the stairs to answer the door. Austin’s visitor, William Wharton (Jack C. Smith), brings news of the border closing. Wharton angrily complains that Texas is no longer a colony, but an armed camp. Furthermore, he argues that Mexico has violated every promise made to the

¹ See page fifty-eight, chapter three for the rationale for the inclusion of substantial plot summaries; establishing the repetition of “already knows” is essential to understanding the Alamo as an exhibitionary complex and site of historiographic denial.

Euro-Americans: immigration has been ended, taxes levied, and policing omnipresent. Wharton reflects on the Texans clearing the land, subduing the Natives, and making the land productive, and as a result of these, asserts Texas should be independent. Stephen Austin's response is more measured. He reminds Wharton that when he negotiated the terms of colonization he promised that the Euro-American immigrants would become Mexican citizens, obey the laws, and remain loyal to Mexico. Austin additionally argues that regardless of the provocations, the Texans need time to organize (*Heroes*).

After this exchange, the film introduces the Dickinson family. The happy couple engage in witty banter about their respective gender roles managing their farm. It is their one year anniversary and both gush affection; Al Dickinson (Bruce Warren) promises his wife a trip to New Orleans to celebrate. Anne Dickinson (Ruth Findlay) seeks assurances that Al will not enter politics and will avoid war with the Mexicans. He responds that no one wants war, and more importantly, time for fighting is nonexistent: building a prosperous society demands too much time and effort. He promises that in a few years, he will build Anne a beautiful plantation-style home. She then sends him to the store. The film cuts to the storefront where a group of Euro-American settlers debate the current state of affairs. They object to Santa Anna telling "Americans" what they can and cannot do; especially irksome are the immigration laws that separate families. These men view war as a necessary solution. When Al arrives at the store he receives a letter from Austin. Austin invites him to become a delegate at a statewide meeting to discuss the troubles with Mexico; in spite of his promises to Anne, Al Dickinson accepts Austin's invitation into the world of politics (*Heroes*).

The film follows couriers delivering mail to William Travis (Rex Lane), Jim Bowie (Roger Williams), and others across Texas. The film fast forwards to April and the convention organized by Austin. Austin lists the grievances against Mexico and again expresses worries about the consequences of war with Mexico. Wharton, again, calls for immediate war with Mexico. Bowie additionally objects to governance from Mexico City; it is too remote to respond to the Texans' needs. Travis urges diplomacy. Austin requests time to attempt a diplomatic solution; he suggests going to Santa Anna and requesting statehood for Texas within Mexico. Dickinson reminds the other men of their families, and urges for one last attempt at diplomacy. However, Dickinson understands the limits of diplomacy, and that tyranny ultimately harms family more than a battle for freedom. Dickinson concludes if Austin cannot succeed, then war is justified. On Dickinson's behest, the convention approves Austin's plan. At this juncture, the film transports the viewer to Mexico City and Santa Anna overseeing the execution of mutinous Mexican officers. Santa Anna learns that the Texans object to his policies. He also learns of the convention and Austin's mission to meet with him. This news displeases him, and after Austin's arrival in Mexico City, Santa Anna forces Austin to wait months for an audience. When they finally meet, Austin states that thirty thousand loyal Mexican citizens seek statehood; Santa Anna refuses, arrests, and jails Austin (*Heroes*).

Meanwhile, back in Texas the men and women celebrate their prosperity at a community picnic. They engage in feats of strength, drinking, singing, and eating. After the meal, the men wonder about Austin; his whereabouts are unknown. Suddenly, Anne collapses; Al carries her home where she gives birth to a daughter, Angelina. The Dickinsons promise one another to make Texas a great country for her. The film then fast forwards to August 1835. The absence of Austin becomes a matter of public debate; Wharton rallies the men to fight. The Texans embrace this cause. Finally, after more than two years in prison, Austin returns to Texas. After his experience with Santa Anna, the Texans acknowledge diplomacy's failure. Austin becomes

one of the most vocal advocates for war. Simultaneously, Santa Anna orders his army north to Texas to stymie the growing rebellion (*Heroes*).

The first skirmish occurs on a road outside of San Antonio. The Texans quickly defeat the Mexicans, boosting their confidence. Austin organizes the defense of San Antonio, and departs to the United States seeking assistance from like-minded patriots. Austin insists that San Antonio must be held at all costs; it is the one garrison protecting the Texans' settlements. Travis responds to the challenge, stating it will be held. Travis and Bowie remain and assume command. Meanwhile, Texan scouts observe Santa Anna rapidly approaching San Antonio with an army that stretches from horizon to horizon. Just prior to this news reaching Travis, several of the Texans desert. Dickinson and Travis, however, remain both physically and in spirit. As a result of limited supplies and defenders, Dickinson encourages the fortification of the Alamo. Travis agrees. News of Santa Anna's imminent arrival reaches the Texans. The film then represents organization of the Alamo's defense (*Heroes*). As the fortification proceeds, Davy Crockett (Lane Chandler) arrives asking if "there's any fightin' to do" (*Heroes*). Upon hearing the news of the forthcoming battle, Crockett agrees to stay because any fight is a good one (*Heroes*).

The film cuts to the Dickinson home, Anne asks Angelina if she misses her daddy, Al. The little girl replies in the affirmative, and Anne elects to sneak across enemy lines and into the Alamo (*Heroes*). Just before her arrival at the fort, Colonel Travis orders a messenger to carry the following message: "Though this call may be neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who forgets not what is due to his own honor and that of his country. Lieutenant Colonel W. Barrett Travis" (*Heroes*). The messenger is told he is the Alamo's last chance. The news only gets worse for the Texans; Travis learns that ammo is so low that one more battle will exhaust the Texans' supply. Meanwhile, Anne, while sneaking into the fort, draws enemy fire, but avoids injury. Once inside, Anne insists that she will not leave the fort; Colonel Travis grants her permission to remain. Welcomed by her husband Al, she immediately begins serving as nurse for the wounded. Messengers return with the news that no meaningful supplies or reinforcements will arrive. Travis delivers his "line-in-the-sand" speech stating he will die at the Alamo. He offers his men a chance to depart with honor. Every man in the fort elects to remain (*Heroes*).

Prior to the final battle, Santa Anna insists that the Texans be given no quarter. While Santa Anna orchestrates the Texans' deaths, the Alamo's defenders sing the "Yellow Rose of Texas." Al and Anne Dickinson profess love for each other and Texas. The film reveals the date: March 6, 1836—the Alamo's final day. Then film depicts the final battle at the Alamo; the Texans wage a gallant defense, killing countless Mexicans, but one by one, the Alamo's defenders die. Once the battle ends, Santa Anna lectures Anne and releases her with the orders to warn those who would defy Santa Anna. Instead, her message to Sam Houston concerns the bravery and honor of those killed at the Alamo; she declares: "Remember the Alamo!" (*Heroes*). Sam Houston immediately stands to attention. The film concludes with a shot of the Lone Star flag vigorously waving in the wind (*Heroes*).

Analysis

Like *Martyrs of the Alamo* before it, Harry Fraser's *Heroes of the Alamo* accentuates the "American" values of those fighting for the Texan cause. In analyzing the film, it is the repetitions of image and ideal, images and ideals with origins in the earliest accounts of the

Alamo, that ensures the consumption of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex based on strictly "American" "already knows." The ideologically framing of the "already known" facts becomes immediately clear in the film's opening dedication; though already quoted above, it is worth repeating:

American history holds no more heroic chapter than the gallant Martyrdom of one hundred eighty-three Americans massacred within the Alamo, an old Franciscan mission in San Antonio (then called Bexar), Texas on March 6th, 1836. Their courageous fight against tyranny and oppression gave birth to the State of Texas. To the memory of these immortal Texans this motion picture is respectfully dedicated. (*Heroes*)

The film's contextual framework places the Alamo above all other heroic acts from U.S. history: Valley Forge, Gettysburg, Belleau Wood, and presumably enduring the on-going Great Depression. The narrative invites the viewer to embrace the Alamo's defenders and to recognize that these are heroes' heroes whose only equals likely reside in the Classical past—these heroes are "America's" Odysseus, Hercules, and Ajax. From the film's outset the Alamo's "already known" facts rely exclusively on the established narrative of the Texans' cause as a struggle against "tyranny" and for liberty; the film is a respectful dedication to the expansion of the U.S., an expansion the film asks its viewers to endorse. The film removes the complex geo-political context in favor of a good (Texas) versus evil (Mexico) binary. Early in the film, the leading men of Texas gather to discuss how to secure their rights as the Mexican government of Santa Anna becomes increasingly tyrannical. The 30,000 Texan colonists perceive Mexican law as radically unjust, primarily the immigration restrictions and "taxation without representation" (*Heroes*). In spite of these grievances, Austin values his promise to obey the laws of Mexico. He identifies diplomacy as the right way to address the Texans' grievances (*Heroes*). The patient approach advocated by Austin, even in the face of insult after insult, represents the hallmark of a just man solely interested in achieving what is right. Austin's tempering of the war cries of his fellow Texans until *all* avenues are exhausted ensures that the film's viewer understands the forthcoming war is a necessary and just war, a good war.

While the struggle to defend individual freedoms and political rights stirs the ire of the Texans, the film conflates the political and familial in Texas (a cause shared with the DRT's commemorative agenda). This confluence emerges within Almerian (Al) Dickinson's position on war. Initially Dickinson endorses Austin; he advocates for a measured approach to Mexico in the interest of protecting his family. Dickinson expresses a willingness to fight and die to protect his family. However, he feels compelled to exhaust every option before resorting to violence. The political process must serve the interest of family before strictly economic or governance issues. This commingling of politics and family abates the call for immediate war. War must be a last resort given the jeopardy it places on one's family. As a result, Austin travels to Mexico City to argue for greater sovereignty (*Heroes*). Thus, the Texan struggle for justice is one of long-suffering and, initially, well within the rule of law. The Texans provide Santa Anna and the Mexicans every opportunity to respect the rights of the Texans and ensure the preservation of the family.

As a component of the ever expanding "already knows" of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, *Heroes of the Alamo* relies on the relatively new and increasingly accessible media of the "talkie" to spread a family-first message. Dickinson ultimately represents the silenced,

martyred husband and father alluded to in the widow Keller's letter. He represents the voice of the fallen provider, the sturdy "American" settler hell-bent on his family's prosperity. This 1937 Al Dickinson also represents a continuity of the Dickinson of Griffith's 1915 film. The cinematic repetition of the image of the robust protagonist Al Dickinson demanding all avenues be pursued before war to protect family likely resonated with an increasingly anxious U.S. population, anxious about the expansionist Nazi and Japanese regimes. The film transforms the Alamo into a twentieth-century signifier that validates a just war after diplomacy's exhaustion, or an unprovoked attack. As the "American" public of the 1930s contemplated war in their day, the fictionalized Texan families of the 1830s provided an acceptable trajectory into conflict. Additionally, the integration, albeit unstated, of the contemporary concerns of the late-1930s into the story of Texas in the 1830s enmeshes the Alamo narrative within the nationalist narratives of the era. Contemporary "America," just as Frontier Texas, must answer the call in the fight against tyranny in order to protect domestic security. The "already known" facts of the Alamo increasingly mirrored the concerns of contemporary U.S. audiences.

However, the strict commitment to familial protection runs up against Santa Anna's dictatorial politics, just as the U.S. isolationist politics of the 1930s were shattered by Pearl Harbor. Santa Anna maintains his government through cruelty and fear, killing dissidents by fiat (this also mirrored the images of fascism's rise in Europe). Santa Anna represents the antithesis of the deliberative, family-first Texans; there are no debates to reconcile differences and build community. When Austin finally speaks with Santa Anna, he argues that loyal Mexican citizens (the Texans) seek statehood *within* the Mexican nation. Santa Anna responds that such is not, and never will be his policy:

Santa Anna: Texas is too close to the United States. And I do not trust the Americans who live there.

Austin: Sir, Texas is loyal, and will remain loyal as long as you grant her people a voice in their own rule.

Santa Anna: Suppose señor, I do not grant it, what then?

Austin: May I remind your Excellency the cry of the unionist colonist during the American revolution was no taxation without representation.

.....
 Santa Anna: You are like all these Americans. Wherever they are, they must rule. Well, you will not rule here. You wish to steal Texas and make it a part of the United States.

Austin: Gen. Santa Anna, you have made your first mistake. (*Heroes*)

This exchange manifests Santa Anna's lack of reason and antipathy for Euro-Americans. Austin seeks partnership within the nation of Mexico, and furthermore, he represents a deliberative body of men who dismiss their feelings of dishonor in a last-ditch effort to both protect their families and secure justice. Austin also seeks a reconciliation that will ensure the prospering Texan families remain Mexican citizens. This cinematic construct dismisses Manifest Destiny as a motivating factor behind the Texans' war—Austin wants to stay *in* Mexico, not join the U.S. However, Santa Anna rejects this; he violates the principles of fair government, familial security, and ultimately forces the Texans into war. This rejection also represents a reversal of the established racial hierarchy. A Mexican, a non-white, oppresses a community of whites. Ultimately, Santa Anna denies these rights based on his own racial biases, and denies the Texans

their “natural” rights. When Austin finally returns to Texas, all agree that their political options have been exhausted. The only remaining option is a war of last resort (*Heroes*). Austin’s efforts, through the film’s narrative, share the logic of the historical figure Richard Ellis²: the Texan cause mirrors that of the Founding Fathers of the U.S. The root cause for war is Santa Anna’s injustice, cruelty, and his rejection of the Texans’ rights on “racist” grounds. This film, just as in D.W. Griffith’s 1915 film and the nineteenth century historical materials, constructs Texas as the time/space of long-suffering, democratic-minded men who wage war as only a last resort and in the interest of family and prosperity. The film’s representation of Santa Anna as a racially intolerant despot who rejects democracy increasingly embeds the “already known” facts of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex within the imperial fantasy of the United States; the U.S. is a land with no white supremacy, no territorial aspirations, and as a land whose only fight is to secure freedom.

Once war is declared and the Texan forces move into the Alamo, the film continues its focus on the family-first “already knowns” through Al and Anne Dickinson’s marriage. *Heroes* casts Anne in the role of ardent patriot and champion of Texas. The first words Anne utters after the birth of her daughter are, “the first born generation of native Texans” (*Heroes*). It is the child’s tie to Texas that is of utmost importance to Anne; Angelina is their “anchor baby.” This confluence of nation and family is constantly reinforced in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. The baby girl and securing her future is the ultimate rationale for the battle at the Alamo and the Texan cause. The Dickinsons, and by extension all of Texas, fight so their daughter (and all Texas’ children) will be free and prosperous. All the male bluster earlier in the film concerning taxation and immigration rights fade behind the domestic goals of the Dickinsons.

Once the battle begins, the film juxtaposes fighting with scenes of domestic peace. Anne sneaks into the fort with her daughter not only because she misses her husband, but as Anne states, “I’m a Texas woman. Col. Travis, I couldn’t sit at home” (*Heroes*). She insists on remaining at the fort and aiding in the struggle, making the home front the literal battlefield. Within the Alamo’s walls women and children resist along side their men. The war against Mexican tyranny and for the children of Texas demands the whole family. Whatever the case, this family dynamic represents another step in the transformation of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex; with each privileging of family, the political and economic fall farther into the shadows of the Alamo’s narrative. Politics, and its messy details, are replaced in the “already know” history of the Alamo by the moral clarity of protecting family.

Again, as in *Martyrs of the Alamo* before it, *Heroes of the Alamo* contains its own “line-in-the-sand” speech delivered by Col. Travis. In this version, Col. Travis’ character states:

News has just come. No more reinforcements. You all know what that means. Personally, I’ll never retreat an inch. None of you men need to feel obliged to stay unless you want to. Now if any of you wanna leave, it’s your last chance. Those who will stay, cross this line to me. (*Heroes*)

While the heroic elements of the statement resonates, the domestic imagery surrounding the speech reveals more about the film’s continuation of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. After Travis concludes the speech, every man in the fort crosses the line and cheers, as Mrs. Dickinson

² Ellis was President of the Texans’ Constitutional Convention that coincided with the Battle at the Alamo. He is cited in chapter two, page forty-five and forty-six.

looks on smiling. Together, the Texans end the evening laughing and celebrating. As this collective celebration transpires, Al embraces Anne, moving her to a semi-private space behind a pillar. There he tells her that they will die. She responds, “And darling, whatever happens to us, Texas will go on. A Texas so great, so wonderful in the years to come that you and I can’t even imagine. But without us, without the Alamo, that Texas could never be. Why, its life, will be our lives” (*Heroes*). The Republic of Texas, and the future state, like their daughter Angelina, becomes Anne and Al Dickinson’s child. Reminiscent of Anne’s nationalist profession immediately after the birth of her baby girl, the Dickinson’s forthcoming death at the Alamo represents the preservation of the lives of both their child and their nation. Anne, as a mother, recognizes no future for her family in a Mexican dominated society. For her family, the only possibility for domestic peace and security is a Euro-American Texas. Anne’s position centers the family and further imbricates the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, and its history, within a narrative of primarily domestic concerns. This message, now a century old and increasingly central to the mass marketed Alamo, buries political narratives behind an epic domestic moralism. As an addition to the exhibitionary complex, *Heroes of the Alamo*’s emphasis on family perpetuates the denial of the crass economic and political aims of the Texans. Their interest in the expansion of slavery, “unoccupied” land, not to mention the perpetual violation of Mexican law and Mexico’s right to defend itself, all disappear behind a family’s love. A father’s and mother’s ultimate sacrifice for the future of his family becomes the ultimate “already known” fact of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

The family-first message is reinforced in the final pitched battle that follows. Mexican casualties are high, but soon the Texans run low on ammunition. The battle is clearly lost and still the Texans fight valiantly. Anne takes cover with her daughter as the Mexicans storm the walls, killing the Texans one by one. Al visits his wife one last time; they embrace and he orders her to remain hidden. As he leaves the room he is shot. Anne disobeys his order; she sneaks onto the battlefield to hold him in her arms as he dies. Anne rendering this final act of domestic service represents the close of the battle at the Alamo (*Heroes*). The destruction of the family unit is Santa Anna’s fault. The Texans went to great lengths to avoid war; Santa Anna’s disdain for democracy started the war, and as a result, Anne, like the widows of the earliest news accounts, mourns the death of her husband.

In what will become another oft repeated “already known” in Alamo movies, after the battle, Santa Anna confronts Anne Dickinson and explains that the fault lies with the Texans who refused to follow his orders. He then tells her to leave with her daughter and relate to the other Texans that resistance is futile (*Heroes*). Anne departs, but instead of delivering Santa Anna’s warning, she tells Sam Houston: “Gen. Houston, the man that murdered my husband, the man that slaughtered 183 heroic men, sent you a message by me. I won’t give you that message; I’ll give you another message. The message that those men who fought . . . bid me give you: Remember the Alamo!” (*Heroes*). Immediately, Sam Houston jumps to attention. The camera closes in on the widow Dickinson’s face as a defiant tear falls across her cheek. The film then cuts to the Lone Star flag waving in a powerful wind, and the film ends (*Heroes*). Anne Dickinson, the proxy mother of Texas, relates the same message as Mrs. Keller a century before in her letter to the *Mobile Daily Commercial Register and Patriot*. A newly widowed woman enlists the United States to remember fallen husbands and fathers.

However, unlike Keller in 1836, this film issues its reminder in 1937. The Great Depression, the rise of fascism, and a rapidly transforming cultural landscape demanded a reinforcing of the traditional roles and values of the Euro-American family. Anne’s endorsement

of Texas at all costs reminds the film's viewers that regardless of the level of personal suffering one may experience, the "gallant" martyrs of the Alamo died to ensure the "American Dream." These past sacrifices encourage, if not demand, the viewer's present loyalty if one's family is to remain secure. The Mexican alternative of the 1830s, or the fascist threat of the 1930s, pose constant danger that only the United States can prevent. After a century of praising the fallen heroes, there is a growing discursive weight of "fact" establishing the Texans' cause as one of justice and fidelity to nation and family. This centering of the moral register in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex further displaces the violent outcomes of the Texans' victory and further empowers the Alamo's historiography of denial. Additionally, *Heroes of the Alamo* serves as a bridge, carrying the ideological positions of the DRT, and their precursors, into the mid-twentieth century. *Heroes of the Alamo* ensures the Alamo remained a part of the "American" cultural landscape. With the release of Walt Disney's 1955 *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*, the Alamo would achieve a cultural import previously unrealized.

Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier (1955) Précis

The film opens with a shot of the cover of *Davy Crockett's Journal*, written by "himself" (*Davy*). The first chapter titled, "The Creek Indian Wars" transitions to a map that slowly focuses on Fort Mims in extreme southern Mississippi Territory on the border of Spanish East Florida. Accompanying this visual, the film's theme song croons: "In 1813, the Creeks arose. Addin' redskin arrows to the country's woes. Now old Andrew Jackson as everybody knows is the general they sent to fight the foes" (*Davy*). The opening melody ends in an encampment full of men dressed in both uniforms and buckskin outfits; the force consists of both regular troops and volunteers. The film introduces Crockett (Fess Parker) as Andrew Jackson (Basil Ruysdael) discovers that Crockett has crossed into enemy territory, unarmed, to hunt. Jackson demands Crockett be located and brought to him immediately. The film traverses a river where Crockett is "trying to grin down a bear" (*Davy*). Crockett falls through some bush, and then rushes back into the thicket with only a knife. He kills the bear with his knife, much to the shock of a well-polished army officer, Major Norton (William Bakewell). Upon returning to camp with Crockett's bounty, Jackson orders both Crockett and Norton on a reconnaissance mission deep into enemy territory. While on the trail, Crockett and Norton clash concerning tactics; Norton objects to Crockett's insistence that they travel off trail. Crockett knowingly states that riding the trails will result in the Creek Indians easily locating and killing them. Unconvinced, Norton separates his company from Crockett, and rides the well-marked trails. Crockett sticks to the backwoods (*Davy*).

Crockett and his sidekick George Russell (Buddy Ebsen) deftly avoid capture by a Creek War party led by the young chief Red Stick (Pat Hogan). Crockett and Russell then track the war party to the Creek encampment and observe the Creek preparing for battle. With this vital piece of intelligence, Crockett and Russell return to meet Norton. They hear gun fire, find Norton's forces surrounded, and proceed to save the day. Crockett then reports to Jackson and leads the army into Creek territory. Crockett along with the rest of the soldiers engage in fierce hand to hand battle with the Creek. Crockett and Red Stick fight; Crockett is almost killed. Because of a mistake by Jackson's troops, Red Stick escapes. After the battle, Jackson learns that the Creek suffered a huge defeat, and they want to discuss peace. Jackson refuses to see this as victory. He orders the pursuit of Red Stick. Crockett and the other Tennessee volunteers inform Jackson that they are leaving the battle. They have families to support. Norton threatens

to kill them if they depart. Crockett is undeterred; he marches right past Norton, affectionately teasing him (*Davy*).

Crockett and Russell arrive at Crockett's home. Crockett's wife warmly greets both, as Crockett's two boys happily welcome him home. The film cuts to Crockett snuggling with his wife Polly (Helene Stanley) by a warm hearth; she fawns over him, staring in his eyes. Crockett, however, remains home for only a few days. He quickly returns to the Creek War. He finds Jackson's army in disarray. Crockett and Russell immediately volunteer to seek Red Stick on their own, over Norton's objection. They depart camp and scout for the Creek warriors. They quickly locate the Creek's trail; however, Russell is captured. Eventually, Crockett locates Russell, begins to argue with the Creek captors to release Russell, and seeks peace. Crockett claims he is just like the Creek. He is a hunter, too. Crockett argues that if Red Stick and the Creek accept the "white man's law" it would serve the interests of the Creek people (*Davy*). Red Stick refuses to listen, so Crockett challenges him to a battle with tomahawks. Red Stick cheats, but Crockett still defeats him. Instead of killing Red Stick, as permitted by "Indian Law," Crockett assures him if the Creek will lay down their arms the U.S. government will allow the Creek to live in peace. Crockett manages to end the Creek War by himself (*Davy*).

After this victory, Crockett returns home for the winter. With spring's arrival, Crockett rides with Russell to the Mississippi River Valley in Western Tennessee in search of land for his family. Crockett prepares to purchase some land. Prior to this purchase, he enters a shooting contest with a man named Big Foot (Mike Mazurki). Crockett wins. After the victory, Crockett buys land next to a Cherokee, Charley Two Shirts (Jeff Thompson). Crockett learns that Big Foot and his "riff raff" are driving the Native Americans off of legally purchased land; Crockett notes that the U.S. government protects Native land rights (*Davy*). The land manager comments that no one will stand up to Big Foot. The film shifts to Crockett building his cabin. While building, Russell discovers the displaced family of Charley Two Shirts; Charley explains that Big Foot beat him and forced him off his land. Crockett decides to become the area's magistrate; his first act is to get Charley's land back. Crockett confronts Big Foot, explaining that the Cherokee possess the same rights as any man. Big Foot states the land is too good for "injuns," and if Crockett wants the land back, they will have to fight (*Davy*). Crockett beats Big Foot, and he turns him over for trial. Singlehandedly, Crockett turns the county around. People grow happy and full of life. Because of his success, Crockett's community urges him to run for the Tennessee House (*Davy*).

Once he accepts the challenge to run for Congress, Crockett gets a letter from home reporting the death of his wife. Crockett silently walks into the woods to mourn for a short time. He almost immediately begins his run for government. Crockett wins and moves to Nashville. While working in Nashville, Norton comes to Crockett seeking his help on Andrew Jackson's Presidential campaign. He meets with Jackson who invites him to run for Congress. Crockett reminds Jackson that if he wins he will not take orders from Jackson, but from the people of Tennessee. Crockett wins election, and in his first speech, he introduces himself as a straight talking man of the people. After a short time in Congress, Jackson tells Crockett that national expansion is a must. Norton then convinces Crockett to embark on a national speaking tour as a precursor to Crockett's run for President. Russell interrupts this tour in Philadelphia informing Crockett that Norton arranged the tour to get Crockett out of Washington so Jackson could pass an Indian Removal policy. Crockett quits the tour and returns to Washington. Norton confronts him at the door of Congress; Crockett knocks Norton out and then denounces the Indian Bill as theft. This ends Crockett's political career (*Davy*).

After he leaves Congress, Crockett elects to move to Texas. On the way to Texas he travels by river boat; a European gambler, Thimble-erig (Hans Conreid), joins him and Russell. As they ride into Texas, they flee from Comanche, observe a buffalo stampede, and finally, their group adopts a Comanche they name Busted Luck (Nick Cravat) because of his unfortunate personal story. They travel together to the Alamo, and along the way they encounter a group of Mexican refugees who warn them of the dangers of proceeding. They narrowly avoid Mexican patrols and arrive at the Alamo. Crockett arrives and is informed of the Alamo's dire straits. The battle rages on for days, eventually, Russell attempts to reach outsiders for help. The Texans continue to resist, and Russell returns with news that there will be no help. At this point, Travis gives his line in the sand speech. All the men cross the line. The Mexicans attack, are driven back, and come again—this time they breach the wall. The Texan defenders are killed one by one. Finally, Crockett dies a heroic death. The film concludes with the admonition that so long as the Alamo is remembered, Davy Crockett, as well as the rest of men who died there, will live on (*Davy*).

Analysis

This film represents a unique cinematic entry into the “already known” facts of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex given that Davy Crockett's life “history” is the film's focus, and not strictly the Alamo. As a result, the Alamo, as Crockett's final stand, becomes the closing statement of Crockett's mythic life. Interestingly, this Crockett is remarkably anti-establishment. The Disney Crockett practices a moralistic individualism to a fault. At every stage of the film, Crockett resists what he perceives as unfair or unjust, regardless of the source. However, his resistance knows limits; it exists within the limits of a racialized paternalism. What is possibly most radical in relationship to the Alamo's existing narrative, especially in light of the racist outcomes of the Texans' victory, is Crockett's repeated defense of Native Americans in the film, at least as radical as white paternalism can be. Disney's film, then, transforms the Alamo's exhibitionary complex to include the trappings of an anti-racist message; additionally, Disney introduces a kind of “rouge” individualism that always stands for what is right. As in earlier Alamo films, as well as the DRT's commemorative efforts, the morality of the Texan cause emerges as the primary moral compass that guides the war against Mexico.

In addition to the radical moralism of Crockett's individualism, this film also transforms the domestic contours of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. The centrality of the Dickinson's marital relationship disappears; in its place Crockett as the great white father who delivers the promises of U.S. justice becomes the anchor for home and nation. As noted above in the Précis, Crockett's singular efforts end the Creek War. After moving to western Tennessee, Crockett saves a family of helpless Cherokee from unscrupulous (and white) land thieves. Crockett's actions introduce community-wide prosperity into what had been a socially and politically stagnant region. Finally, after Crockett publically decries the corruption of President Andrew Jackson and the U.S. Government, Crockett seeks refuge in Texas where Santa Anna threatens *real* freedom (*Davy*). It is Crockett's paternalistic impulse to do what is right, to seek truth, to defy even the President of the United States when the President acts dishonorably that becomes a pillar in the constantly shifting “already knows” of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Patricia Penn Hilden notes:

How interesting—and pleasant!—to think that by teaching us that the standard to which we should hold the government was a very high one, that lying was pure evil, that telling the truth, defending minorities, scorning material wealth, and judging others on the basis of their character (did Martin Luther King watch Davy Crockett?), Walt Disney may have been an unwitting part of the youth explosion of the 1960s! (*When* 86)

This Crockett introduces a righteous anti-establishment presence. Of greatest import for this dissertation, however, is the meaning that Crockett's flight into Texas adds to the Alamo's story. Crockett leaves the United States because it fails to meet his high ideals; the U.S. proper exudes a repellent corruption. Texas, however, represents, literally, a last Frontier for Crockett to both seek and fight for a society constituted by benevolent patriarchs like himself. The Alamo as exhibitionary complex benefits from this affirmative "guilt by association." The Texans, and their cause, come to represent the same democratic and moral logics of Crockett. These men, Bowie, Travis, Dickinson, with whom Crockett elects to die represent men of the highest moral and personal character, higher even than the elected officials of the United States. Disney's construction of the Alamo introduces into the "already known" historical narrative a Texas that is better than the United States. Texas and its struggle become a moral counterpoint for a questionable United States.

And though the film does not focus as directly on the family, the domestic concerns of the DRT, *Martyrs of the Alamo*, and *Heroes of the Alamo* still persist; however, Disney's film meets the needs of its era. The U.S. of the 1950s demanded a *Father Knows Best* or *Leave It to Beaver* approach to family values. With Crockett's wife dead, he becomes free, in essence, to serve as proxy father for all those in need of protection. The threat to white womanhood disappears from the narrative, supplanted by Crockett's paternalistic protection of weaker individuals (who happen to be almost exclusively Native American). Subsequently, the Alamo's exhibitionary complex is rewritten in the spirit of the Cold Warrior—Crockett fights to protect the individual from injustice and to maintain the highest moral orders of society: freedom, property, and security.

This radical paternalism, however, occurs within a carefully proscribed racial framework. Granted, Crockett introduces into the Alamo's "already knowns" a rebelliousness and a willingness to question every authority figure. But Crockett's behavior always maintains a Eurocentric racial hierarchy. Here, Disney maintains the conservative doxa of 1950s U.S. culture. In the context of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, the logic of a benevolent white paternalism is reinforced. Throughout the film Crockett aids Native Americans (Crockett does nothing for the African/African American slaves who populate his native South). However, his assistance furthers the logic of assimilation of Natives into the "American" political, cultural, and economic mainstream. Crockett advocates, through force when necessary, the assimilation of Native America into the U.S. cultural "mainstream" for *their* own good. Peace with Red Stick rests on the willingness of the Creek to surrender their traditional ways and their historic grievances that provoked the Creek to revolt in the first place (*Davy*). And Crockett, for as smart as the film portrays him to be, appears ignorant of, even at this early stage of U.S. history, the failure of treaty after treaty to secure the land rights and cultural heritages of Native Americans in the United States. Consequently, the "already known" facts of the Alamo envelop a universally liberatory feel where all who embrace Euro-American culture and law, a just law to be certain, will prosper.

Furthermore, the film casts Crockett's micropolitical acts as substitutes for the macropolitical genocidal violence perpetrated by the U.S. Again, Crockett remains silent on the issue of slavery, except when accepting their services at the home of Andrew Jackson. Additionally, when Crockett ends the Creek War and saves the Cherokee family, his individual acts obfuscate the genocidal tide against Native America, furthering the "American" Frontier logic of benevolent paternalism in the mind's of Disney's audience. Crockett thwarts Big Foot's theft and promises peace to the Creek; the film's narrative implies that Crockett's promises are kept (*Davy*). Disney's film introduces a narrative of national expansion that peacefully incorporates those Indigenous peoples who accept federal treaties, and in fact, patently denies that any systemic violence was directed at Native Americans—Crockett is the state, and he is their protector. Historically, nothing could be further from the truth. Native Americans, and slaves, if they did benefit from Crockett's actions (which is debatable), still suffered tremendously. Disney's feel-good narrative of "American" expansion denies the consequences of the macropolitical violence behind the folksy, good-natured paternalism of Crockett. Again, this reordering of history is carried into the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Crockett's paternalism, earnest honesty, and commitment to universal justice creates a false racial context for the Alamo. Crockett, the only fully developed character in the film, becomes the proxy for the values of all the Alamo's defenders and the cause of Texas. Subsequently, the Alamo's exhibitionary complex comes to represent not only the final Frontier of freedom and honesty, but also a location where a primary concern is racial justice. Crockett, and the men who fight and die with him in the Alamo, by virtue of the film's narrative are fighting to prevent the kinds of injustice that Crockett fought his whole life.

And as will be discussed below, the Alamo represents a location where white supremacy became both the *de jure* and *de facto* approach to the Native American populations in Texas, as well as the slaves imported after the Texan victory. However, *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier* rewrites this history in favor a values-first narrative. Disney's intervention into the Alamo exhibitionary complex silences the historical facts of genocide and slavery behind the façade of Crockett's benevolent paternalism, and his near universal appeal to 1950s "American" youth. *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*, as a mass media phenomenon, introduced the nineteenth century narratives of the Alamo, D.W. Griffith's interpretation of Texans' values, and the moralism of *Heroes of the Alamo* to the mid-twentieth century, cementing these as the exhibitionary complex's "already knows." The Alamo becomes part of the mass hysteria of Disney, and the sheer weight of the film's narrative solidifies the Alamo's exhibitionary complex in the realm of values and not politics. This value-driven narrative is further solidified in the hands of John Wayne.

John Wayne's *The Alamo* (1960) Précis

Wayne's film opens with a written message to the film's viewers:

In the year of our Lord, 1836, Texas, which has known many flags, was under the colours of Mexico. Though its inhabitants were made up of settlers from far countries and all part of the United States, they were Mexican citizens all. Generalissimo Santa Anna was sweeping north across Mexico toward them, crushing all who opposed his tyrannical rule. They now faced the decision that all

men in all times must face . . . the eternal choice of men . . . to endure oppression or to resist. (*Alamo* Wayne)

The film moves to San Antonio. General Sam Houston (Richard Boone) and his army ride into town. Houston immediately convenes a meeting with Colonel William Travis (Laurence Harvey), Captain Almeron Dickinson (Ken Curtis), James Bonham (Patrick Wayne) and several other officers. Jim Bowie (Richard Widmark) cannot attend the meeting due to drunkenness. Houston orders Travis to secure San Antonio and buy him time to organize the Texan army. Travis objects to working with Bowie; Houston orders the room cleared. Houston tells Travis that he would trust Bowie with his family's life. Houston then scolds Travis lamenting his boorish personality, but he concludes that Travis merits the same trust as Bowie. Houston leaves the meeting and sees Bowie's slave Jethro (Jester Hairston); they have a warm exchange, and Jethro makes excuses for Bowie's absence from the meeting. Houston and his troops then depart, and Jethro goes to his master, Bowie. Bowie wakes up, and expresses disappointment in missing Houston (*Alamo* Wayne).

The film shifts to the fortification of the Alamo where Travis orders the 1824 flag raised over the Alamo. Travis and Bowie meet inside the Alamo; Bowie tells Travis that Santa Anna (Ruben Padilla) advances with an army of seven thousand men. Bowie confronts Travis, arguing defense of the Alamo is impossible. Travis reminds Bowie that while drunk he missed the meeting with Houston. Travis and Bowie engage in a series of antagonistic interactions concerning how to defend the fort, what intelligence to believe, and how to fight. While they engage in their personal struggles, on a vista overlooking San Antonio, Davy Crockett (John Wayne) and his men arrive at San Antonio. These Tennessee volunteers immediately locate a cantina; they rowdily change out of their riding clothes into party clothes. That evening Crockett's men drink and dance with the local señoritas. Travis arrives at the party seeking Crockett. Travis and Crockett retire to a quiet room to discuss the situation at the Alamo. Travis asks Crockett permission to enlist the Tennessee volunteers in the fight against Santa Anna. Crockett preempts Travis by revealing his awareness of the goal to declare the Republic of Texas. Crockett embraces the cause, and in fact, reveals that he has come to Texas to fight for the cause of independence (*Alamo* Wayne).

The film moves outside the cantina where Crockett encounters a young Mexican boy moving luggage down a staircase. The boy moves the luggage for a beautiful Mexicana, Señora de Lopez (Linda Cristal). Attempting to leave town, her efforts are thwarted by a Euro-American Emil Sande (Wesley Lau). He orders her luggage taken back upstairs; Crockett follows. Sande slams the door in both Crockett's and the boy's face. Crockett confronts Sande and asks the young woman if she needs his assistance; she states she is safe, and Crockett leaves. Crockett eavesdrops on de Lopez's and Sande's discussion; Sande attempts to force de Lopez to marry him. Sande wants her land. Crockett waits outside the woman's room until Sande departs, allowing Sande to see him as he goes to de Lopez's room. Crockett informs her that he overheard and will assist her. She declines his assistance, but is very grateful. Crockett leaves the room and once in the street, Sande and some of his Mexican thugs confront him. A brawl ensues, Crockett holds his own until Bowie arrives, and the two men defeat the six thugs. After their fight, Crockett and Bowie drink together. Bowie describes the beauty of both Mexico's land and its people. After a brief discussion, Señora de Lopez informs Crockett of Sande's arsenal hidden in a church basement. Crockett, Bowie, and a group of Crockett's men sneak into the church and take the arms (*Alamo* Wayne).

Day breaks with the forces of Santa Anna advancing ever closer to the Alamo—the numerical superiority of the Mexicans is clear: cavalry, cannon batteries, brigade after brigade of foot soldiers. In the next scene Mexican refugees flee north; Crockett watches from a balcony next to Señora de Lopez's window. He asks her to write a letter to him in Spanish, and then have breakfast. Next, amidst the fleeing refugees, Crockett and Bowie take the guns and ammunition to the Alamo. Once inside the Alamo, Travis invites both Crockett and Bowie to an officer's meeting. Travis and Bowie get into an argument over tactics; Travis shuts Bowie down reminding him that the Alamo is his command. Additionally, he asks both Bowie and Crockett to lie about the strength of the Texan Army. Both Crockett and Bowie object to the dishonesty. Travis presses them, arguing if the truth were known the volunteers would flee. Crockett returns to the cantina where the majority of his men discuss the value of fighting for the Texan cause. At this point, Crockett pulls the letter that Señora de Lopez wrote for him; Crockett claims Santa Anna wrote it. The letter states that the Tennessee volunteers are not welcome in Mexico, should leave immediately, and if they do not they will be executed. This riles them, and they decide to fight for the Texan cause. Crockett then explains that Santa Anna did not write the letter, but it contains Santa Anna's sentiment. Crockett's men still believe the letter to be from Santa Anna and insist on aiding the Texan cause. Afterward, Crockett and Señora de Lopez take a walk admiring the land's beauty. At the end of the walk, Crockett places de Lopez on a wagon with her belongings and sends her north to safety (*Alamo Wayne*).

In the next scene, Crockett leads his men into the Alamo. As Bowie and Crockett ride into the fort, Bowie advocates abandoning the Alamo and waging a guerilla campaign. Crockett, however, elects to fight in the Alamo as Houston and Travis ordered. Immediately after this, Santa Anna's advanced forces arrive in San Antonio; the remaining locals scatter and hide. A cohort of Mexican soldiers ride to Alamo and offer the Texans the opportunity to surrender; Travis fires a cannon in response, rejecting the offer. Thus begins the battle at the Alamo. Over the course the film's next sixty minutes numerous skirmishes occur as the Mexicans assemble their forces, and the Texan defenders prepare for the final assault. The Texans perform numerous acts of almost reckless bravery: sneaking behind enemy lines to destroy a Mexican cannon and stealing a herd of cattle, for instance. Also, conflict between Travis and Bowie comes to a head; Bowie threatens to take his men out of the fort. Crockett repeatedly intervenes reminding both men of the democratic principles at the root of their shared struggle. Bowie ultimately elects to stay and defend the Alamo, and the two men ultimately come to terms as fellow patriots. Prior to escalation into a full-fledged battle, Santa Anna learns that women and children remain in the fort; Santa Anna sends an emissary inviting the Texans to evacuate the women and children. The Texans accept the opportunity, and all the women and children, with the exception of Mrs. Dickinson (Joan O'Brien), leave the fort (*Alamo Wayne*).

Once the women and children evacuate, the Mexican army begins an almost non-stop bombardment of the Alamo. Numerous infantry assaults occur. Initially, the Mexicans suffer tremendous casualties as the Texans hold the fortress. Elderly Mexican women pray over their fallen sons and husbands as the defenders of the Alamo ruminate about the valor of the fallen Mexican soldiers. After the tenth day of the siege, Bonham arrives with news no reinforcements are coming; the men at the Alamo stand alone. After this news, Bowie again prepares to lead his men out of the Alamo. Just before Bowie leaves, Travis delivers his line-in-the-sand speech. Bowie dismounts to stand beside Travis, immediately followed by Jethro. Eventually, every man in the fort elects to stay and fight. The evening before the final battle, there is a heartfelt goodbye between Captain Dickinson and his wife (*Alamo Wayne*). Images of

pensive men cross the screen; Davy Crockett professes, “I’m not thinking. Just remembering” (*Alamo* Wayne). Bowie frees Jethro (this scene will be discussed in detail below), and Jethro as a free man also elects to stay and fight. Dawn comes, and with it, the final Mexican assault (*Alamo* Wayne).

The final assault opens with panoramic shots of thousands of Mexican troops moving into various positions around the Alamo, accentuating the numeric superiority of the Mexicans. Though brief, the battle results in significant casualties for the Mexicans, and the deaths of all the Texans. One of the last Texans standing, Crockett fights to his heroic end. Bowie dies right after Crockett with Jethro dying at his side. The battle concludes with the discovery of Mrs. Dickinson hiding with her daughter and a young slave. Given a burro and some provisions, Mrs. Dickinson leaves the fort as the throngs of Mexican survivors look on. She rides past Santa Anna who orders his troops to attention as he salutes her; Mrs. Dickinson then rides off into the horizon. The film concludes with a panoramic shot of a sunset over the Alamo (*Alamo* Wayne).

Analysis

John Wayne’s 1960 Oscar winning epic *The Alamo*, is the direct heir to the one hundred and twenty-four years of “already knowns” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. In spite of the minor plot variations, the racial and nationalist narratives remain consistent in temperament to what has come before; the patriotic paternalism of Crockett, the narratives of progress to civility from savagery, and a divine hand all shape this late-twentieth century Alamo narrative. Just as in the earlier Disney film, Wayne’s Davy Crockett endorses the quest for Texan “freedom” from Santa Anna’s Mexico with a distinctly Cold War flavor.³ In a discussion with William Travis, Crockett embraces and promotes the Texan cause:

...Live free. Talk free. Go or come, buy or sell, be drunk or sober however they choose. Some words give you a feeling. Republic is one of those words that makes me tight in the throat. Same tightness a man gets when his baby takes his first step or his first baby shaves, makes his first sound like a man. Some words

³ The vision that Wayne forwards closely resembles the political ideology of the era in which it was produced (the late-1950s early-1960s U.S.). It is produced with a very strong political ideology; Richard Slotkin writes: “Wayne wanted *The Alamo* to be received as a serious historical epic that gave an authentic picture of the historical event and linked it to an impeccable and uplifting moral and political message. He wrote much of the publicity for the film, defining his purposes in terms . . . of historical authority and educational purpose: ‘We want to recreate a moment in history which will show to this living generation of Americans what their country really stands for, and to put in front of their eyes the bloody truth of what some of their forebears went through to win what they had to have or die—liberty and freedom.’ He hoped that the film would play a role in the struggle against Communism in the emerging nations, that through it he could ‘sell America to countries threatened with Communist domination . . . [and] put new heart and faith into the world’s free people . . .’ But his more immediate purpose was to ‘sell America’ to the American people, whose patriotism had gone flabby: ‘I think we’ve all been going soft, taking freedom for granted’ (516). Thus, Wayne’s *The Alamo* is as much a historical reflection as it is a contemporary work of political ideology that seeks to present a very narrow, and arguably narrative fraught with half-truths, picture of the Texans’ past.

give you a feeling that makes your heart warm. Republic is one of those words.
(*Alamo* Wayne)

The Texan cause is a republic; a land of individual liberty that invokes the depth of feeling that one has for a child. Wayne's imagining of the Alamo expands the domestic paternalism of Disney's Crockett; it is a much more masculinist projection than *Martyrs of the Alamo* or *Heroes of the Alamo*. Here, the cause of "republic" overtly commingles with the pride of a father. Securing Texas' freedom stirs parental love within Crockett and situates the forthcoming fight within a stridently paternalistic framework: Crockett and his fellow defenders are engaged in the parenting, the raising, of Texas into a republic. And this Crockett, unlike Disney's, exists in a familial vacuum. His wife, his children remain outside the film's narrative. Wayne's Crockett and Alamo exist in a space of strong fathers and husbands who possess the freedom and mandate to act in the interests of a greater good without, for the most part, endangering their familial relations. This parallels the cause of the U.S.'s Founding *Fathers*, and represents a stern condemnation of the aims of Santa Anna, as encapsulated in the previously quoted opening sequence of the 1960 film: "Genearlissimo Santa Ana [sic] was sweeping north across Mexico toward [Texas], crushing all who opposed his tyrannical rule. [The Texans] now faced the decision that all men in all times must face . . . the eternal choice of men . . . to endure oppression or to resist" (*Alamo* Wayne). Wayne's paternalistic narrative solidifies the father's leadership role; Crockett's wife, along with Mrs. Dickinson, fade into the background as the men at the Alamo make the "eternal choice of men." Like Disney's 1955 Crockett, Wayne's Alamo represents the finest form of benevolent paternalism, elevating this value system over any political or economic concern. All that matters is freedom.

Furthermore, the tyranny of Santa Anna, the anti-patriarch, manifests in the fear the Mexican residents show as his troops arrive in San Antonio—they flee and hide before the tyrant's arrival. Santa Anna embodies the bad father; unlike the benevolent paternalism manifest in Crockett and the Texans, Santa Anna provides no parental support for his people—it is not family; it is strictly power applied in the interest of order. Conversely, the Mexican citizens, recognizing the benevolence of the Texans, offer their food, liquor, and women to the Euro-American defenders of the Alamo (*Alamo* Wayne). The Texans and their cause represent a paternalism universally recognized as good, and Wayne's narrative further interjects the centrality of values over politics into the "already knows" of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex.

While Wayne's version of the film lacks the past emphasis on the role of Mrs. Dickinson in the Alamo's defense, the 1960 film is not without the invocation of women's voices and their role in the Texans' struggle. However, all of these moments serve to further the primacy of a paternal domesticity. In a scene prior to the final battle, Santa Anna discovers that women and children remain in the fort; he issues an apology and orders a temporary cease-fire to allow for the evacuation of the women and children. As the families evacuate, Jocko Robertson (John Dierkes) wavers because of his family's extreme circumstances: his wife, Nell (Veda Ann Borg) is blind (*Alamo* Wayne). The following exchange resolves their dilemma:

"Blind" Nell Robertson: Go on, Jocko. Do the best you can.

Jocko Robertson: I can't. . . . I can't. I just can't do it, fellas.

William Travis: Col. Bowie, this is a request and not an order. But I suggest as desperate as our needs are, that family's needs are more desperate.

Jim Bowie: Get in that line, Jocko, and move out with your people.

Jocko: You can see how it is. It's more than a man can bear. She's never said a word of pity for herself in the ten years she's been blind.

Nell: Will Travis, just who do you think you are?

Travis: Mrs. Robertson, I can assure you that no blame will attach itself to your husband.

Bowie: Get moving, Jocko, or I'll help you along with the toe of my boot!

Nell: Shut up, Jim Bowie! You and Travis listen close. My man ain't going out. He's just as much a man as either of you, maybe more. In spite of he ain't rich like you Jim, or fancy educated like you, Will Travis. Jocko, you get back up on that wall. You're just as good as any man that ever trod leather, and it's your right. And I can't see, but I'm just as good as any woman in Texas. And it's my right to go and leave you. Now we've cuddled nice and said all our good-byes. But I'll say it again. We'd be fools not to face it. You're likely to go and get yourself killed in this battle. And I don't know what you're gonna say going through the gates of heaven, *but I'm going to say that no woman ever lived had herself a better husband than you been to me.* Now, go on!

(Jocko stays. Nell leaves. All the men cheer: "Hip, Hip, Hooray!" The scene closes with melancholy music.) (*Alamo* Wayne, emphasis added)

While clearly a less intimate perspective on family than the loving Dickinsons of earlier films, Wayne's approach introduces an "every family" working class sensibility to the struggle at the Alamo while maintaining the primacy of the patriarch. Prior to this film, the focal points have been the officers and their families—the "elites" at the Alamo. Wayne's directorial intervention centers not only the elites, but the common man in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Thus, the Alamo becomes representative of the preservation of not only elite family values, but also the "salt of the earth." Jocko, the simple, earnest man, is elevated by his wife's words to equal standing with the wealthy Jim Bowie and refined William Travis. Nell's words democratize the cause of the Alamo and invite both common and well-heeled into the family of defenders, and demonstrates the shared values of the cause. Additionally, Blind Nell, a woman, orchestrates this social leveling. Her voice, the voice of domesticity, challenges and dismantles any class hierarchies in the Texan cause. However, her rationale for Jocko remaining is to solidify her claim that "no woman [who] ever lived had herself a better husband . . ." (*Alamo* Wayne). Her admonition creates equality among men, among patriarchs. At the Alamo, the "American" family, its values, extend beyond class divisions, and a woman's voice ensures the primacy of men in the social order.

Wayne furthers the Alamo's exhibitionary complex's incorporation of "everyman" in the following scene. As the final night draws to an end, the soldiers gather sleeplessly. Bee Keeper (Chill Wills), one of Crockett's men, laments that all his sins will hinder his entry into heaven. Another man caustically dismisses the existence of heaven. Jocko intervenes; he stares directly into the camera, directly at the film's viewers and states: "I say this. I believe. I can never find a way to argue down you that don't believe. But I believe in the Lord God Almighty, all knowing and all forgiving, and I believe that good shall be triumphant in the end and that evil shall be vanquished. I believe in a hereafter" (*Alamo* Wayne). This profession is followed by Thimblerrig (Denver Pyle): "Me too. I figure a man's got to believe those things. Does he want

to believe in the good things about man, about his own very self? The real good things, like courage, honesty, and love” (*Alamo* Wayne). Building on Nell’s democratizing of the Alamo’s paternalism, Jocko and his compatriot Thimblebrig elevate the war’s justifications, and their manhood, to the highest reaches of heaven. Wayne’s narrative not only introduces a classless landscape into the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, but he also firmly reasserts the divine mandate to fight for what is right, and the Texans’ cause is right. Inclusivity and salvation become the calling cards of the Alamo’s “already knowns.” The geopolitical questions of immigration and taxation, much less slavery, never cross the lips of the Alamo’s defenders, and Wayne’s narrative further diminishes these within the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

While the majority of the film centers the works and choices of Texas’ Founding Fathers, the film’s final frames return squarely to a feminized domesticity; however, unlike earlier films, it is a silenced female who represents this. With the battle concluded, the bodies of the male Texans litter the fort. The Mexican army provides Sue Dickinson, her daughter, and a young African American boy a donkey to carry their belongings away from the decimated fort. Dickinson places her daughter on the burro and begins to ride out of the fort; her little girl asks about her father. Mrs. Dickinson remains silent. The Mexican forces form two lines, surrounding her as she leaves the Alamo. Several older, silent Mexican women cross themselves as she exits. When she approaches Santa Anna, he orders his soldiers to stand and the band plays a salute for her. He removes his hat in her honor. There is no conversation, only music. Throughout the scene, this “soldier’s wife” remains stoic and silent. She reaches a hilltop, and leaves the Alamo never looking back. Mrs. Dickinson, the sole survivor, widow and mother is the heir of the Texans’ sacrifice, and she becomes the transmitter of both the cultural inheritance and story of the fallen men. The father’s of Texas may be dead, but they have ensured the survival of Texas’ future. Mother and child ride into the sunset to tell the story of the Alamo’s heroes. The film’s conclusion centers mother and daughter (a slave is there, as well) as benefactors and survivors of the patriarchs of Texas. Family, and its continuity, again emerges at the center of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, and like Nell earlier in the film, Sue Dickinson will be the voice that carries the story.

By the late-twentieth century, whether it is the protection of family or personal virtue, moral clarity in the absence of politics is the hallmark of the Alamo’s historiography of denial. The heroes of Wayne’s Alamo, while imperfect men, possess such a deep of commitment to the cause of individual freedom and morality that they choose death before dishonor. William Travis, although here represented as a pompous man, nevertheless inspires the trust of his soldiers; he becomes the good father. Crockett, wise beyond his years, possesses the experience and heroic standing of a stately grandfather. Jim Bowie, who drinks too much, is among the bravest and most loyal of soldiers, and another father figure. All of these men and their choices center a moralistic paternalism at the core of nation. In Wayne’s narrative the focus on the nuclear family is replaced with membership in the family of Texas, and it is the work of Texas’ Founding Fathers that represent the truths of the Texans’ fight. This is accentuated in the film’s valediction:

Let the old men tell the story
 Let the legend grow and grow
 Of the thirteen days of glory
 At the siege of Alamo
 Lift the tattered banners proudly

As the eyes of Texas shine
 Let the fort that was a mission
 Be an everlasting shrine
Yes they fought to give us freedom
That is all we need to know
 Of the thirteen days of glory
 At the siege of Alamo
 Now the bugles are silent
 And there's rust on each sword
 And a small band of fighters lies asleep in the arms of the Lord.
 Lies asleep in the arms of the Lord. (*Alamo* Wayne, emphasis added)

The actions and internal struggles of each of the leading men are simply backdrops to brave, moral men doing what is best not for themselves, but their nation and descendents. And they do it of their own free will, knowing full well that they will die. It is a sacred duty, and the Alamo becomes a geographic location, a “shrine,” where homage can be paid to this “small band of fighters” who sleep “in the arms of the Lord” (*Alamo* Wayne). The valediction urges the listener to consider only that “they fought to give us freedom/ That is all we need to know” (*Alamo* Wayne). The egalitarian and holy cause, and the desired outcome, are the only factors that should be weighed when considering the men who stood against Santa Anna’s tyranny. The only issues of importance, just as in the primary materials from the nineteenth century suggests, are the thirteen days of struggle, the men’s sacrifices, and their ideals—the history is the personal choices of the defenders, and these personal choices ground the highest moral and ethical aims in the time/space of the Alamo.

The three films discussed in this chapter represent both the transmission and transformation of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex from a nineteenth century battlefield into a pop culture icon at the center of “American” family values and personal virtue. With each new film, the projection of the values and virtues fit neatly into the social milieu of its era. This narrative does not end with John Wayne. The Alamo, and its historiography of denial, carry through the final decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, again, transforming to fit the specific cultural moment, all-the-while (re)imprinting the “values first” narrative of the Alamo while silencing the racist aims and outcomes of the Texans’ cause.

Chapter Five: Norming the Historiography of Denial: The Alamo's Media "Blitz," Part III

"There's right and there's wrong. You gotta do one or the other. You do the one, and you're living. You do the other, and you may be walking around, but you're as dead as a beaver hat."

—John Wayne, as Davy Crockett in *The Alamo*

All of the previously discussed Alamo representations originate in an era of relative U.S. certainty. The idea that the U.S. represented the most free, the most just, the richest and so on permeated U.S. popular cultural and political thought. John Wayne's 1960 film represents the final entry in the Alamo exhibitionary complex before the radical youth movements and Power Movements of the late-1960s and 1970s, the conservative backlash and economic excesses of the 1980s, and ultimately the rupture of September 11, 2001. The Alamo as malleable cultural trope, however, persists into post-9/11 U.S. popular culture. These late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century films, like those before, both embody and respond to the increasingly ambiguous understanding of what "America" means; however, while doing this, these Alamo texts continue to transmit a historiography of denial through the Alamo's increasingly complicated exhibitionary complex. This chapter takes up the latter two periods, exploring two more layers in the sedimented history of the Alamo, one a 1987 film, the other a film from 2004.

***The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory (1987)*¹ Précis**

The movie opens with a huge party in the town plaza, standing in front of a portrait of George Washington, Davy Crockett (Brain Keith) compares the Texans' fight to Washington's struggle during the American Revolution. William Travis (Alex Baldwin), standing aloof from the party, remains inside the Alamo. Travis speaks with his long-time compatriot Joe (Hinton Battle), a free African American. Meanwhile at the fiesta, the film introduces a young couple Lucia (Laura Fabian) and Danny (Tom Schonely). Eventually, Travis rides into the middle of the party; he locates Crockett and invites him to a meeting with Bowie. At the meeting between Travis, Bowie and Crockett, Travis and Bowie clash over military intelligence, Bowie's drinking, and how to defeat Santa Anna. Travis storms out. Bowie and Crockett sit down, and Crockett realizes that his earlier speech about George Washington was really about Texas. Bowie's housekeeper informs Bowie and Crockett that their men are fighting in the plaza. Travis breaks up the fight, and calls a battle alert.

Meanwhile, ten miles from San Antonio, Santa Anna (Raul Julia) states he cannot avoid the garrison at San Antonio. He must avenge the earlier defeat of General Cos at San Antonio. The Mexicans demonstrate ultimate confidence as they plan the Texans' defeat. The film shifts to the Dickinson's bedroom; the two are snuggling affectionately. Al Dickinson (John Lindstrom) attempts to persuade his wife Susanna (Kathleen York) to leave San Antonio; she refuses. Meanwhile on the plaza, Travis and Bowie rally the soldiers, place them on battle alert, and rile the troops for battle.

¹ See page fifty-eight, chapter three for the rationale for the inclusion of substantial plot summaries; establishing the repetition of "already knows" is essential to understanding the Alamo as an exhibitionary complex and site of historiographic denial.

In the morning, Lucia wakes Danny, and she begs him to leave with her. Danny refuses, arguing that he must remain to fight for their home. Lucia then also elects to remain. The film shifts to the Alamo where Travis oversees the construction of the defenses and placement of the cannon. Crockett arrives in the fort; he reassures Travis that he and the Tennessee volunteers will help defend the Alamo. Almost immediately, Santa Anna's forces arrive. The civilians of San Antonio begin to flee; Susanna Dickinson tells her husband that she will *not* be leaving her husband's side. The pace of fortification at the Alamo accelerates. Santa Anna learns that the Alamo has not been reinforced but is hesitant to attack. He wants to be certain about the size of the Texan force. Travis begins sending messengers asking for assistance. Travis and Bowie again clash over tactics and who possesses the stronger moral character.

Santa Anna's forces march through the center of San Antonio. As Santa Anna moves through the city he notices a young woman on a balcony (Laura Harring); he leans over to one of his officers, Colonel Alamonte (Fernando Allende) and whispers a message in his ear. Meanwhile, at the Alamo, a messenger arrives informing the Texans that they will not be getting reinforcements. The Mexicans begin shelling the Alamo; it is out of range. The Texans return fire, destroying a Mexican cannon. Then Mrs. Dickinson approaches Travis with the 1824 Flag; it is flown to remind Santa Anna of the Mexican Constitution of 1824. Travis enlists Mrs. Dickinson and the other women; he asks them to work with the soldiers during the battle reloading rifles, making shot, and helping with the wounded. More scouts return to the Alamo with the somber news that no additional reinforcements will arrive. In spite of this bad news, more scouts leave seeking help.

Meanwhile, Santa Anna's plan for the young woman on the balcony advances. Later that evening, Bowie begins to show signs of illness. Travis and Bowie briefly discuss why they fight and their futures: Travis fights for his family and a bit of glory, Bowie for freedom. Bowie discloses that Santa Anna is his cousin. The film moves to Crockett telling a story about the Creek Indian War and the viciousness of the Creek. The next day, the Mexicans begin attacking the fort; while the attack rages, Santa Anna marries the young woman from the balcony. However, the priest is Santa Anna's officer, Colonel Alamonte. As the wedding ceremony concludes, Travis and Houston sneak outside the Alamo to blow up a series of old buildings. They succeed and this outrages Santa Anna.

The following day, the Mexican attack continues. A rider finally locates and meets Sam Houston (Loren Greene); Houston informs the scout that he will not march to relieve the Alamo. The rider calls Houston a coward, and leaves. Back in the Alamo, the Texans discuss how they have built Texas, not the Mexicans. The fighting continues, and Jim Bowie suffers a serious injury leaving him bed-ridden. After the injury Travis grows overwhelmed with his suddenly increased responsibility. Travis' African American friend, Joe, encourages Travis and helps him find confidence.

Immediately following Joe's and Travis' conversation, two scenes stress the interrelationship between family and commitment to the political causes: one between Santa Anna and his sister, the other between Houston and Travis. Following these heartfelt exchanges, the Texans sneak out of the Alamo and destroy several Mexican cannons. This again outrages Santa Anna; he berates his officers for their failure and incompetency—he threatens them with death if there is another failure. His generals conclude that he is crazy. Back in the Alamo, Crockett, Bowie, and some of the other Texans discuss Santa Anna's marital practices; Crockett shares other outlandish stories with the soldiers. While Crockett relates his tales, a group of about thirty riders arrive at the Alamo; this new group informs Travis, Crockett, and Bowie that

Texas is about to declare independence. This inspires the Alamo's defenders until, just moments later, another scout arrives to inform Travis that there will be no reinforcements. This news prompts Travis to deliver his line-in-the-sand speech; it is the eleventh day of the siege. After the speech, all but one of the defenders, a Frenchman, elect to stay and defend the Alamo.

As the next day comes to a conclusion, the camera pans across the tired, somber faces of the defenders. Al Dickinson sleeps on the ground, and Susanna comes outside to sleep by him at his post. Lucia finds Danny sleeping at his post; she wakes him and asks him to ask her to marry her. He does and she accepts. She then takes him to Travis' room; Joe and Bowie's housekeeper have arranged for them to spend the night as a married couple. The film reveals it is March 6, 1836—the thirteenth day of the siege. Travis presents the bedridden Bowie with a set of pistols. The women and children hide in the back of the church, and Santa Anna raises the flag of no quarter. The final assault begins.

As the Mexicans advance, they suffer significant casualties. The Texans repel the Mexicans' first assault. The Texans, again, reflect on their coming deaths—they speak of bravery and fear, honor and dedication. Santa Anna, meanwhile, again lectures his generals; he insults them and calls them fools. He then insists on victory or death, death for his generals. He orders them to kill everyone in the Alamo. As morning breaks, the Mexicans begin another attack. The Texans initially thwart the Mexican advance, but the Mexicans' superior numbers and firepower eventually overwhelm the Texan defenses. One by one, the Texans are killed, while they inflict terrible casualties on the Mexican attackers. Dickinson, Danny, Travis, Bowie, Crockett are all the subjects of melodramatic death scenes. The Mexicans storm the infirmary and kill the wounded. Finally, with all the Texan defenders dead, the Mexicans locate the women and children; they are spared. One of Santa Anna's officers, Colonel Black (David Ogden Stiers), urges Mrs. Dickinson to meet with Santa Anna so she will live and be able to tell the story of the Alamo from the Texans' perspective. She accepts the invitation.

The film closes with scene after scene of fallen Texan soldiers. Lucia wanders the battlefield until she finds Danny's body. Joe locates Travis' body. Both Lucia and Joe weep over their fallen loved-ones. The Mexican soldiers build a bonfire and stack the Texans' bodies beside the fire. Santa Anna rides into the fort and surveys the carnage. He dismounts, and wishes to see the bodies of Crockett, Travis, and Bowie. He speaks with Mrs. Dickinson; he orders her to tell the other "rebels" what she sees and what will happen if the rebellion continues. Colonel Black quietly comments that victory at the Alamo will cost Santa Anna the war. The final scene of the film is of the surviving women and children climbing into a wagon with Joe as Travis' line-in-the-sand speech echoes as if from heaven.

Analysis

The trend of emphasizing "American" values and honor divorced from the geopolitical conflicts continues in Burt Kennedy's 1987 film *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory*.² Based on Lon Tinkle's historical work of the same title, the film's narrative begins on February 23, 1836. Like

² After having viewed this film at least ten times, I can only conclude that the film itself is of questionable artistic value! However, it needs to be noted that the film did secure a Primetime Emmy Nomination for Outstanding Cinematography for a Miniseries or Special *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory* lost to *Christmas Snow* ("Primetime"). While the film's quality is dubious, at the time of its release it did garner positive critical attention.

the films *Martyrs of the Alamo* and *Heroes of the Alamo* the quest for a nation represents the highest aspirations and a god-given right. The jovial, down-to-earth Texans of the opening scene's party are juxtaposed with militaristic, impersonal Mexican forces on the march and the haughty Santa Anna. With this comparison fresh in the minds of the viewer, Crockett, after his public speech about George Washington, privately tells Jim Bowie:

. . . when I'm right in the middle of speech-i-fying, I can hear myself saying something that makes a whole lot of sense. Now for instance, I was talking about George Washington and how he got the [United States] going and all that. And without meaning to get allegorical or anything like that, it come to me that what I was talking about is right here, now. Government. People's rights. Now you got 40,000 Americans down here; they was invited down by Mexico, wasn't they? . . . Helped tame the place. Given citizen's rights. And this Santa Anna comes along and he's gonna take their rights away from them; that's wrong. I'll fight that right down to the ground. . . . I mean even if the only land I wound up with is six feet of dirt they throw on top of me. (*Alamo: 13*)

Crockett's public presentation about George Washington and this private admission to Bowie centers the Texans' struggle against tyranny with the cause of the Founding Fathers. The Texans tamed the wilderness and did so because they lived, initially, in Mexico with "citizen's rights." Santa Anna's march on Texas represents a return to the wilderness, a decline into a savage and lawless past. Furthermore, Crockett, like Austin in *Martyrs of the Alamo*, invokes the American Revolution's ultimate aim of vanquishing tyranny to secure personal liberty. This position is becoming a well-worn talking point in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex: the Texans only want what was promised by the Mexican government, nothing more. Their fight seeks the preservation, not an expansion, of their legal rights. Later in the film, as Bowie speaks to Travis, it is Bowie's turn to reveal his reasons for fighting: "More like the old life, I guess. Like it used to be. Like it is in America where the people own the government. See, Santa Anna he thinks he owns the people, and I don't like being owned. I'm, ah, kinda particular about that kinda thing" (*Alamo: 13*). Bowie, building on Crockett's earlier "speech-i-fying," casts Santa Anna as a slave master; Santa Anna rejects the notion of personal liberty and believes himself the absolute master of all people living in Mexico. Bowie casts Santa Anna as a surrogate, and certainly false, god who must be defeated. Personal liberty, freedom from bondage, these ideals guide Bowie's and the Texans' crusade against Santa Anna's false providence. This is reminiscent of the earliest justifications starting with the news accounts in 1836 all the way to John Wayne's 1960 rendering of the war's cause: preservation of personal liberty. And in what may be the most emotionally affective presentation of the Texans' cause in Kennedy's film, the boyish Private Danny Cloud in discussion with Crockett and Travis states:

Danny: What I mean is we're the ones that made it work here, not the Mexicans, not the French, even the Indians don't care for this part of Texas much. Mexico invited us down here; we made the land work. If we succeed now, the land will reward us; we can hold our heads high.

Col. Travis: What if we fail?

Danny: Well, death in the cause of liberty does not make me shudder, Colonel. (*Alamo: 13*)

Danny's proclamation buttresses liberty and progress as the sole focus of struggle in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Danny, like Nell and Jocko before him, possess only the hope of a better future, and Texas represents that hope, a hope that only exists because of free, white labor. Everything about Crockett's reflections on Washington, Bowie's rumination on personal liberty, and Danny's "everyman" appeal reiterates the themes common to the well-established Alamo exhibitionary complex: the Texans fight only for what is rightfully theirs, personal liberty, and a nation where everyone has access to a brighter tomorrow. All that prevents Texan prosperity and civilization is the constant trope of Mexican treachery. The Mexico the Texans resist represents the time/space of both decline and tyranny.

As should be clear by now, the Alamo's exhibitionary complex rests on the clearly established "already known facts" repeated in each Alamo narrative: a value-driven agenda of liberty, prosperity, and family. *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory*, of course, repeats the "already known" within its own version of Travis' "line-in-the-sand" speech. It demonstrates the consistency of sentiment across the one hundred and seventy plus years of Alamo historiography:

Some of you men are probably asking yourselves the same questions I'm asking myself. I can't answer them for you; you can't answer them for me. What I do know is this. This is not about land or money. This is about the one thing that no man should ever be able to take from another man. The freedom to make his own choices about his life. Where he'll live. How he'll live. How he'll raise his family. We face a man who would take those God given rights away from us. Well not from me he's not. There can be no doubt about the price. . . . We can expect no aid. . . . For the past eleven days you have done more than any man has the right to ask. I'm honored to be among you. (He then draws a line in the sand.) Those men who wish to stay will cross the line and stand with me. The others may go with my blessing. (All but one cross the line.) (*Alamo: 13*)

Travis states land and money are irrelevant. What matters are "God-given rights" and as the commander of the garrison, the surrogate father of his men, he teaches his warrior-children (and the viewers) what values are worth dying for, those ideals that make "us" better than "them." The listing of personal choices ("Where he'll live. How he'll live. How he'll raise a family") harkens back to John Wayne's rumination on fatherhood, republic, and the sacredness of personal freedom (*Alamo: 13*). According to Wayne, freedom chokes-up a man as if watching his son complete any number of rights of passage (*Alamo* Wayne). The family-values of the Texans presented in this mass media text again argues that god supports the fight for divinely appointed rights, and that the honor and civility of the Texans are a necessary foil to the barbarous Santa Anna. Burt Kennedy's film presses the "already knows" of the Alamo's historiography of denial into the late-twentieth century; the complexity of treaty law and immigration agreements between the Texans and Mexico, again becomes irrelevant.

These marks of "Americanness"—getting what's right, personal liberty, opportunity, and family—underpin the film's narrative, just as these values have earlier films. However, the 1987 film marks a return to the racial representations of the 1915 and 1937 films. While Disney in 1955 and Wayne in 1960 constructed Mexicans as the enemy, they were generally spared the harshest renderings. *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory* represents Santa Anna as a dandy and scamp,

nearly identical to Griffith's racist 1915 representation. Santa Anna, regardless of the frontier setting of San Antonio de Bexar in 1836 dresses in opulent and constantly changing uniforms. Most damning, Santa Anna also performs the man without honor or morals. When Santa Anna first rides into town he observes an unnamed, beautiful young woman. She stands next to her mother on a balcony. Immediately, Santa Anna halts the military procession, nods to her. He then leans over for a hushed conversation with Colonel Alamonte, his nephew. A later conversation between Santa Anna and his nephew finalize the details of Santa Anna's seduction. The next time the young woman appears on screen, she is in a wedding gown next to Santa Anna as he utters wedding vows about marital fidelity. She believes she is marrying Santa Anna; however, the "priest" is actually Colonel Alamonte. The marriage is a sham. Santa Anna, of course, takes the unsuspecting young woman to the marriage bed. As in Griffith's 1915 film, Santa Anna willfully violates women. However, Kennedy adds the violation of providence to the Alamo narrative. Instead of simply attempting to take women by force, Kennedy's Santa Anna perverts a sacrament of the Catholic Church to facilitate his illicit affair. Santa Anna becomes destroyer of both family and the sacred (*Alamo:13*). This whole episode manifests Santa Anna's barbarism and supports the implication that his—and Mexico's—moral weakness forces the Texans to resist. In the larger context of the Alamo exhibitionary complex, this representation of the "racial other" as moral degenerate directly ties this late-twentieth century film with the earliest racial discourses of Kerr, Keller, Griffith, and Kipling—these "devil-children" cannot be trusted to rule.

Conversely, the family values of the Texans are above reproach. As in the 1937 film, *Heroes of the Alamo*, the focal point of familial virtue in the 1987 Alamo remains the Dickinson family. However, in 1987 they enter in the film in a manner not possible in 1937: they lie in their marriage bed, representing a holy union that further illustrates Santa Anna's disregard for the sacred. A knock sounds at the door summoning Captain Almeron Dickinson away to duty. Before leaving, he orders his wife Susannah to leave with their daughter. As in 1937 film, Susannah refuses:

I've got something to say and you better quiet down and hear me out. I did not bring our child 1,000 miles to see us separated. Now I believe the Lord wanted us to start a new life. And brought us all the way out here to Texas to do it. And you can't say I haven't been a good wife; I have come all the way out here across the country like this. And you can't say that I've ever been one to argue with the Lord. Or my husband . . . but I'm staying! (*Alamo: 13*)

Like her predecessors, Mrs. Dickinson represents a fervent patriot, standing righteously by both nation and husband. Her justification for staying lies with the "Lord"; Texas represents a promised land and a location where her family, and others, can begin a new, prosperous life. Later in the film after the commencement of the siege, Susannah Dickinson brings the 1824 Flag³ of the Republic of Texas to Colonel Travis, telling him, "'Ought to remind Mr. Santa Anna that we Americans are used to living under a Constitution and we don't take light to people breaking their word.' 'Indeed'" replies Travis, agreeing to fly it (*Alamo: 13*). Travis then enlists

³ According to Robert Maberry it is highly unlikely that this provocative flag was flown over the Alamo. It is not until 1860 that it begins to make its way into the Alamo's historical record (Maberry 9-11). See Appendix Four for an image and brief explanation of the 1824 Flag.

Mrs. Dickinson's help reloading rifles and so on. She thanks him (*Alamo: 13*). Rather than the passive observer of the battle, as in the 1960 film or completely invisible in the Disney's 1955 rendering, this Mrs. Dickinson represents a return to D.W. Griffith's 1915 rendering. She is the "Texas woman" of *Heroes of the Alamo*. This Mrs. Dickinson becomes an active player: she is not a warrior, but she participates in the battle until the very end. Her voice, as mother and wife, calls all women to invest in the struggle to preserve the Texans' legacy of resistance for family and against the amorality represented by Santa Anna. Her patriotism and commitment to the cause of liberty (re)establishes her as the female archetype, the oft repeated "already known" role-model, of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Additionally, because she survives, it falls to her to carry the defender's final patriotic message. Before meeting Santa Anna, Colonel Black, an officer in the service of Santa Anna, urges her to accept his invitation to speak, so that she can survive and tell the truth about the battle, a truth Santa Anna will certainly not tell (*Alamo: 13*). Their conversation transpires as follows:

Santa Anna: Madame.

Mrs. Dickinson: I ask that my daughter and the others be spared. For myself, I would've fought with the men.

Santa Anna: You're very courageous. Tell the others what you've seen. Tell them what will happen if they stand in my way. Send her to the North with the others. I do not make war on women and children.

Mrs. Dickinson: Just the freedom of your people?

(Santa Anna ignores the comment)

Santa Anna: Wine! I will drink to my victory. (*Alamo:13*)

Susannah Dickinson defies the genteel expectations of nineteenth century women, modernizing the character and appealing to the feminist sensibilities of the late-twentieth century. However, she does not press too far; her defiance and anger stem from the loss of family and Santa Anna's overturning the land that represented her family's "new life." Mrs. Dickinson decries the fall from civilization represented by Santa Anna's victory.

As an addition to the Alamo's exhibitionary complex's "already knowns," *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory* represents both a return to older narratives and an introduction of a new 1980s vision of the Alamo's meaning. *13 Days to Glory* marks a return to some of the more virulent racist stereotypes of both Griffith's 1915 *Martyrs of the Alamo* and the 1937 *Heroes of the Alamo*. Santa Anna as imagined by Burt Kennedy presents a lascivious and amoral threat to women and also undermines the sanctity of religion. He, like the nineteenth and early-twentieth century narratives of the Mexican threat becomes the face of the savage other (in spite of his fine dress and speech), and ultimately justifies the reasons the Texans sought independence: "American" values cannot thrive under foreign, and amoral, rule. Also, *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory* reintroduces women as central, active players. Disney and Wayne shared a much more masculinist vision: symbolic father-figures took charge and acted on behalf of all women and children. Whereas, Mrs. Dickinson returns in 1987 as a participant in the battle and a vocal advocate for the Texan cause, not just a supportive voice *behind* her husband's choices. Women reemerge as the moral compass of the Alamo's "already knowns" and ensure that the family and its values are the central focus of the Texans' struggle. These tensions, negative racial narratives coupled with a stronger, Euro-American woman's presence introduces a distinctly late-twentieth century perspective into the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. The film appeared on network

television toward the end of Ronald Regan's second presidential term. The Cold War and communism remained the primary threat to the United States; Iran-Contra looms. *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory*, much like the earliest accounts of the battle, reminds the viewer that the core values of the United States ensure both personal liberty and familial security. Additionally, these values cannot be trusted to other nations—they will lead “us” down a road to both economic and moral ruin. And reclaiming both moral and national security as a bi-gendered project, Mrs. Dickinson, the consummate “Texas woman,” actively advocates for the cause—her voice reasserted after the enforced passivity of Disney's and Wayne's narratives. Women represent the force that will hold the nation together, regardless of what confronts “us.” Within the context of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, and the historiography of denial, the context of the battle, again, fades as the struggle to preserve values becomes primary, a struggle that must be won at any cost.

The reemergence of a Euro-American racial primacy, a primacy articulated by a gender-neutral chorus, still silences the racist outcomes of the Texans' victory at the Alamo—the conclusion of the film as Mrs. Dickinson leaves the fort with the few survivors, a reprise of Travis' line-in-the-sand speech reminds the viewer that the Texans paid the “ultimate price” to secure personal liberty and familial security. As a result, *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory* adds to the growing narrative of “already knowns” of the Texans' cause as one of moral superiority, a value-driven cause. The questions of slavery, Mexico's right to self-defense, and the Texans' violation of their legal agreements with Mexico disappear behind the moral clarity of the Texan cause. Though the film transforms the “already knowns” in style, their ideological and cultural substance persists. This contradiction and continuity of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex continues in John Lee Hancock's 2004 film, *The Alamo*.

John Lee Hancock's *The Alamo* (2004) Précis

This Alamo 2004 film also opens with a textual introduction:

The Alamo was established as a Spanish mission in 1718. For more than a century armed conflict deprived it of its sacred purpose. The church became a makeshift fortification against marauding Indians, rebels, and a succession of conquering armies. Location, proximity to settlements, and perhaps even fate made the Alamo a crossroads for siege and battle. (*Alamo* Hancock)

The film then shifts to the battle's end. A dog licks the face of a dead man. A weeping Mexican soldier holds a comrade. The corpses of William Travis (Patrick Wilson), Jim Bowie (Jason Patric), Davy Crockett (Billy Bob Thornton), and other Texans cover the battle field. In the next scene, a messenger arrives at Sam Houston's camp with news of the massacre; there is a close up of Houston's face, and then the film travels back in time, to Washington, D.C. 1835. Sam Houston (Dennis Quaid) guzzles whiskey at a black-tie event. He meets Crockett and urges him to travel to Texas because of its tremendous economic opportunity (*Alamo* Hancock).

The film shifts to San Felipe, Texas. A group of men debate the future of Texas; one of the Texans reminds the group of the loyalty oath they swore to the Mexican government. Houston enters the meeting, drunk, and he admonishes the men to build and train an army. The discussion turns ugly, and Bowie enters the room. He removes Houston from the fracas. The film introduces Travis purchasing a baroque uniform; Travis' slave, Joe (Edwin Hodge), informs

him that his wife has arrived. Travis exits the store. Travis and Bowie pass one another on the street, insulting one another. Travis meets with his wife to finalize their divorce; he then sends his wife and daughter away. Evening comes as Houston and Bowie sit and drink on a patio; Houston tells Bowie that the Mexicans will return and attack with a larger, more organized army. Houston decries the Alamo as a worthless fort. Houston sends Bowie to the Alamo to destroy the fort, claim the cannons, and remove them. Houston and Bowie discuss Bowie's recently deceased Mexican wife, and the scene comes to a close with Travis leaving his son in the care of another family (*Alamo* Hancock).

The next scene opens with Bowie entering San Antonio. He rides with his company of volunteers. He abandons them temporarily to return to his former home. He experiences a flashback, recalling his deceased wife. His slave, Sam (Afemo Omilami), disturbs him. Travis arrives with his forces; he arrives to mocking calls of "dandy." He then rides to review the Alamo. Travis is warned that the Alamo is all that stands between Santa Anna and the rest of Texas; Travis commits to hold the fort with his life. The film cuts to Bowie telling drunken stories to a group of friends; Travis arrives and confronts Bowie. Bowie and Travis, again, exchange harsh words. Almost immediately, Davy Crockett arrives. Crockett believes the fighting to be over; the fact that the war is still ongoing greatly disturbs him. He displays reticence over the many assumptions that the Texans believe about his larger-than-life persona (*Alamo* Hancock).

The following day, the film shifts to Santa Anna's columns marching north. Santa Anna (Emilio Eschevarría) orders the execution of a number of captured Mexican rebels, and does so with no remorse. The film then cuts back to San Antonio where Davy Crockett plays his fiddle, leading a fiesta. The fiesta breaks up when Bowie and Travis get into another fight; Crockett breaks them up. The soldiers, both regulars and volunteers, hold a vote to determine who will lead the forces at the Alamo. The soldiers vote almost unanimously for Bowie. Crockett explores the town and observes the Mexicans packing their belongings, evacuating. The next morning, the church bell rings signaling the arrival of Santa Anna's army. The Texans retreat into the Alamo. The film introduces Almeron and Susanna Dickinson (Stephen Bruton and Laura Clifton) as they relocate to the Alamo. During the relocation, Bowie coughs up blood. Travis and Crockett briefly discuss their dire situation. Santa Anna enters San Antonio; his numeric superiority is evident. While Travis sends couriers pleading for additional troops, Bowie meets with Santa Anna's second in command to discuss a truce. While Bowie meets on the bridge, Travis orders a cannon fired. In response to this provocation, Santa Anna orders the raising of a flag reading "death to all traitors" (*Alamo* Hancock). Meanwhile, the Mexican officers sip tea from fine crystal, and laugh at the presence of the great "American" warriors Bowie and Crockett (*Alamo* Hancock).

That evening the Mexicans begin bombarding the Alamo. The men defending the Alamo hide behind their defensive positions, while inside the buildings, the remaining women and children cower in fear. The morning arrives, birds chirp, and in general, the Alamo's defenders are all thrilled to be alive. As Travis moves around the fort, Bowie hides in the shadows, his cough becoming worse. Bowie and Travis briefly converse; Travis tries to make peace, but is rebuffed by Bowie. On the Mexican battle line, Santa Anna orders the Mexicans to move their cannons closer to the Alamo. He is warned that Crockett is in the Alamo and can accurately shoot a great distance. Santa Anna screams that rather than fear Crockett, they should fear him. Crockett shoots the shoulder mark off Santa Anna's uniform. In response, the Mexicans fire a canon; the canon shell does not detonate. Travis picks up the dud, much to the surprise of the

rest of the Alamo's defenders. This action earns Travis the respect of Bowie, and all the fort's inhabitants (*Alamo Hancock*).

While this occurs, in Gonzales, Texas, Houston and others debate the fate of Texas. Houston insists that he will raise an army, but only after Texas declares independence and creates a government. Meanwhile, at the Alamo night has fallen; Bowie and Travis send Juan Seguin (Jordi Mollá) to Houston to plead for assistance. Bowie confronts Crockett about the stories of his bravery; Crockett responds that, in their own way, the stories have consumed him, negatively taking over his life—the stories compel him to act with an unnatural bravery in front of everyone. At the end of this discussion, Bowie collapses. The film cuts to Houston organizing an army and promising to liberate the Alamo (*Alamo Houston*).

Back at the Alamo, the Mexicans launch their first attack. It is a very brief encounter, and the Mexicans quickly withdraw. After the skirmish, the Texans leave the fort to burn down some wood structures nearby the Alamo; another brief fight occurs. Crockett fatally wounds a young Mexican soldier. The death of the boy deeply saddens Crockett. Morning arrives in Gonzales, Texas. Seguin arrives at Houston's camp and is told there are not enough soldiers to assist the Alamo. Houston orders Seguin to remain in the camp, as well. Houston states that he will not sacrifice Texas' future for the defenders of the Alamo (*Alamo Hancock*).

Later that night, a group of thirty-two riders arrive at the Alamo; these are the Alamo's final reinforcements. Santa Anna, aware of the reinforcements' arrival, mocks the Texans. He purposefully left a corridor open for the reinforcements to arrive. He issues an order that those who leave the fort will be allowed to live. This scene occurs, again, with Santa Anna sitting with his officers eating and drinking in a finely appointed dining room. After the meal, Santa Anna retires to his bedroom where a young, frightened Mexicana from San Antonio awaits him in bed (*Alamo Hancock*).

The following morning, a large group of families, children, and Sam, Bowie's slave, depart the Alamo. Crockett comes to Travis, and urges him to speak to the remaining defenders. Crockett asks Travis to tell the defenders the truth. Travis delivers his line-in-the-sand speech; he admits that there will be no assistance. He outlines his battle plans; he intends to force the Mexicans to attack the fort and resist as long as possible. He extends the invitation for the men to depart with honor, or remain in the Alamo and die heroes. No one leaves the fort. As night falls, shots of the men against the brilliant orange sunset frames the defenders writing final letters home. They reminisce about Texas' greatness and their love for their families. In Santa Anna's dining room, he lays out the final battle plan. Santa Anna's plan, his generals observe, will cost the lives of many Mexican soldiers. This does not trouble Santa Anna. Additionally, he orders the execution of the Alamo's defenders in the interest of Mexican sovereignty and as a warning to others from the United States who would seek land in Mexico (*Alamo Hancock*).

The battle sequence spans nearly a half-hour. It begins before sunrise. The Alamo's defenders sleep as the Mexicans advance to within yards of the Alamo's walls. Once the Texans awake, the battle erupts. The Mexicans suffer tremendous casualties. Eventually, the superior numbers of the Mexicans overwhelms the Texans' defenses. Travis is the first to die. Though playing only a minor part in this film, Mrs. Dickinson weeping over her dead husband receives brief attention. Bowie dies in his bed. One of the last Texans standing, Crockett is taken prisoner. The film returns to the initial shots of the film, panning across both Mexican and Texan corpses. Santa Anna then gives Crockett, the last survivor, an opportunity to beg for mercy. Crockett responds that he thought Santa Anna would be taller, and then, one last time, he

performs Davy Crockett. He orders Santa Anna's surrender, saying he will ask Houston for mercy. Santa Anna orders him killed over the objection of his generals (*Alamo Hancock*).

The remainder of the film relays Houston's near constant retreat from Santa Anna. Houston becomes increasingly unpopular with both his soldiers and the Texas' government. As Houston retreats, Santa Anna divides his army, leaves supplies behind, and makes tactical mistake after mistake. Houston waits until Santa Anna makes a key mistake, and then defeats him. Prior to the final battle, Houston charges his men to "Remember the Alamo!" (*Alamo Hancock*) The final battle is swift and brutal; the Texans initially refuse to take prisoners. Santa Anna's army is defeated in less than twenty minutes. Santa Anna attempts escape but is turned in by his own soldiers. To save his life, Santa Anna surrenders Texas. The film ends with a shot of Crockett playing his fiddle on one of the Alamo's defensive towers, and a note reminds the viewer: "Nine years after the fall of the Alamo, Texas became the 28th state of the United States" (*Alamo Hancock*).

Analysis

Unlike the earlier films, Hancock's vision of the Alamo relies on the economic promise of Texas as a motivating factor of the war with Mexico. Sam Houston tells all who will listen that Texas is a land full of timber, water, cattle, and more land "of your choosing" (*Alamo Hancock*). This final claim clearly harkens back to de Tocqueville's imaging of an empty "American" landmass. Houston defines Texas as open country; a land of opportunity where resources belong to those who will take possession of and use them. However, in the film's narrative Texas as crass economic interests is short-lived.

Over the course of the film, the heroic values of the Alamo's defenders overtake both narrative primacy and the character's motives. The primacy of values in Hancock's 2004 vision validates, again, what has become the central trope of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex: values before all else. The essential moment of this trope occurs during Travis' "line" speech. Here Travis' final call to battle asks his men to consider what values or ideals each individual would willingly fight and die for: "There have been many ideas brought forth in the past few months of what Texas is. Of what it should become. We are not all in agreement. But I'd like to ask each of you what it is you value so highly that you are willing to fight and possibly die for? We will call that Texas" (*Alamo Hancock*). Texas then is both a geographic place and idea. Travis' speech moves beyond the economic opportunity sold by Houston and articulates a highly individualized value system of men seeking better lives, second chances, and richer futures for themselves and their families. Texas thus becomes a land endowed with a myriad of hopes, visions, and possibilities as broadly defined as the needs of the Alamo's defenders. This focus on highly individualized values, versus economic development, buttresses the long-standing denial of economic interest, political gain, and slavery that were the immediate outcomes of the nineteenth century Texans' victory over Mexico. And rather than a singular value system binding the people to the cause of Texas, Travis' invocation of Texas as any cause for which one would die recasts the value driven "already knows" as a complex, multifaceted latticework of lofty, personal values. The values-first narrative of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex is liberalized to maximize its inclusivity, but only to a point.

The selfless moral clarity of the Alamo's defenders resonates in early twenty-first century "America." Enmeshed in post-9/11 culture, Hancock's narrative assures the viewers of the moral foundation of both the United States and its wars. When "we" fight, "we" fight to protect

the most sacred aspects of “our” society, not just the right to consume or grow rich. In an exemplary scene some of the defenders write goodbye letters to family on the eve of the final battle. The scene begins at dusk; the sky glows red with a majestic sunset framing a vast horizon. The camera pans into the Alamo, scanning the defender’s pensive faces. Finally, the camera centers the profile of a sage-looking, grey haired defender who writes: “Dearest Mary, I hope someone with a kind voice is reading this to you. If you could see, you’d know how beautiful this land, our home, is. Kiss all six children for me, and kiss them again” (*Alamo* Hancock). Another message has no embodied speaker; the message and messenger becomes everyman: “Please remember me to my father, and tell him to think of nothing but of coming to this fair country when it is free” (*Alamo* Hancock). This is joined by, “I go the whole hog in the cause of Texas. I expect to help them gain their independence and to also form their civil government, for it is worth risking many lives for. From what I have seen and learned from others, there is not so fair a portion of the earth’s surface warmed by the sun” (*Alamo* Hancock). Finally, “everyman” accepts his fate: “We know what awaits us, and we are prepared to meet it” (*Alamo* Hancock). This entire scene is accompanied by a melancholic piano solo, reminding the viewer of what exactly is to come: death to the heroes. These are the voices of the defenders; these are the values that Travis urges his men to see as “Texas.” So, while Travis’ speech created an almost limitless framework within which to imagine Texas, the film carefully proscribes its limits: Texas, again, equals, family, security, prosperity, liberty. As an addition to the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, this twenty-first century text, a text released in a country rife with social conflict and highly contested values, reassures the viewer of the centrality of family, freedom, and progress—these are the values for which these men fight and die. They are values that rise well-above simple greed or desire for economic advancement; these baser desires remain expunged from the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Also, unlike earlier films, this twenty-first century version of the Alamo represents the heroes as morally complex figures. Alcohol plagues Bowie; adultery and gambling mar Travis’ image; Crockett resents his public persona. Still none of these compare to the utter depravity of Mexico’s leader Santa Anna. All of the Alamo narratives use Santa Anna’s putative evil character to justify the Texans’ war. Although, as noted in several of the films and a historical fact, the Texans swore to obey the laws of Mexico as a condition of settling in Texas; the Texans, however, justify their mutiny simply by claiming they did not agree to be ruled by, in the words of one of the film’s character, a “son of a bitch” (*Alamo* Hancock). Hancock’s Santa Anna engages in the worst behaviors of the past fictionalized Santa Annas: defying Mexican military tradition he executes entire villages without granting anyone mercy, he rapes a young Mexicana without the pretense of marriage, he recklessly sacrifices his soldiers during the battle at the Alamo, and after his defeat at San Jacinto, like a coward, he attempts to flee while disguised as an enlisted soldier (*Alamo* Hancock). He represents what the Texans are not. Santa Anna manifests values antithetical to the “American” way; he is violence for violence’s sake. He seeks to destroy the freedom and prosperity of Texas and exercise absolute dominion over a group of morally superior people. This narrative crafting ensures that this Alamo narrative continues the positioning of the conflict within a moral framework and far from the geopolitical concerns. Values remain the central “already known” in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

This most recent cinematic representation of the Alamo represents the final pop culture entry into the Alamo exhibitionary complex. While the Alamo’s defenders have their own shortcomings, they redeem themselves as they embrace a righteous cause. Santa Anna remains unredeemed and unaware of his immortality. Amy Kaplan argues “[that] to denial and

displacement we can add projection; imperial politics denied at home are visibly projected onto demonic others abroad, as something only they do and we do not” (“Left” 13). The Texans and the Anglo-Saxon readers of the nineteenth century understood themselves as above the trivialness of people of color; seemingly, they could do and never did any wrong, it was always someone else. The 2004 film, regardless of any personal failures on the part of the Alamo defenders, reifies the moral absolutes of the Texan cause: it is right. It is in this reification that the historiography of denial persists uncontested.

These parallel narratives of Texan moral superiority and Mexican deviance constitutes a one hundred and seventy-plus year historiographic and cultural narrative that draws attention to the issues of familial protection, moral superiority, and the promotion of democratic ideals. The questions of the impact of the Texan victory on the Mexican citizenry, on Native America, and enslaved people reintroduced into Texas by the victorious Euro-Americans do not register, and are, in fact, irrelevant. All that ultimately matters are the rights of Euro-Americans. Despite small changes that reflect each version’s historical context, each visual document reiterates the constant narrative repetition from the initial news reports. The films of the twentieth and twenty-first century reinforce that the battle and the Texan cause are about primarily family and individual freedom—these supersede any and all economic or political interests. As is so often the case with U.S. war ideology, this war with Mexico was not one the U.S. sought. Rather, to borrow from today’s war rhetoric, it was a “war of necessity” to end a threat to the “American” way of life (Mason). Santa Anna’s malevolence caused the war. While at some level, these narratives of family and individual rights are no doubt true, they are not the singular causes, or more importantly, the outcomes of the struggle at the Alamo.

Connecting the Dots: Film, “History,” and the Reach of Denial

While this concludes the discussion of mass media Alamo films, these texts, as extensions of the both the Alamo’s historiographic record and its exhibitionary complex, do not exist in isolation. Quite the contrary, in fact. The Alamo as a cultural icon arose from the confluence of the DRT’s investment in their personal history, how this personal history fit into “American” heritage, and a constant need to protect this heritage from revision. As these cinematic records (re)cast the Alamo to suit each passing generation, all the films tread along the well defined pathway established by the DRT, a pathway established on a mythology of heroic men and victimized women/children, a fictionalized narrative of epic last stands, a belief in divinely anointed outcomes in history, the omission of complicating geopolitical and economic facts or perspectives, a sense of moral superiority, and a Messianic rendering of conquest. These are all foundational narratives of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, its pop culture representations, as well as the museum and museum’s publications. Likewise, these narratives reinforce the historiography of denial. It is this complimentary interplay between over one hundred and seventy years of both primary and secondary materials that ultimately validate the accounts of a heroic and just war with Texas.⁴

⁴ This is only a very brief account of secondary texts that support the ideological renderings of the primary materials as well as the DRT in the aftermath of Texas’ separation from Mexico: Walter Prescott Webb’s *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (1935), John Myers’ *The Alamo* (1948), Lon Tinkle’s *13 Days to Glory: The Siege of the Alamo* (1958), Walter Lord’s *A Time to Stand* (1961), James B. Gillett’s *Six Years with the Texas Rangers, 1875-1881* (1963),

To finish the analysis of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex and the historiography of denial, the dissertation returns to the DRT, through the DRT's modern histories of the Alamo. Appearing in 2009 on the DRT's Alamo website,⁵ the DRT argues that the Alamo requires situating the battle within the "larger Mexican civil war" in which the Texans were independence-seeking "insurgents" ("Texas Revolution"). According to the DRT, the conflict raged between the insurgent Texans invested in their own self-preservation and Santa Anna's Mexican troops representing the out-of-touch federal authority in Mexico City. This version mirrors the rhetoric of freedom versus tyranny so prominent in the earliest press accounts and over a century of film. The early phase of the insurgent campaign sought the reinstatement of the more settler-friendly Constitution of 1824. The despot Santa Anna stymied this hope. Thus, the Texan insurgents formed both an army and provisional central government, again, only in response to the lack of acknowledgement from Mexico City. By February 1836, Texas' desire to reinstate the Constitution of 1824 had almost completely waned (the website gives no explanation for this). After a number of proposed military expeditions to Matamoros, and even deeper into Mexico, the Texan cause evolved into outright revolt against Mexico. For a period, as the Texans debated what course of action to take, the Mexican army returned to Texas. According to the DRT, the Mexicans took advantage of the Texans' disarray and attacked the Alamo garrison in February 1836 ("Texas Revolution"). The defenders resisted Santa Anna's larger force for thirteen days, and, "Legend holds that with the possibility of additional help fading [for the outnumbered Texans], Colonel Travis drew a line on the ground and asked any man willing to stay and fight to step over—all but one did" ("History"). The DRT's account concludes:

While the facts surrounding the siege of the Alamo continue to be debated, there is no doubt about what the battle has come to symbolize. People worldwide continue to remember the Alamo as a heroic struggle against impossible odds—a place where men made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. For this reason, the Alamo remains hallowed ground and the Shrine of Texas Liberty. ("History")

The DRT's official history reads like the century of cinematic docudramas. Other than the invocation of freedom, liberty, and the divine, the rhetoric of the Alamo and its fall rejects any critical engagement with either the causes of the war or the consequences of the Texan victory.⁶

Virgil Baugh's *A Pair of Texas Rangers* (1970), *Texas Rangers Sesquicentennial Anniversary, 1823-1973* (1973), Reuben Potter's *The Fall of the Alamo* (1977), Ben Procter's *The Battle of the Alamo* (1986), John L. Davis' *The Texas Rangers: Images and Incidents* (1991), Paul Lack's *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (1992), Richard Winders' *Sacrificed at the Alamo: Tragedy and Triumph in the Texas Revolution* (2004), Charles M. Robinson III's *The Men Who Wear the Star: The Story of the Texas Rangers* (2001), and S.E. Spinks' *Law on the Last Frontier: Texas Ranger Arthur Hill* (2007).

⁵ This is the "official" website of the Alamo museum. In today's "wired" world, it is reasonable to view the website as an extension of brick-and-mortar Alamo.

⁶ Key to the continuation of the imperial ideologies of liberalism within the symbolism of the Alamo is its ownership and the maintenance and its interpretation of the site by the DRT. The DRT, founded in 1891, commit themselves to the preservation of the "memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved and maintained the independence of Texas" (Rash). Their

This online, early twenty-first century rumination on the Alamo and its legacy occurs *after* the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, and countless less visible, daily struggles for racial justice in both Texas and the United States. Many of the ills visited on people of color living in Texas resulted directly from the value systems imported by the Texans; however, there is no room for ambivalence concerning the Texans and their victory, or for that matter the negative consequences on people of color living under white rule in Texas.⁷ Just as in the

primary function centers on maintaining the Euro-American culture and history of the Texas Republic, the battle at the Alamo, and its participants. Of course, the role of such upper class, white women's organizations has long been problematic for communities of color both within and beyond Texas. As many have noted, some white women's politics have created obstacles to progressive political struggles as readily as those political movements opposed to leftist politics (Moraga, Preface xiii). Looking specifically at the DRT, who certainly do not represent the vanguard of leftist, feminist projects, the concerns raised by Cherríe Moraga deserve special consideration: "In a white dominated world, there is little getting around racism . . . It's always there . . . Time and time again, I have observed that the usual response among white women's groups when the 'racism issue' comes up is to deny the difference . . . But there is seldom any analysis of how the very nature and structure of the group itself may be founded on racist or classist assumptions" ("La Güera" 33). The DRT are no different; rather than treat claims of racist representations at the Alamo seriously they hide behind the rhetoric of the nineteenth century discourse of masculinity and Anglo-exceptionalism. Demonstrating this point, *The Economist* raises these issues in a 1993 article: "The Alamo's custodians, the redoubtable Daughters of the Republic of Texas, insist that this is not a mere historical site; it is a shrine. 'Most Americans don't understand that word,' says one of them. Possibly; but that is not the problem. The problem is a memorial that, in these politically correct times, seems to give too much glory to white American land-grabbers, too little to women and Latinos, and none at all to those damned Mexicans" ("Present" 28). The article is not in support of change. Instead, its author presents the accusations of racism as a function of a PC impulse, essentially reducing them to questions of a present political moment. They are not questions of accurate history or of the racialized social legacies raised by David Montejano (222-234). In fact, the article gives the last word to a museum curator who states that as soon as the Chicanas/os and Mexicans do their genealogy and "prove" their forefathers were there, then the list of "heroes" will expand to include them ("Present" 28). As if to prove the importance of proof, the Alamo web site maintained a list of the "men who are known to have died in defense of the Alamo" (A. Williams). Each name, with few exceptions, was linked to an extended bibliography full of references to the sources "proving" the existence of the man in question. One of the most interesting aspects of the list is the notable difference in length between the Anglo defenders and those of Mexican or African descent. The article concludes with praise for the DRT for "saving" the Alamo from the forces of "crass capitalism" ("Present" 28). The praise offered by *The Economist* seemingly removes the project of the DRT from the project of liberalism and places it in the realm of "objective" preservation. This, however, ignores the interests of the DRT and the defenders of the Alamo!

⁷ Robert Utley discusses in *Lone Star Lawmen: The Second Century of the Texas Rangers* (2007) the role of race and law enforcement in Texas during the 20th century. It was established early in the twentieth century that the Rangers generally "did the bidding of the Anglo establishment" (19). This bidding manifest in direct acts of violence against communities of color. During the

“fictional” cinematic renderings, the “non-fiction historical” records produced by the DRT advance a values first agenda where heroism and bravery erase the historic complexities of the era. Race, international treaty law, and so on, facts that would greatly complicate if not disavow the heroism of the Alamo’s defenders, simply disappear from the historical record. If these omissions existed in isolation one could consider these minor omissions from second-rate historical works; however, given that these omission compliment nearly one hundred and eighty years of omissions, these become core “already knowns” within the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex and buttressing “facts” within the historiography of denial.

Shockingly (or maybe not that shocking at all), the message of the twenty-first century’s DRT parrots that of the DRT’s 1916 tract *The Alamo: A Memorial to Texas Heroism*. The DRT, the official caretaker organization of the Alamo, after ninety-plus years of pop culture Alamo representations, cleaves to a late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century narrative; the historical challenge of Civil Rights and the Power Movements have no impact on recent historical narratives promulgated by the DRT. In spite of an increasing awareness that racism, slavery, and

“Bandit War” of 1915 in South Texas, the Rangers lynched between an estimated one to three hundred Mexicans. The Rangers engaged in very little of the actual fighting against armed Mexican insurgents; they, instead, “scouted” their sectors and killed Mexicans. The lynchings were not uncommon and were widely supported by the Anglo establishment (Utley 38-39). Utley continues: “Except in the western part of the state, no less than the rest of the South did Texas practice strict white supremacy, chiefly over blacks but in places over Mexican Americans also. . . . Racial subordination, segregation, discrimination, and deference—Jim Crow—were simply unquestioned features of Texan culture, and any perceived violation of the social order could instantly transform white Texans into savages. Race riots and lynchings darkly stained half a century of Texas history. . . . [The] Rangers were white Texans and thus white supremacists” (100-101). It should be noted, however, that the Rangers had a history of stopping mob violence, though they were rarely given the time to reach the scene of a lynching before it happened; local officials generally allowed white mobs to operate unchecked (101-104). Mob justice was often the justice for suspected non-white criminals, guilty or otherwise. Utley notes that this logic of discrimination did not fade until well into the 20th century: “The 1960s threw . . . the entire Ranger force into a troubling new era in the nation’s history. The counterculture movement, with its hippies, rock festivals, protests, and drugs, discomforted the Rangers. But it served as a mere backdrop to trends of more direct effect. Civil rights laws brought new hope, and new turmoil, to blacks. Other laws and federal court rulings reinforced this landmark legislation by imposing on all law enforcement officers a host of rules for handling suspected criminals. The Supreme Court’s Miranda decision of 1966 alone seemed preposterous: the spectacle of a Ranger apprehending a suspect and reading a list of ‘rights’ printed on a card stood in glaring contrast to the way Rangers usually conducted an arrest. To all Rangers this amounted to ‘coddling’ criminals. A succession of DPS directors echoed the Ranger attitude by inveighing against a ‘permissive federal judiciary’ that fueled a rising crime rate. Aside from civil and criminal rights, . . . [the Rangers] confronted another developing strand of national life: the political awakening of Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest. [The Ranger’s] domain was South Texas, overwhelmingly Mexican American in population. County and city officers had kept these people in their historic subordination, with the solid backing of . . . [the] Rangers. In the 1960s that dynamic began to change” (236). These changes, however, were met with stiff resistance on the part of the Anglo establishment and the Rangers (237-248).

genocide represent a part of the “American” past, the “already knowns” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex remain unconcerned with the negative impacts of the Euro-American “victory” in Texas. Euro-American honor and moral clarity represent the core issues of the Texan struggle, and certainly the battle at the Alamo. This narrative repetition matters because the DRT’s uncritical, unchanging stories inform the museum’s narrative, the cinematic narratives, and how these inform the role of the Texans in the formation and definition of what “America” represents. And as text in a museum, it carries the disciplining force of the exhibitionary complex: modern visitors consume the historiography of denial through the DRT’s narrative of nineteenth century imperial ambition and racist discourse steeped in a language of religiosity and heroism, falsely evacuated of racism and its violence.

In 1996, for example, the DRT published *The Alamo*, by Mary Ann Noonan Guerra. It represents the DRT’s last 20th century entry in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. This text situates the conflict at the Alamo as follows:

What made the Alamo famous was the Battle. For thirteen days 189 Texan volunteers held off 4000 Mexican troops in a battle that can be counted as one of the most dramatic and violent of all times. The Texans were fighting for their rights, and by their stand committed themselves to certain death. In the eyes of the Mexican government the Texan uprising was treasonous. The Texans were Mexican citizens. The newcomers had accepted the terms of colonization—land for allegiance—and pledged themselves to the laws of Mexico. But the oath of citizenship had been taken under Mexico’s Constitution of 1824. The rules had changed. (Noonan Guerra *Alamo*)

Noonan Guerra repeats the stock mantra of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex: the events at the Alamo occurred because Mexico violated the “rights” of the Texans. Thus, a spirit of liberty akin to that which inspired the American Revolution prompted Texas’ revolt. While Noonan Guerra alludes to the legally binding agreements between the Texans and Mexico’s government, agreements the Texans violate, she argues that because Mexico reformed its laws in a manner unfavorable to the Texans, the Texans possessed every right to revolt. In essence, Mexico should have checked with its population of immigrants prior to revising its domestic policies impacting immigration. The Texans, one can only assume because of their moral superiority, deserved to trump the Mexican national government. Noonan Guerra continues buttressing this logic of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex in her 2002 *Heroes of the Alamo and Goliad: Revolutionaries on the Road to San Jacinto and Texas Independence* (also published by the DRT):

They [the Texans] had lost the battle and every man who had fired a rifle or wielded a sword was massacred. Yet within three weeks of the fall of the Alamo until today, over 150 years later, the men who gave their lives on March 6, 1836, have ranked with the heroic giants of Rome and Greece. As the news of the courageous battle at San Antonio spread to the small communities and reached Houston, the *Telegraph and Texas Register* carried in headline, the first report, “We shall never cease to celebrate it.” Freedom and Independence, these were the prizes worth fighting for by men driven by that universal belief that a man should be willing to make any sacrifice to keep those prizes. (5)

Not only had Mexico brought the war on itself, but they fought against not only the U.S. but also Odysseus, Ajax, and Achilles. Like the texts that preceded these entries into the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, freedom is at stake, not personal gain or imperial ambition. The defenders of the Alamo championed and died for the most essential human rights, while the Mexicans sought to oppress Texas. The narrative connections with Antiquity and the emphasis on personal liberty are familiar narratives stretching from the earliest accounts of the Alamo and through its cinematic record. Noonan Guerra's updates the logic of the nineteenth century primary materials. Her DRT published texts represent a contemporary manifestation of the historiography of denial; they are popular historical texts purchased (though not exclusively) on the museum grounds; they are short, accessible works. And like the films, her books *The Alamo* and *Heroes of the Alamo and Goliad* continue the narratives of progress over politics. "We" as a nation should thank and praise the men who died at the Alamo; they secured "our" freedom and denied tyranny's grasp of Texas.

Even the 2008 mission statement of the DRT echoes their 1916 tract: "to perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved and maintained the independence of Texas" ("Mission"). Though in relationship to the Alamo proper, it is more refined:

The DRT recognizes the need to couple commemoration with education. . . . [In reference to the Alamo as museum, the DRT state] the exhibit explains the evolution of the Alamo from mission to modern-day shrine. . . . Moreover, [visitors] will be reminded that values displayed by the Alamo garrison in 1836 are universal and recognized by cultures all around the world. ("Alamo – a Story")

After nearly one hundred and eighty years of cultural representation, summing up the historical narrative of the Alamo takes but a moment. From Kerr's 1838 poem to Hancock's 2004 *The Alamo*, the "universal values," at least on the surface, are heroism, liberty, family, security, and progress. From the first news accounts to the latest-DRT publications, the ultimate aim of the men who died at the Alamo exist beyond reproach. Mexico consistently represents evil; Mexico is tyranny and regression. Thus, the "universal values" are shaped by the commitment of the DRT to preserve the Alamo "as a *sacred* memorial to the Alamo Defenders" ("Mission," emphasis added). It is this element of the sacred, when coupled with their investment in the nineteenth century renderings of the defenders as epic heroes that creates the framework for the twentieth and twenty-first century historiography of denial. The sheer volume of the historical and cultural texts that span the last century and a half establish the Alamo exhibitionary complex as a beacon of democracy and freedom. Racist violence and white supremacy are not part of the narrative proper, though race does become a part the Alamo's "already knows." As will be discussed in the following chapter, the racism of the nineteenth century Texas is barely sublimated below the profession of universal values. The packaging of the Alamo may mute the highly racist language of the nineteenth century; however, over the course of its history, the Alamo's exhibitionary complex only invites in the "right" kind of people of color.

Chapter Six: The “Right” Kind of People of Color Shall Inherit the Earth

“Do you remember the days of slavery?

And how they beat us
 And how they worked us so hard
 And they used us
 ‘Til they refuse us

.....

My brother feels it
 Including my sisters too
 Some of us survive
 Showing them that we are still alive

.....

History can recall, history can recall
 History can recall the days of slavery
 Oh slavery days! Oh slavery days!

While I remember, please remember!
 Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you?”

—Burning Spear, “Slavery Days”

Well-established by the early twenty-first century, the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex draws from film, historical records, the Alamo museum, and the heritage narratives crafted by the DRT. As discussed earlier, an exhibitionary complex builds on a succession of “already known facts” permeating a culture’s zeitgeist. At the Alamo, family values, progress, heroism, and resistance to tyranny represent the “already knowns” of the Alamo narrative. Repetition of these values through the Travis’ famous “line-in-the-sand speech,” the Dickinson’s familial dynamics, the stories of heroic battle and individual acts of the Alamo’s defenders, all reinforce these as mythical values as “facts” of history. Just as the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex reinforces these “affirmative” values, it also transmits “already known facts” about those individuals relegated to the outside of the Alamo’s epic narrative. Race, of course, lies at the heart of this distinction-making process. This chapter analyzes the Alamo’s contributions to the construction of race. Here of the mythology of “good” and “bad” people of color becomes a narrative trope that aids in the denial of the Alamo’s role as one marker in centuries of racist, genocidal violence in the United States.

David Montejano points out that the Alamo represents the starting point of the racial narratives that would dominate Texas for the coming century:

In the late nineteenth century . . . every [racialized] conflict provided an opportunity for the recreation of previous battles. . . . The basic rules regarding . . . authority [demanded a structure] in which Anglo stood over Mexican. . . . [Furthermore] what cannot be ignored . . . is the striking but common paradox where the historical legends of the Alamo . . . co-exist innocently along side sociological studies of Mexican Americans as immigrants. (82-83, 261)

Mexicans and Mexican Americans reconstituted as subordinates and immigrants—unlike the Anglo-Saxon centered the Euro-American population as native Texans, consistent with the sacrosanct narrative of Manifest Destiny. Euro-Americans, not the Mexicans (or for that matter the Indigenous populations predating the arrival of Spain), belonged in Texas. Indeed, the previously discussed newspaper articles, poems, films, and histories imply that the land belonged to the Anglos defeated at the Alamo—theirs was a natural right to ownership as manifest in the “already known facts” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.¹ As W.E.B. Du Bois argues in another context, imperialism is the “doctrine of the divine right of white people to steal” (*Darkwater* 507). José David Saldívar continues:

Stephen F. Austin later recalled the purpose of [Texan] immigration: “[I wanted] to redeem Texas from the wilderness. . . . My object, the sole and only desire of my ambitions since I first saw Texas, was to redeem it from the wilderness—to settle it with an intelligent honorable and interprising [*sic*] people.” Of course, what Austin meant through his frontier rhetoric was a “whitening” of Texas. As De León suggests, Austin wanted to make the Texas frontier “a cultural and racial copy of the United States.” (*Dialectics* 64)²

In “history’s” eyes, Mexican defense of their country’s borders represented, and continues to represent, a barbaric and regressive project to run “good” people off of unoccupied land. Throughout the texts discussed in the previous chapters, the *Geist*-centered historiographic narrative constructs the Mexican as the anti-thesis of the Texan. The Mexican destroys Euro-American family, assaults white womanhood, hinders economic development, and advances despotism; the Mexican remains fallen until the Texan arrives to introduce both history and progress. Unless subservient, enslaved, or buried Mexicans, Native Americans, and

¹ The will to question the legitimate claims of ownership is not something relegated to the past; this lack of will still shapes contemporary scholarship. Consider Frederick Wilkins’ *The Texas Rangers, 1823-1845* (1996): “I [Wilkins] am *not* attempting revisionist history, but I have tried to gather together all the materials bearing on the early rangers to make whatever judgments seem justified by a study of these facts. Because historical events must be judged in terms of the morality of the day, I have tried to avoid the prejudices of our later era. The first rangers lived and fought in a time when morality was more black and white than it is today, and an enemy was anyone who tried to hinder the development of the land the settlers considered to be their own” (xii, emphasis in original). Consider the application of Wilkins’ careful effort to avoid revisionist history; the Rangers participated in Indian removals as Texan settlers moved onto lands that had historically belonged to various Indigenous tribes; however, as noted in the introductory passage, the legality of the movement of the Euro-American settlers mattered little as they considered the land “to be their own.” Thus, the Rangers’ actions to clear the land were justifiable (25-58).

² The importance of this attitude of expansion is furthered in Saldívar’s second book *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (1997). Here the argument is made that the white supremacist and expansionist attitude marks the genesis of the age of global imperial expansion and its accompanying historical and economic logics, and thus it represents a precursor to Hegel’s initial articulation of what this dissertation calls the historiography of denial (45).

subsequently imported enslaved African/African American did not belong in Texas unless, in rare cases and if at all possible, they assimilated to become “good Americans.” Even then, the “good ones” needed a Euro-American endorsement.³ As Montejano points out, the Alamo as touchstone for the subsequent race relations in Texas both accounts for and defines the status of non-whites in its exhibitionary complex. It crafts a long series of “already knows” that establish the proper places for people of color in Texas.

Remember, If You’re Not White, To Know Your Place Is To Have a Place

People of color always lived in intimate proximity to the Texans; they were, however, enslaved and living in a state of oppression. The fact of slavery represents one of the political and social complexities that rendered a completely “pure” narrative of the Alamo problematic. The usual response of Euro-American narratives, however, was simple: complete dismissal of slavery from the construction of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. Another problematic factor was that unlike the United States, Mexico had outlawed slavery in 1829. Thus, omitted from the “already knows” is the Texans reintroduction of chattel slavery to Texas. Consider the sentiment expressed in the 1845 abolitionist political pamphlet *How to Conquer Texas Before Texas Conquers Us*: “III. The continuation, through an undefined time, of slavery in a region adapted to it as Texas is by its position. IV. The destruction of the balance of power between free and slave States, and Atlantic and western States” (4). Slavery and its persistence were serious concerns for many in the United States. Most of the concern over slavery in Texas was not rooted in worry for the well-being of the slaves; rather the question, in this case, focused on the expansion of “free labor” into empty, rich lands where poor European immigrants and Euro-American citizens could make a living (*How* 8).

The devaluing of free labor was not the only objection. Looking again at the public debate concerning the war in Texas (a debate excluded from the “already knows” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex), one sees the “progressive” John Quincy Adams rejecting the idea of aiding the Texans. Adams, in fact, preferred to sit the war out. He urged the United States to respect the international border and the right of Mexico to govern itself. In fact, he condemned the colonial project of the Texans in a speech delivered in Congress in 1836: “And again I ask, what will be your *cause* in such a war? Aggression, conquest, and the re-establishment of slavery where it has been abolished. In that war, sirs, the banners of *freedom* will be the banners of Mexico; and your banners, I blush to speak the word, will be the banners of slavery.” Some decades later, Hubert H. Bancroft’s 1885 *History of Mexico* offers a similar assessment of the Texans’ aims. Bancroft, like Adams, believed that the cries for justice and liberty were false, merely cover for the real aims of the Texans, the incorporation of a new slave state into the United States to buttress the pro-slavery voting block in congressional and national elections (151-185). Still, although both Adams and Bancroft condemned the Texans for their duplicity, both still expressed notions of Anglo superiority in their opinions about the Mexicans and their actions/abilities. Here, for example, are Adams’ remarks concerning the leadership of Latin America and the potential outcome of war between the U.S. and Mexico:

³ For an example of a “good” person of color, see Francisco Becerra’s 1875 account *A Mexican Sergeant’s Recollections of the Alamo and San Jacinto*. Becerra’s is prefaced, and validated, by his Texan patron, John S. Ford.

Sir, the history of all the emancipated Spanish American Colonies has been ever since their separation from Spain, a history of convulsionary wars . . . Santa Anna was but one of a breed which Spanish America for the last twenty-five years has been a teeming mother—soldiers of fortune, who, by the sword or the musket-ball, have risen to supreme power . . . The same soil which produced them is yet fertile to produce others. . . . Your war, sir, is to be a war of races—the Anglo-Saxon American pitted against the Moorish-Spanish-Mexican American . . . Sir, in considering these United States and the United Mexican States as mere masses of power coming in collision against each other, I cannot doubt that Mexico will be the greatest sufferer by the shock. The conquest of all Mexico would seem to be no improbable result of the conflict . . .

Adams saw a “fertile” country to the south that “breeds” malcontents like Santa Anna. Though he cited Texan deceitfulness as a reason to stay out of the war, his concern remained “race war.” Not that he doubted the outcome; Adams was supremely confident that the U.S./white race would win. He clearly shared the conviction of his peers that the United States and its stronger (superior?) people would have little difficulty subjugating Mexico. When Adams looked south, he perceived a disorganized, violent, and crude race of people, and subsequently, felt no interest in involving the United States with them, not even to protect the lives of his fellow Euro-Americans living in Texas. The repetition of Mexican defeat, and the racial superiority embraced even by those against the Texan war, illustrate the pathway to exclusion from the “American” nation. However, submission proved a more tricky cultural practice in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. Adams’ and Bancroft’s narratives of the war centered slavery as a cause of the conflict, though both shared the sense of racial superiority of the Euro-American. Regardless, this narrative of war fails to impact the Alamo’s exhibitionary conflict. The textual records, the foundations of the “already knows,” of the Alamo construct a very different narrative when dealing with the question of slavery. As will be demonstrated below, just as the Alamo’s almost century long cinematic and cultural narrative establishes a historical framework buttressing the Euro-American claim on Texas and the moral high ground, this same narrative also contributes to a political and social narrative of an “us” versus “them” racialized world.

With the exception of the barbarous Mexicans, the earliest Alamo films barely acknowledge the presence of people of color as players in the Alamo exhibitionary complex. *Martyrs of the Alamo* (1915) contains several scenes with an uncredited black-faced actor. Bowie’s unnamed slave utters no lines; this deference secures the slave’s status in Texan society. Euphorically crossing Travis’ line-in-the-sand represents his most consequential act (*Martyrs*). A slave, Bowie’s property, exercises choice to follow his master and defend the cause of Texas, the cause of his *own enslavement!* The slave dies crouching by Jim Bowie’s bed reloading, but never firing, rifles for his master (*Martyrs*). At the Alamo, a war to reintroduce slavery into Texas, a slave chooses his master over the Mexican forces who would free him. This depiction promotes the notion that slaves loved their masters; the relationship between master and slave proves a benevolent relationship that ultimately, as manifest in the slave’s choice to fight with Bowie, serves the best interest of the slave. Slavery is racial harmony, and the Texans import this harmony with them and this raced interaction reasserts the natural order of things. Griffith introduces this visual record of racial harmony (so long as the Euro-American dominates) into the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. As a foundational “already known” in the pop culture representations of the Alamo, the happy-go-lucky slave whose singular character trait is

deference serves to justify the white supremacist legal and cultural structures that emerged after the Texan victory.

Similarly, *Heroes of the Alamo* (1937) generally avoids engaging in the issue of race in the context of Texas. Just as *Martyrs* before it, a deferent, happy slave represents the “good,” but passive, racial other. Representing no threat to the white racial order, and in fact buttressing it, Luke, Stephen Austin’s slave, performs the proper subservience and safely navigates Texan society and retains a place within it. Both of these representations manifest the racial values of pre-Civil Rights U.S. culture—people of color, specifically African Americans, “fit in” so long as they know their “place.” Embedding this logic in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, these films construct slavery as benevolent and completely erase the question of Native America. These earliest mass media texts craft a benign racial politics for the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, and this benign portrait represents a strict denial of the systemic violence of the “American” past.

In the 1955 Disney film, *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*, the racial discourse shifts away from African Americans. Slaves, however, do make an appearance. Crockett visits Andrew Jackson’s estate where two African American actors play the role of a young field hand and a well-dressed older house servant. Both appear content, relatively well dressed, and healthy. They naturally move about Jackson’s estate; they are in their places (*Davy*). Just as the previous two films, Walt Disney’s rendering of nineteenth century race relations creates a vision of harmony and stability between African American subordinates and white masters; peace reigns so long as this racial hierarchy exists. Conversely, challenging the racial order results in chaos. Disney demonstrates this chaos through the introduction of Native America into the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. Crockett, in a segment titled “Hunting Red Stick,” assists the United States Army subdue the Creek Indians. Fighting with conviction, killing numerous Creek warriors, Crockett acts to protect “Americans” threatened by the war-like Natives (*Davy*). Native Americans enter the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex as a disruptive force and a threat to security. They initially reject the pathway to racial harmony represented by the master-slave relationships that exist between African American slaves and their white masters. Crockett, however, furthers the established narrative of Euro-American moral superiority, and in spite of repeated “provocations” by the Indigenous, he resists becoming an Indian killer (*Davy*). In another of the film’s chapter “Indian Bill,” Crockett attempts to stop the federal Indian Removal Act, he opines:

But before it comes to a vote, I just want to remind you of somethin’. Expansion is a mighty fine thing. Sure, we gotta grow. But not at the expense of the things this country was founded to protect. The government’s promises set down in the Indian treaties is as sacred as your own word. Expansion ain’t no excuse for persecutin’ a whole part of our people because their skins is red and they’re uneducated to our ways. (*Davy*)

Crockett adopts the Indigenous into “our people.” They merit such inclusion because the tribes about to be removed adopted U.S. law and custom. Crockett previously ended the Creek Indian War by promising Red Stick that adopting “American” values represented the only pathway to peace. Additionally, he defends an assimilated Cherokee family from unscrupulous, and white, land speculators. Crockett advocates for the protection of “good” Indians, just as he wages war against the “bad.” He goes so far as to deride Native removal as the motive of amoral capitalists

and a violation of what the “good Lord” envisions for the United States: justice, liberty, and right (*Davy*). Crockett delivers the above speech knowing full-well that standing for the rights of the Indigenous is political suicide. After this speech, Crockett leaves Washington and heads to the Alamo to protect Texan independence and real freedom.

Disney’s narrative inserts the idea of “good Indians” into the Alamo exhibitionary complex—Crockett, a great “American” hero kills “savage Indians” while he protects the “good” ones. The distinguishing feature between the “savage” and “good” Natives lies with their assimilation. This narrative move on the part of the film, links the cause of Texan liberty with Crockett’s commitment to justice for assimilated Indigenous peoples; the Texan cause manifests a pure struggle for freedom, one that cannot be found in the corruption of U.S. politics, a political practice that violates the rights of “good” people of color. The inclusion of Crockett’s political philosophy in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex constructs a Texas *more* free than the United States; Crockett, a man who gives up life in a politically corrupt United States to defend Texas, chooses Texas over the United States.

This is reinforced when upon arriving in Texas, Crockett states, “Texas! There’s plenty of room out there for every dream I ever had” (*Davy*). However, Crockett immediately recognizes the smoke signals of the Comanche, the “barbaric horde they call the Cossacks of the Plains” (*Davy*). Even in the freest state of Texas, the specter of the “bad” person of color poses a threat. However, Crockett rides on only to encounter an injured “Cossack.” Rather than shy away from the wounded “savage,” Crockett approaches the unconscious man and begins to aid him. The wounded Comanche awakes and attacks Crockett. Crockett subdues the man and makes peace through a magical form of non-verbal communication (*Davy*). Crockett’s continued commitment to peace with Native America burrows deeper into the Alamo’s narrative. The film continues with the Native volunteering to become their guide; he is named “Busted Luck” by Crockett. Busted Luck accompanies Crockett and his entourage to the Alamo. He stands with Crockett and the Euro-American defending the Alamo and the aims of the Texans (he does so, however, without a gun). After another epic “line-in-the-sand” speech is delivered, Busted Luck, along with Crockett, crosses the line and consigns his life to Texas. As the film closes and the battle rages, Busted Luck fights along side Crockett with as much zeal as anyone in the fort. He, like the great Euro-American hero Crockett, dies in defense of the Alamo and its cause (*Davy*).

This film, through Davy Crockett, creates a narrative of justice that encompasses the killing of Natives, a need for racially sensitive federal legislation, and the incorporation of “good” Natives into the Texan cause. By the mid-1950s, Alamo films represented the “good” African American vis-à-vis multiple representations of largely silent, always subservient and passive slaves into the cultural record of the Alamo. Additionally, the earliest films ignored Native Americans, but Disney’s 1955 film centers the narrative of Native America within the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, though only tangentially through Crockett’s values. Crockett, as defender of the “good” Indian and killer of the “bad,” furthers the growing body of “already known” facts that “good” people of color possess a place within the democratic vision embodied by the Alamo’s defenders. The Alamo exhibitionary complex is populated by men who protect the rights of those people of color who follow the values espoused by the Texans, but like the omnipresent “bad” Mexican, those peoples of color who do not embrace “America” are subject to death.

In John Wayne’s 1960 film *The Alamo*, slavery returns as a benevolent institution in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex; whereas, Natives again fade from the narrative. Jim Bowie, the

night before the final battle, orders his slave Jethro to speak with him. The conversation proceeds as follows:

Bowie: Jethro.

Jethro: Yes sir?

Bowie: This is somthin' I promised Mrs. Bowie. Know what it is?

Jethro: No sir.

Bowie: That's your freedom. You're a free man, Jeth.

Jethro: Oh! Thank ya, sir!

Bowie: Better get your belongings together and get on over the wall tonight. It's gonna be more than a little rough around here.

(Both shake hands while looking one another in the eye.)

Bowie: Good luck, Jeth.

Jethro: Thank ya, sir. . . . Ah, Col. Bowie, you say I'm a free man?

Bowie: That's right.

Jethro: Well, if I'm free, then I got a right to decide what I'm gonna do. Seems to me that's what you men are fighting for. So, I reckon I'll stay.

(Jethro then walks off.) (*Alamo* Wayne)⁴

Jethro, the slave-made-free by his master, elects to stay with those fighting for freedom; his cause, the *only* cause Jethro embraces as a free man, is the cause of Texas' liberty, the cause of his just-former master. Jethro's final act further illustrates his commitment: during the battle, Jethro sits beside his former master Bowie, a riding injury confines Bowie to bed. As the Mexican forces storm Bowie's bedroom, both Jethro and Bowie discharge their weapons. Jethro then looks at the Mexican forces, at Bowie, than back to the Mexican soldiers as they charge forward with bayonets. Jethro throws himself across Bowie in one final act of loyalty toward this former master; this allows Bowie time to kill one more Mexican (*Alamo* Wayne).⁵ Jethro, in spite of lifelong servitude, makes his final choice as a free man to save his former master. This interplay between slave and master casts the institution of slavery in the best possible light; slavery, as practiced by Bowie, manifests the very best of benevolent paternalism: Jethro, though property most of his life, exemplifies the best of the "good" person of color. Additionally,

⁴ This dialog mirrors, to an extent, the long-standing tradition of "Amos and Andy" performances where subservience and deference were the hallmark of a "good" African American; for a contemporary, and very thoughtful critique, of this kind of performance Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* (2000) is an excellent popular culture text. For a more scholarly readings of this, see John Strausbaugh's *Black Like You* (2006), Cedrick Robinson's *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning* (2007), and Linda Tucker's *Lockstep and Dance* (2007).

⁵ The absurdity of this image is captured in Patricia Penn Hilden's work *When Nickels Were Indians: An Urban, Mixed-Blood Story* (1995): "Vine Deloria recounts a joke about two men, one black, one Indian, sitting in a bar talking about the problems of their respective groups. The black man reviewed all of the progress his people had made over the past decade and tried to get the Indian inspired to start a similar movement of activism among the tribes. Finally, the black man concluded, 'Well, I guess you can't do much, there are so few of you.' 'Yes,' said the Indian, 'and there won't be many of you if they decide to play cowboys and blacks' (Penn Hilden 232).

Wayne's representation of slavery marks an "improvement." A speaking subject in the film, Jethro self-reflectively embraces the Texans' cause; this is a measureable difference from the lampoonish black-faced slave in Griffith's 1915 film. However, the refusal to overturn the existing white supremacist racial order remains consistent. Jethro, after a lifetime of slavery and though free, chooses to remain in his place and serves his white master to the end.

Overall, slavery in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex is not an institution of violence and dehumanization. Rather, slavery works out quite well for all the slaves depicted. Each learns the values of freedom so completely that they freely choose servitude, like the Native American, Busted Luck in Disney's 1955 Alamo film. Jethro's sacrifice, in the context of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, shows the film's viewers that the Texans' values served the interests of people of color. Through Wayne's representation, and building on the earliest historical texts and previous films, the Alamo's exhibitionary complex increasingly, and ahistorically, comes to represent a location of struggle for universal rights, rights available to all "good" people.

The 1987 film, *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory*, continues writing "good" people of color into the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Joe, the representative African American, is a good *friend* of Colonel Travis; Joe is free and equal to all the men at the Alamo. Colonel Travis and Joe converse easily at the film's opening. The two talk about drinking and ladies—Joe informs Travis he intends to travel to California where he expects to find women (*Alamo: 13*). Joe, unlike a slave, possesses the freedom of mobility and the right to seek a mate independent of a master's oversight. These are the hallmarks of freedom, and as the only African American at the Alamo (in this film, anyway), the film's narrative establishes Joe as completely independent and the dehumanization of slavery absent. Later in the film, Joe challenges Travis, who feels overwhelmed by the burden of command. Joe tells a story about his mother and the valuable lessons of personal accountability she taught him. He *lectures* Travis about destiny, and how it is often thrust upon a person. Finally, Joe thanks Travis for being the one white man who believed enough in justice to stop Joe's lynching. Joe, as Travis' equal, orders Travis to lead his men (*Alamo: 13*). An African American, Joe, emerges as the moral compass for Travis. The Alamo's exhibitionary complex, in so far as the representation of African Americans is concerned, becomes a location where all "good" men are equal. The men who fought at the Alamo are recast through Travis as men who stand against the undemocratic lynch mob and its orgiastic racist hate. Travis, the commander of the Alamo, becomes an early abolitionist and Civil Rights activist. Again, this is contrary to the facts, but increasingly central to the Alamo's evolving exhibitionary complex.

While African Americans stand as equals alongside the Texan defenders, Native America reemerges in this 1987 Alamo narrative as "bad" people of color. Crockett recounts his experiences fighting the Creek: "they're born mean; it's in the blood...why a young buck ain't even considered a man till he's killed and scalped a dozen people, preferably white.....I can tell you this, you don't ever let 'um take you alive" (*Alamo: 13*). Crockett additionally labels the Creeks a "sea of savages" (*Alamo: 13*). Without a hint of remorse, Crockett concludes: "Decimation is not a pretty sight," but given the savage nature of the Creek, Crockett implies genocide was the only option (*Alamo: 13*). These savages, like the Mexicans attacking the Alamo, hindered both liberty and familial security. They rejected assimilation which justified their decimation. In-so-far as Texas proper, *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory* removes Native Americans from Texas; as the young Danny noted, Native Americans live elsewhere in Texas because the area around the Alamo is geographically unappealing to the Natives (*Alamo: 13*).

Thus, Texas, in this 1987 rendering, represents empty land for the Euro-Americans to take and African Americans are equals. As the Alamo's exhibitionary complex evolves into the late-twentieth century, "bad" people of color do not live in Texas (except as invaders or rouge Natives), and the "good" ones stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Euro-American Texans.

By 2004, the Alamo narrative introduces a more complex notion of both slavery and Native America; however, the complexity does not challenge the ultimate moral superiority of the Texan cause or formula for a person of color's inclusion or exclusion from U.S. society. In this John Lee Hancock's *The Alamo*, both Bowie and Travis own slaves. Bowie represents a coarser slave owner. On his deathbed, he calls his slave Sam to his side and orders him to flee the fort. Sam grows excited and inquires about his freedom. Bowie replies sternly, "I'll own you until I die" (*Alamo* Hancock). Thus, unlike the Bowie of Wayne's imagination, this Bowie believes slavery a perpetual institution, or at least he is not moved by sentimentality toward his property. Bowie's unyielding commitment to slavery comes as no surprise. Earlier in the film, Sam, converses with Travis' slave, Joe, while digging a well for Travis. Sam acknowledges his contempt for his, and all, masters:

Sam: When they [the Mexicans] come over those walls, I want you to throw up your hands and holler "¡Soy negro! ¡No disparo!"

Joe: What's that?

Sam: Mexican law said there ain't no slaves, right?

Joe: Yeah.

Sam: And contract or no, that's what you is. Now the Mexicans see your color, you tell 'em, "Don't shoot." They pass you by.

Joe: But Mr. William [Travis], he gonna give me a gun, and I'll . . .

Sam: You clean up their shit, you take care of their horses, you wash 'em, you feed 'em. Damn if you ain't gonna die for 'em, too. (*Alamo* Hancock)

Sam juxtaposes freedom in Mexico with servitude to the Texans. However, Joe reacts hesitantly. Travis, Joe's master, is unlike Bowie. Travis' slavery more closely resembles the benevolence of the Bowie in Wayne's film. Prior to the final battle, Sam, on Bowie's orders, leaves the fort; he is symbolically and physically separated from the Alamo's cause. Though while he departs, he leaves with the women and children as the men look on; Sam lowers his eyes under the gaze of the those who remain, including Joe, to fight as heroes (*Alamo* Hancock). As noted, Joe remains and during the final battle at Travis' side until his master's death during the final assault on the Alamo. After Travis' death, Joe retreats from the wall, collects Travis' papers and secludes himself on Travis's bed, rocking back and forth, repeating "¡Soy negro! ¡No disparo!" (*Alamo* Hancock). In essence, Joe elects to serve his master until the end. Unlike the 1960 rendering of the film, the institution of slavery in 2004 presents a greater degree of ambivalence. Bowie, a committed slaver owner, is harsh in manner, but not physically cruel. Travis represents the benevolent patriarch. Slavery emerges as a spectrum, ranging from Bowie's zealous commitment to the institution to Travis' well-intentioned ownership. Additionally, the film displaces Sam the "bad" slave; he ultimately leaves the fort under a cloud of shame and cowardice; however, the "good" slave, Joe, remains and by claiming Travis' documents, secures a measure of the Alamo's history. The Alamo's exhibitionary complex begins to deal with slavery as an institution that slaves disliked; however, the film ultimately redeems the institution

through Joe's final acts of loyalty to his master Travis. And additionally, it is the subservient slave who remains a part of the Alamo's legacy; Joe's loyalty marks him among the heroes.

Just as the film engages in the complexity of slavery, Native America also returns to the film's narrative, and in an equally complex manner. Davy Crockett is again, the focal point for Natives in the Alamo narrative. Crockett in the 2004 film version recounts a tale from the Creek Wars, a tale much different than the 1955 Disney or 1987 versions. When asked about his past "scrapes," Crockett recalls the Creek slaughter of a company of U.S. soldiers and the subsequent pursuit and brutal defeat of the offending Creeks. A few survivors remained cornered in a hut; they attempted to surrender until a Creek woman fired an arrow, killing a U.S. soldier. The soldiers refused to grant the Creek quarter, set fire to the hut, and burned the survivors alive. The day after, Crockett recalls sifting through the ashes, and locating a basement full of potatoes cooked by the drippings of the Creek bodies. Nearly starving, the soldiers (Crockett included) ate the potatoes, in spite of being cooked by human lard. Crockett tells the others that to this day, he cannot eat potatoes. Those listening to the story, and certainly those watching the film, cannot avoid the moral quandary of this near cannibalism (*Alamo* Hancock). Some of the luster of Crockett's heroics dim. However, the violence against the Creek does not sully the mission of the Texan forces. In fact, the heroics of Crockett at the Alamo serve, possibly, as a redemptive moment for him. Crockett dies as he should: defiant in the face of death and engaged in a cause worthy of a hero (*Alamo* Hancock). His past savage acts, and those of quite possibly the United States, are absolved through his self-sacrifice for the great causes of Texas: freedom, security, progress, and so on. The struggle against the "bad" Creek also serves as a context within which to define white heroes. The morally complex Euro-American hero may have behaved immorally prior to his arrival at the Alamo, but through a heroic death, he secures redemption for not only himself, but also for his cause.

Film is not the only medium perpetuating the Alamo's narrative about "good" people of color. As previously noted, the Alamo's exhibitionary complex also builds on the popular histories of the DRT. Inseparable from the popular culture texts of the Alamo, these histories inform each other. Two exemplary DRT-sanctioned histories written by Mary Ann Noonan Guerra paint a heroic and racially harmonious picture of Texas leading up to the battle at the Alamo. Though this is a departure from strict accounts of the battle at the Alamo, it is an essential departure as these publications set the racial context of 1830s Texas and add to the scope of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex narrativization of race. Noonan Guerra focuses on Hendrick Arnold, a Freedman who "served throughout the campaign for independence as a member of [Erastus "Deaf"] Smith's famous 'spy' company, and was conspicuous at the battle of San Jacinto. He never submitted a petition to remain in Texas, but was accepted without question even though he was black" (Noonan Guerra *Heroes*). The account of Arnold's role at the Siege of Bexar follows: "The major reason given for the Texan indecision [about when to attack] was the refusal of the officers of one division to march in the absence of the free negro, Hendrick Arnold, who had been chosen as a leader" (Noonan Guerra *Alamo*). Upon Arnold's return, the spirit of the soldiers revived, and they marched on to victory at Bexar (Noonan Guerra *Alamo*). Thus, central to the mythology forwarded by the DRT, a narrative of both tolerance and camaraderie between the Euro-American warrior and a "good" African American willing to fight for the Texan, and ultimately his own, cause emerges. Couple Noonan Guerra's account with the happy-go-lucky subservience of *Martyrs of the Alamo* and *Heroes of the Alamo*, the benevolent and loving relationship between Bowie and Joe in Wayne's *The Alamo*, slavery's absence in *The Alamo: 13 Days to Glory*, and the ambivalent, but not physically cruel, rendering of slavery in

the 2004 *The Alamo*, and at worst, the African American condition in the Texas consists of one governed by, at worst, harsh words and demanding task masters. The lives of African Americans, at least those who stand by the cause of Texan liberty, provided the same opportunities as the Euro-American Texans. The crafting of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex increasingly exists within a framework where violence visits only those people and communities of color who reject the Texan, and ultimately, the United States' cause.

As a result of the ongoing denial of slavery in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, the recollection of the dehumanization of slavery become hollow complaints. Just as the genocide of Native America disappears. These cinematic and historical narratives welcome "good" people of color, and further the logic of Texas as both a time and space of democratic ideals and personal liberty, so much so that "good" people of color willingly embrace their master's (or just-former master's) cause. This narrative of the Alamo furthers an exhibitionary complex that perpetuates the historiography of denial. The Alamo's narrative of freedom, as imagined in Hollywood cinema and by the DRT is a not always ideal, but a relatively benevolent, multicultural episode in "American" history where, again, the most important lessons to be learned emerge from the sacrifices of the fallen heroes. Their values should be the focus. Subsequently, this dissertation contends that these lessons are important only insofar as they are windows into the historiography of denial.

The "Shrine of Texas Liberty," Chattel Slavery, and Genocide: "Texas Diversions" as Good Clean Forgotten Fun

The myriad practices of historical denial ultimately shapes the contours of this dissertation. In the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, the genocidal violence of chattel slavery and Native American removal do not register in the historiographic record. The "already knows," as noted time and again in this dissertation, focus on the preservation of home and individual liberty. While the men who fought at the Alamo did indeed exhibit bravery, or an ultimate recklessness, the focal point of both popular culture representations and the historic record direct the Alamo's consumers to see only heroic outcomes, the already discussed "weak Messianic" moment.

Exposing the "weak Messianic" moment in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex occur when crafting a strong Messianic moment, a corrective to the "silent" and "bloody" smile of denial in the Alamo. The lack of attention to both slavery and Native American removal (or at reconstruction of these historical complexities as a good/bad binary) at both the Alamo museum and its accompanying cultural narrative represents denial at their worst. A long and grotesque historical record of racist violence surrounds the museum and popular cultural texts. A very brief survey of both the racist aims of the Texans and the violent outcomes of their victory, outcomes that belie the welcoming of "good" people of color into Texas as both a nation and later a U.S. state follows.

A September 1836 issue of the *Christian Register and Boston Observer* quotes an editorial in the English paper, *London Patriot*. The editors of the *Christian Register* qualify the *London Patriot's* perception of the situation in Texas; the *London Patriot's* editors imply Texas is representative of the "American" will. The editors of the *Christian Register* argue such is not the case; however, they endorse the general sentiment:

The British public ought to be made aware of what is going on at present in Texas; of the true cause and the true nature of the contest between the Mexican authorities and the American slave jobbers. None of the daily journals, however, Liberal or Tory, have cared to bring the facts under the notice of their readers. (qtd. in “Texas” *Christian*)

The English press recognize a distinctly “American” unwillingness to acknowledge “the mere lust of territory, which, in the Americans, seems a national passion” (qtd. in “Texas” *Christian*). The *London Patriot*, like both Adams and Bancroft above, identifies the aim of the Texans “is to convert it [Texas] into a slaveholding State, not only to make it a field of slave cultivation, and a market for the Maryland Slave-trade, but, by annexing it to the Federal Union, to strengthen in Congress the preponderating influence of the Southern or slaveholding States” (qtd. in “Texas” *Christian*). The *London Patriot* goes so far as to quote former U.S. President John Quincy Adams claiming that Mexico, not Texas, is the land of liberty:

There was . . . another country to which the voices of liberty has a claim quite as powerful as it has here, with this addition—that it extends that feeling of liberty to all races, to all conditions and colors. That country has set you an example with the last two years, of proclaiming freedom to their slaves . . . (qtd. in “Texas” *Christian*)

Rather than acknowledge personal liberty and freedom as the Texan cause, the *London Patriot* identifies the Texan cause as crassly economic and brutal. The Texan settlers, the supposedly moral Euro-American fathers, mothers, and children who fought for the Alamo, sought *white* freedom and security on the backs of slaves. Of equal importance, the editorial identifies the origins of the historiography of denial in the immediate aftermath of the battle at the Alamo. In spite of the easily identifiable issues of slavery and economic interests, the battle’s and Texas’ narrative become synonymous with exclusively heroism and democracy. Even more jarring, one of the U.S.’s iconic politicians elevates Mexico over Texas on the scales of freedom; the abolitionist Mexico, according to Adams, represents the freedom so deeply enshrined in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. Left out of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, Texas would be cultivated and developed by chattel, not the hands of the Texans themselves. This alternative historical narrative questions the “already knows” of the Texans’ racial politics and the narrative of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Rather than an anomaly, the above English account represents a prevalent attitude among U.S. abolitionists of the era. The abolitionist Ohio newspaper, *Genius of Universal Emancipation* argued during the 1830s that the U.S. citizens who believed that the Texan cause was a struggle for individual liberty and human rights were ill-informed (“War”). The paper asserts:

It is susceptible of the clearest demonstration, that the immediate cause and the leading object of this contest originated in a settled design, among the slaveholders of this country, (with land-speculators and slave-traders,) to wrest the large and valuable territory of Texas from the Mexican Republic, in order to re-establish the SYSTEM OF SLAVERY; to open a vast and profitable SLAVE-MARKET therein; and, ultimately, to annex it to the United States. (“War”)

Again, during the 1830s, slavery and its expansion, as both an economic practice and a political philosophy were perceived to be a central tenet of the Texan cause (“Texas or Disunion,” “Texas” *Palladium*, and “Webster”). In fact, by the 1850s slavery thrived as a well-advertised, wide-spread industry in the state (“Slave,” “R.M.,” and “Texas – General”). Chattel slavery muddles the images of heroism central to the “already knowns” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. Given the rapid reintroduction of legalized slavery into Texas after its separation from Mexico, and the broader contentious debate in the United States, the exclusion of these narratives from the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex maintains the false purity of the heroism and moral clarity promulgated within the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. The image of Texan as slave master complicates the carefully managed remembrances and perpetuates a much more questionable spirit of liberty. As noted by James, Hilden, Guha, and Benjamin above, denial suits the needs of those telling the story. To disrupt these narratives calls into question what both Texas and the U.S. represent as historic ideals.

However much may one want to believe the moral clarity of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, the logics of extermination directed at African Americans (and Native Americans to be discussed below) became normal immediately after the Texan victory and well into the twentieth century. A representative critique of the normalization of racist violence in Texas appears in the *Cleveland Journal*. A 1905 poem by Edward Crosby, “Texas Man and Maiden,” critiques this violence:

Oh, where are you going, my pretty
maid?
I’m going a-lynching, sir, she said.
And what is the noose, my pretty
maid?
There’s nothing but hemp and a strug-
gling wretch
And many hands willing to carry and
fetch.
May I go with you, my pretty maid?
If you carry the oil, kind sir, she said;
If you carry the oil and a match or
two—
For there will be good and plenty to
do—
So come right along, it hasn’t begun,
And be sure you’re in time not to
miss the fun.
But what has he done my pretty maid?
Why, what has he done, kind sir? she
said.
Pooh! Fudge! Go back and sit down,
she said,
Go tell the doctor to examine your
head—

Why, he voted wrong and his skin
 ain't white
 And that makes this lynching just
 and right:
 I guess that'll "hold you awhile," she
 said.

This fictional account of a lynching reveals the day-to-day violence in Texas, and the general attitude of the heirs of the Texan victory over Mexico. Lynching, only seventy years after the Texans' sacrifice at the Alamo, emerged as a widely accepted tool in restricting liberty, at least African American liberty. The poetic account of the public murder of an African American male for simply exercising his franchise, for enacting liberty and being a "good" citizen, occurred in a picnic-like, carnival-esque atmosphere. A September 1915⁶ Associate Press account reprinted in the *Cleveland Advocate* further recounts the sublime festivities surrounding racist violence in Texas:

Here is the latest "Texas diversion," culled from an Associated Press dispatch: "When the posse returned with the two *trophies* of the chase a *large crowd* awaited the train of automobiles. Word of the hunt had gone out over telephone lines and the district gathered eagerly for a Texas Sunday afternoon diversion. Burning at the stake in the public square was the crowd's demand, and the posse eagerly agreed. The automobiles moved toward the center of town, the mob following, cheering, howling, swearing, lusting for a lynch law spectacle." ("Texas Diversion")

Six weeks earlier, an account of the lynching of Will Stanley appeared in the national press:

"The scene on the *well-lighted public square* at the time of the burning was spectacular. The mob had chosen an open space to build the fire, this being surrounded by men who *yelled and cheered* as they shoved the colored man into the flames." . . . White men—they who claim the title of builders of civilization—held a "lynching bee" in a city's public square, whilst *boys and girls of tender years looked on*. ("Lynching in")

And the following May, 1916 the *Cleveland Advocate* describes the scene surrounding the lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas; on the public square a crowd of approximately "15,000 persons as witnesses, including women and children" watched the public murder ("Latest"). Eighty years after Texas' separation from Mexico, Texas developed a culture of violence so prevalent and wanton that the public murder of African Americans became community celebrations for the entire family. Parents brought school-aged children, families

⁶ It is worth noting that this is the same year as the release of D.W. Griffith's *Martyrs of the Alamo: The Birth of Texas* and *The Birth of a Nation*. As already discussed, both of these films highlight the prevalence of white fear concerning unruly people of color, and the normalization of white supremacy as a means to contain this perceived threat and ensure white liberty and security.

celebrated; the lives of African Americans by the early-twentieth century had been written out of humanity. As a further marker of this perversity, cattle mattered more than African Americans in Texas. In 1920 a news report describes the El Paso police breaking up a bull fight. The newspaper cynically notes that Mexicans foolishly elected to kill a bull as spectacle; if it had “just been an ordinary lynching of a Colored man the sport would have been allowed to proceed, and the coroner would have brought in the usual verdict of ‘died from unknown hands’” (“Lynching, Not”). From Paris, to Waco, to Longview, to Denison, and to Wharton, across the state of Texas a culture of extermination thrived, and yet remained absent from “already knows” of the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Just as African Americans fared poorly under the Texan regime, Native Americans did not face any better prospects. One of the fundamental differences between African Americans and Native Americans is that the Alamo narrative largely, and absolutely, erases the very existence of the Indigenous. As previously discussed, the Westward expansion of the Euro-Americans merges with the notion of providence/*Geist*; the continent belonged to them. As such, respecting Indigenous land rights proved to be a non-issue (Churchill, *Little* 218). In fact, one of the first official decrees of the Republic of Texas declared its refusal to recognize the existence of a Native American title to any land in Texas (Washburn 121). After the Texan victory, rather than offer to expand liberty and familial protection to the Indigenous populations, “A special unit, the Texas Rangers, [was] assembled to deal with the ‘menace’ presented by the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa Apache defense of their treaty-guaranteed homelands” (Churchill, *Little* 225). Churchill continues:

Upon its entry into the Union in 1845, “the Texas government made it clear that it would not, then or later, agree to set aside [any] territory for an Indian reservation. In fact, the state was already busily granting and selling Indian lands to encourage immigration and development. Meanwhile, both the state government and a horde of land speculators demanded that the federal government do its duty and remove [by whatever means] the ‘squatting’ whose land it actually was.” . . . There is ample indication that the army would have complied with the wishes of the Texans—and of the manner in which this compliance would have occurred—had the Civil War not intervened. (*Little* 225)

Rather than welcome the Natives in a Texas of liberty, the aim, at least for the Native Americans was forced removal and extermination (Utley, *Indian* 55-56). One can only wonder if Disney’s Crockett would have denounced these removal policies as he denounced earlier removals? Again, this narrative of removal and racist attitudes is not present in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.⁷ It is denied.

The application of Texan “liberty” to the Native Americans manifests in the plight of the Kiowa; after the Civil War, the Texans fenced their ancestral lands, culled buffalo herds (their livelihoods) into non-existence, and the U.S. Army forced the Kiowa to relocate to Fort Sill,

⁷ While outside the direct scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that the treatment of Natives articulated here was carried beyond Texas into the entire Southwest. Edward Spicer’s book *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (1962) offers insight into the impact of the Euro-American project against Native America that grew out of the Texan/Euro-American conquest of the Southwest.

Oklahoma. By 1875, after years of minor skirmishes and massacres, the war of attrition and violence waged on behalf of Texan land speculators and farmers, finally forced the Kiowa into submission. Confinement to reservations far from their ancestral homelands and cultural genocide became the Kiowa's "liberty" (Brown 241-271). And unfortunately, this policy of subduing and destroying the Indigenous ways of living did not end in the nineteenth century—in 1953, the United States Congress enacted a termination law to eliminate all federally-recognized tribes in Texas; termination resulted in the sale of all tribal assets and an end to federal protection (so far as it existed) of tribal rights. By fiat, the tribes magically ceased to exist, at least in the white political imaginary (this was not unique to Texas; termination was a national policy, but it is also a marker of the historical treatment Native Americans received in Texas under the guise of Texas liberty) (Kilpatrick 55-57; Washburn 92). Not only does the magnitude of the violence contradict the "already knows" of the Alamo, it violates the narrative promise made to the "good" people of color.

The Indigenous in Texas lived on reservations and followed the laws; they generally behaved in accordance with the culturally ascribed definition of the "good" person of color imposed by the Euro-American legal and social order. And yet, this did not prevent their extermination. Native America is disappeared from both Texas and the Alamo's exhibitionary complex in an application of de Tocquevillian magic: Texas had moved beyond the landscape of Native Americans. While this was simply not true; the Texans managed to make this "peaceful" vision, more or less, truth as they applied violent measure to destroy the Indigenous ways of life in Texas (Kiernan 334-349).

As noted above, the law protected cattle while it snuffed out the lives of African Americans and Native Americans.⁸ Denying their humanity, Euro-American families, heirs of the Alamo, destroyed African American communities and families with violence and dehumanization. After emancipation, the cultures of violence reigned supreme and the lessons of dehumanization were reinforced over and over again in the public square. This systemic devaluing of life was not exclusive to the African American population. A devaluing enforced through sanctioned murders became a component of a statewide practice, reminding all people of color of their place and warning against deviation from the proscribed roles, roles defined by the Euro-American majority (though as manifest through the policy of extermination, submission guaranteed nothing). This culture of violence evolved with intent, and this is only one of the elements that constitutes the genocide denied in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex:

We[, the Civil Rights Congress,] shall present evidence, tragically voluminous, of "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group . . ." Our evidence concerns the thousands of Negroes who over the years have been beaten to death on chain gangs and in the back rooms of sheriff's offices, in the cells of county jails, in precinct police stations and on city streets, who have been framed and murdered in sham legal forums and by a legal bureaucracy. It concerns those Negroes who have been killed, allegedly for failure to say "sir" or tip their hats or move aside quickly enough, or,

⁸ According to David O'Rourke, the Euro-American worldview developed in such a way as to discount the lives and value of those who were not of European ancestry. Their humanity was abrogated; their murders simply did not matter, because to the Euro-Americans in Texas, they were not lives of equal value or measureable importance (194-195).

more often, on trumped charges of “rape,” but in reality for trying to vote or otherwise demanding the legal and inalienable rights and privileges of United States citizens formally guaranteed them by the Constitution of the United States, rights denied them on the basis of “race,” in violation of the Constitution of the United States, the United Nations Charter and the Genocide Convention. We shall offer proof . . . of “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part.” (*We*)

While this dissertation offers only a small sample of the evidence of the cultures of both negation and violence that existed in Texas as a direct result of the Texan victory of 1836, it is clear that however the Euro-American victors understood personal liberty, familial security, and economic opportunity, these principles did not extend to people of color. The exhibitionary complex of the Alamo and its accompanying “already known” facts offer no clue that the enslavement and extermination of people of color resulted because of the Texan victory. Slavery, murder, depravation, these are the freedoms delivered by Texans’ “victory” at the Alamo.

The Alamo represents only one moment in the history of the United States where the language of white supremacy veils the genocidal impulses behind a rhetoric of freedom. Its exhibitionary complex represents the silencing of slavery’s legacy and the silencing of the brutal outcomes of U.S. Native policy. Over the course of one hundred and seventy-three years, the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex assists the national historical narrative of the United States, assists by representing one more key historic location where people can look to a mythic past of both great men and causes. The Alamo’s exhibitionary complex, a narrative that centers Euro-American heroism and denies white supremacist violence, serves to deny the systemic violence of the U.S.’s national expansion, to deny the role of genocide in the conquest of the West. This dissertation’s focus has been the Alamo because of its prominence as a historical event and its cultural persistence—the Alamo appears and reappears throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century. Its very popularity represents the dire need to both explore and understand the consequences of the U.S. national project of denial central to its exhibitionary complex. In order to explore the question of denial, this dissertation now shifts to “the age of genocide” to fully explore the logical outcome of the distinctly “American” form of genocide denial central to the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex and the broader social and cultural contexts of the United State’s historiography of denial.

Chapter Seven: As American as Apple Pie: Denial and the Art of Genocide

“Calabazas lit up another cigarette and took a long drag before he started. . . . ‘I was born here.

My great-grandmother was born here. Her grandmother was from the mountains of Sonora.

Later the other Yaquis used to hide up there from the soldiers. I have to laugh at all the talk about Hitler. Hitler got all he knew from the Spanish and Portuguese invaders. De Guzman was the first to make lamp shades out of human skin. They just weren’t electric lamps, that’s all. . . .

In no time the Europeans wiped out millions of Indians. In 1902, the federals are lining Yaqui women, their little children, on the edge of an arroyo. The soldiers fired randomly. Laugh when a child topples backwards. Shooting for laughs until they are all dead. Walk through those dry mountains. Right now. Today. I have seen it. Where the arroyo curves sharp. Caught, washed up against big boulders with broken branches and weeds. Human bones piled high. Skulls piled and stacked like melons.” (215-216)

—Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*

The previous chapters discuss the founding of the United States’ narrative of denial sedimented over generations into what has become the history of the United States: the violence against people of color, when mentioned at all, appears as natural, necessary, and occurring as part of a greater national good. Often, the invasion and conquest is portrayed as an extension of providence’s/*Geist*’s will. In this dissertation, the Alamo represents one exemplary location of this narrative of denial. As an exhibitionary complex, the Alamo promulgates a narrative supported by an expansive and growing cultural archive. The Alamo thus represents not only a past event, but also a current one, today communicating narratives of nineteenth century Manifest Destiny. While the Alamo forms the primary case study of this dissertation, it is vital to note that at the same time it is merely a symptom of the historiography of denial, not the cause. The historiography of denial, the erasure of genocide and racism, spills beyond the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex. It is this “overflow” that is the focal point of this chapter. Here one must be mindful that the historiography of denial is not simply a matter of museums and movies; rather it provides a framework for understanding both the historical and contemporary United States. The historiographic support impacts the silencing of genocide in foundational narratives of the nation as well as the continuity of social and cultural asymmetries of power. This chapter demonstrates that rather than an antiquated notion of the past, the erasure of the U.S.’s violence against people of color is so deeply embedded in the national narrative and psyche that it manifests not only in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex but also in other, non-visual studies, including the recent study of genocide, Samantha Power’s Pulitzer Prize winning, *‘A Problem from Hell’: America in the Age of Genocide* (2002).

This book demonstrates that the U.S. as a nation consistently renders its cultural, political, and social histories innocent of the legacies of white privilege and genocide. Power’s book focuses on the twentieth century’s genocidal catastrophes and details U.S. indifference and inaction in the face of repeated genocide. Her explanation for the inaction is that the U.S. populous ignores events *over there*. Citizens of the U.S., Power believes, avert their eyes from these foreign horrors. Power rightly identifies this selective blindness as a manifestation of U.S. privilege and choice. On this point, her work is incisive. Unfortunately, as this dissertation argues in the previous chapters, the rest of Power’s narrative both continues and perpetuates the historiography of denial. Thus, while her work demands an accounting of relatively recent U.S.

governmental and popular indifference to extra-national genocides, it nevertheless allows for the continued denial of homegrown atrocities and their legacies. Like the Daughters of the Republic of Texas before her, Power fails to account for the roots of U.S. privileges she castigates. Because of this failure, Power's text becomes a keystone for understanding and articulating the relationship between U.S. denial, genocide, and nation building. *'A Problem from Hell'* offers a necessary portal for understanding the interrelationship, and centrality, of this trinity in U.S. historiography, and as an intellectual descendant of de Tocqueville, Locke, Kipling, and Boas. Although considerably more thoughtful, *'A Problem from Hell'* also mirrors the mollifying ideologies of exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny present in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. In other words, Power's isolation of the 20th century at *the* age of genocide buttresses the historiography of denial that surrounds the genocides of Native America and African Americans in the United States.

Lemkin's "Problem from Hell": Denial, Denial, and More Denial

In the chapter's epigraph, Leslie Marmon Silko rejects the logic of Western civilization and progress represented in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. Silko writes from a location antithetical to the preservation of the traditions of canonical U.S. historiography (Penn Hilden's "Red Zone" of alternate, decolonial memories discussed at the end of chapter one) and the narratives of denial privileged therein. *Almanac of the Dead* intervenes in the historiography of denial of the United States by communicating popularly denied memories and past events, namely a genocidal project in the Americas that provided twentieth century perpetrators with historical lessons. *Almanac of the Dead* endeavors to reveal a history that is both material and spiritual, a reminder of the costs of the progressive, liberal, and "Enlightened" march of Euro-American nation-building and the genocidal sacrifice of those perceived to be beyond the pale of the "modern," those who simply "disappeared" as civilization encroached. Silko adds her strength to the task of exposing the "divinely anointed" victor's historiography of denial where there are no vanquished, only the playing out of a metaphysical *Geist* (à la Hegel). Despite such decolonizing work, however, the historiography of denial maintains a cultural prominence given its central, and soothing, role in the fabric of Euro-American discourse.¹

Understanding the impulses of denial is essential to understanding contemporary discussions of genocide and genocide prevention so popular in the U.S. today in relationship to, for instance, Darfur.² W.E.B. Du Bois in his 1920 text *Darkwater* reminds his readers of the U.S.'s place within the genealogy of genocidal impulses and practice:

¹ The measure of this criticism is found in the establishment and continuity of Ethnic Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicana/o Studies and the slight "diversification" of other more canonical fields within the academy. Though, it should be noted, there is still long way to go.

² For an ongoing event, there has been a good deal of ink spilled discussing the events, the implications, the impacts, and so on. For instance, Eric Reeves' *A Long's Day Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide* (2007), Brian and Gretchen Steidle's *The Devil Came on Horseback: Bearing Witness to the Darfur Genocide* (2007), Samuel Totten and Eric Markusen's *Genocide in Darfur: Investigating the Atrocities in the Sudan* (2006), John Hagan and Wenona Raymond-Richmond's *Darfur and the Crime of Genocide* (2009), Gérard Prunier's *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide* (2007), Leora Kahn's *Darfur: Twenty Years of War and Genocide in*

Conceive this nation, of all human peoples, engaged in a crusade to make the “World Safe for Democracy”! Can you imagine the United States protesting against Turkish atrocities in Armenia, while the Turks are silent about mobs in Chicago and St. Louis; what is Louvain compared with Memphis, Waco, Washington, Dyersburg, and Estill Springs? In short, what is the black man but America’s Belgium, and how could America condemn in Germany that which she commits, just as brutally, within her own borders. . . . As we saw the dead dimly through rifts of battle-smoke and heard faintly the cursings and accusations of blood brothers, we darker men said: This is not Europe gone mad; this is not aberration or insanity; this *is* Europe; this seeming Terrible is the real soul of white culture—back of all culture,—stripped and visible today. This is where the world has arrived,—these dark and awful depths and not the shining and ineffable heights of which it boasted. Here is whither the might and energy of modern humanity has really gone. (500, 502)

Du Bois boldly asserts that counter to the promulgated narratives of progress whatever sins of commission and omission Europeans and the United States may have perpetrated against other Europeans during World War I did not arise from an ephemeral realm of unknown evil. Instead, Du Bois notes, it was a “best practice” previously reserved only for implementation on darker-skinned peoples. However, this contradicts the standard representation of savage violence in “world” history, nor are the violent precursors of mass murder so readily situated as an organic extension of European and U.S. civilization, “the back of all culture.” Du Bois dismisses the claims of shock and surprise at the potential for violence within U.S. and European cultures; instead, like Silko, he urges the dismayed Euro-American to simply look at the manner in which they have handled the question of the color line. Unlike his white counterparts, Du Bois sees the reality of savage violence, genocidal violence, where his contemporaries see only the inexplicable or voids. This historiographic disconnect becomes especially relevant in the context of a contemporary surge of interest in and understanding of genocide as a contemporary, and relatively modern, event occurring, however, in some other time and space.³

For a manifest example of the commingling of the U.S.’s historiography of denial and the contemporary interest in genocide, one need look no further than Samantha Power’s 2002 scathing indictment of the U.S.’s institutionalized indifference to the genocides of the twentieth

Sudan (2007), *Explaining Darfur: Four Lectures on the Ongoing Genocide* (2006), Halima Bashir’s *Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur* (2008), and M.W. Daly’s *Darfur’s Sorrow: A History of Destruction and Genocide* (2007) to name only a few. In spite of this proliferation of works advocating an end to the killing, the killing continues. The balance of ink to blood spilled may be the ultimate measure of the West’s will or lack thereof.

³ Ben Kiernan’s *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (2007) is powerful step in carrying forward Du Bois’ vision; Kiernan effectively links imperial expansion, notions of technological improvement, and genocide—essentially, the expansion of “more advanced” societies into areas of “savagery,” and the accompanying destruction of both the “savage” people and their life-ways, is as old as civilization itself. Kiernan argues that the march of civilization demands a logic of extermination. I am grateful to his work for providing essential intellectual buttressing to this dissertation project.

century: *'A Problem from Hell': America in the Age of Genocide*. Her book was enthusiastically received, been termed a *magnus opus*, and listed as one of the most important books of the decade (Porter 151). Of course, Power should be applauded for drawing public attention to the U.S.'s systemic failure to act, or even acknowledge, genocide during the twentieth century.

Power's work begins with a thoughtful discussion of Raphael Lemkin's⁴ work spanning the late-1930s to the late-1950s. Lemkin, driven by the rise of National Socialism in the heart of Europe and its subsequent atrocities, urged the West to "believe the unbelievable" in terms of the scales of willful and systemic violence perpetrated in the world; Lemkin urged people to, essentially, believe Du Bois (Power, *'Problem'* 31). According to Power, Lemkin's advocacy hoped to stymie the ability of nations and individuals to avoid acknowledging the occurrences of violence on a grand scale. To deny such occurrences after Lemkin marked a policy of silent acquiescence, if not silent complicity with genocide. Power dismisses official responses—i.e. "we didn't know"—concerning contemporary and past inaction in the face of twentieth century genocide; such evasions, post-Lemkin, emerge as measures of national indifference and governmental apathy.⁵ The more credible explanation behind inaction, according to Power, rests in a deeper logic: the U.S. public lacks both the ability to truly imagine the evil of genocide or the ability to reckon with it. A supposed innocence within U.S. historiography protects the U.S. popular imaginary.⁶ In fact, in recent history, when the specter of genocide has arisen, it has quickly been reduced to a semantic struggle (a Hegelian word game): does the amount and nature of the violence *really* equal genocide?⁷ Or more damning, people simply will not utter the "G-word" because the moral force, and treaty obligations, of the word demands action (Power, *'Problem'* xv-xviii).

Power convincingly demonstrates that these responses betray Lemkin's understanding and articulation of the concept and practice of genocide. Lemkin's odyssey gained critical

⁴ Lemkin is generally attributed the honor of both developing the term genocide, and pushing for recognition of it as a special category of criminal activity.

⁵ It can be readily argued that until the closing of the "American" Frontier *every* sitting politician directly *benefited* from the practice of genocide! However in contemporary U.S. politics, Power asserts that U.S. politicians easily conflate public silence with indifference, and the cost of action (dead U.S. soldiers, lost votes, and so on) are risks not worth taking and easily avoided—in fact, Power mentions numerous times that no sitting U.S. politician has ever lost votes, or paid any political price, for ignoring genocide because of a societal inability to reckon with "evil" (*'Problem'* xvii-xviii, xxi, 83, 84). In spite of rising interest and concern for Darfur (an event people will speak of as genocide), this still seems to be the case—the presidential election of 2008 did not hinge on either candidate taking a leadership position against genocide in Africa, or anywhere for that matter (Connelly).

⁶ An "innocence" that I would argue harkens back to the exceptionalist denial of de Tocqueville, Kipling, Boas, and the DRT—though this innocence has passed through the experience of Civil Rights and now drapes itself in an innocence born out of a supposed reckoning with past misdeeds and, more honestly, a lack of information.

⁷ The most contemporary example is that of Rwanda. There are several very painful scenes in the documentary *Frontline: Ghosts of Rwanda* (2004) where U.S. State Department officials perform gazelle like verbal acrobatics to argue that the mass murder in Rwanda is not genocide—these word games are juxtaposed with piles of primarily Tutsi corpses that were being seen worldwide on news programs.

attention in the aftermath of World War II, and the Shoah. Despite the grotesque evidence across Europe (and as Du Bois argued, across Africa, Asia, and the Americas) of genocide's reality, Lemkin met with immediate waffling among the world's leaders, and in the United States in particular—Lemkin's obstacles with post-World War II U.S. politicians were based in the “notion of getting attacked for being (rather than doing) was too discomfiting and too foreign to process readily” (Power, *Problem* 36).⁸ Lemkin's vision for laws against genocide fell on deaf ears among U. S. citizens and its legislators because violence directed at individuals for just “being” Jewish, “being” African American, or “being” Native American was, and is, seemingly beyond the pale of Euro-American understanding or practice. Such irrational violence remains foreign to this “exceptional” land, a land based on the perception of a centuries old tradition of respect for individual rights ensured by providence/*Geist*. Even though Lemkin confronted widespread public indifference and official resistance, this did not initially deter Lemkin's idealism.⁹ Lemkin intended to craft a broad understanding of genocide, especially in the aftermath of the Shoah and the emerging violence of Europe's attempts to re-secure its far flung colonies (not to mention its two-hundred year legacy of colonialism).

Though Lemkin's crusade gained momentum after World War II, his work began in the 1930s with the idea of banning “barbarity” and “vandalism.” He defined “barbarity” as “the premeditated destruction of national, racial, religious and social collectivities” and “vandalism” as the “destruction of works of art and culture, being the expression of the particular genius of these collectives” (qtd. in Power, *Problem* 21). Lemkin's inspiration stemmed from his exposure to the Armenian genocide, its accompanying global inaction, and his recognition that “the crime of barbarity repeated itself with near ‘biological regularity’” (Power, *Problem* 22). It, being genocide, was not something unique or exceptional; it exists as a foundational part of Western history, though suspect as a result of its absence from the historical record.

Even during the earliest days of his odyssey, Lemkin met with significant resistance. Lemkin was prevented from traveling to the Madrid Conference of the League of Nations in 1933 to present his proposed treaty banning barbarity and vandalism. He was prevented for two reasons: one, the Polish state's attempt to placate Hitler. Poland did not want an outspoken Polish critic to travel to the conference, and two, the international community “was too divided to make joint law—never mind joint law on behalf of imperiled minorities” (Power, *Problem* 22). Lemkin clearly understood that in peace time, the well-to-do and powerful were not going to go out of their way to observe, or abet, the suffering of those peoples identified as less-than the white race. The “haves” must have those “below” to service their privilege. The economic and political realities of empire, and its accompanying narratives of progress and civilization, would likely have been severely challenged had Lemkin's treaty been enacted. The colonial

⁸ The very fact that Power makes this un-cited comment demonstrates the contemporary scope of historiographic amnesia in the United States to the histories of people of color in the United States where *to this day*, one can be attacked, if not killed, for simply *being* non-white—this violence of being extends to women, homosexuals, immigrants, and so on. It is, seemingly, a grand “American” tradition, both past and present, to attack individuals and groups for simply *being* (see Flint, 2004 and Wolf Harlow, 2005).

⁹ In this case, I do not refer to Hegel's ill-willed historiographic ideals, but the idyllic spirit of a man who sought to make the world a safer place. If anything, Lemkin's idealism was driven by as just a motivation as one can hope to embody. I may idealize his efforts to an extent, but I am comfortable with this.

powers would have had to address several centuries of “barbarity” and “vandalism” of their own. Both Europe and the United States would have been cut-off from their readily exploited communities of cheap labor who were far enough removed from their national territory, or isolated in ethnic ghettos, that the day-to-day violence of empire was easily ignored. In spite of this pre-World War II resistance, Lemkin pressed on, and after World War II, Lemkin insisted that genocide’s definition not be limited by the specific contours of the Shoah. Lemkin’s intentionally broad definition is as follows: “[Genocide] connote[s] not only full-scale extermination but also . . . other means of destruction: mass deportation, the lowering of birthrate by separating men from women, economic exploitation, progressive starvation, and the suppression of the intelligentsia who served as national leaders” (Power, *‘Problem’* 40). Power restates the inclusive nature of Lemkin’s definition:

The perpetrators of genocide would attempt to destroy the political and social institutions, the culture, language, national feelings, religion, and economic existence of national groups. They would hope to eradicate the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, lives of individual members of the targeted group. . . . *A group did not have to be physically exterminated to suffer genocide. They could be stripped of all cultural traces of their identity.* (*‘Problem’* 43, emphasis added)

Thus, genocide, according to Lemkin and the Lemkin inspired U.N. Convention on the Prevention of Genocide¹⁰ went to great lengths to encompass events other than the Shoah in Europe. Lemkin initially worked for a *comprehensive* and *far-reaching* understanding of genocide involving more than the wholesale extermination of a people’s physicality; he wrote with an expansive, and possibly politically naïve, investment in social justice. Lemkin did not fully grapple with the political and cultural contours created by the long-standing historiography of denial in the United States or Europe, a historiography so central to the U.S.’s self-understanding that it ultimately reframed the entire debate about how expansive, or in this case narrow, an understanding of genocide the U.S. would accept.¹¹ And given the primacy of the U.S. in the post-World War II era, the U.S. stood as gatekeeper of the West’s international agenda.

Like Lemkin, Power also fails to acknowledge that the U.S. resisted Lemkin’s broad understanding because of discomfort with or denial of its own genocidal history. She likewise lines up with the long-standing U.S. historiography of denial in her treatment of the genocide in the Americas, and specifically the United States. Power’s carefully distances official U.S. government inaction from the possibility of genocide being committed by the United States government or its citizens. “Always a by-stander, never a perpetrator” seems to be the implied mantra of *‘A Problem from Hell’*: if the U.S. sinned it is a sin of omission and only a twentieth century sin. Power, though only briefly, insists that whatever crimes the U.S. committed against people of color in the United States are *not* included within the legal definition of genocide. Power offers little support, other than a quote from Lemkin (to be discussed immediately below), a quote from a man, who by Power’s own admission, would go to any length to pass a genocide

¹⁰ See Appendix One for the full text of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention of Genocide.

¹¹ See Appendix Two for exclusions specific to the United States.

treaty through a racist, 1940s-50s U.S. Congress¹²—this is a strikingly shortsighted analysis given that the book is essentially a condemnation of U.S. inaction in the face of multiple genocides during the twentieth century. But as implied in the title, “*the age of genocide*” did not come to pass until long after Native America’s de Tocquevillian disappearance as the “American” Frontier expanded into an empty wilderness, the Kipling-esque burden of uplifting the “half-devil, half-child,” the Texan reintroduction of chattel slavery and dispossession of the Mexican, and the accompanying “weak” Messianic revisions of both the victor’s and vanquished’s histories within a historiography of denial celebrating a divinely anointed white civilization and nation.

As noted above, Power does address some claims for an understanding of genocide in Lemkin’s work that excludes any U.S. crime. Specifically, Power quotes a 1950 letter from Lemkin to *New York Times* editor, Gertrude Samuels; Lemkin wrote that the U.S.’s treatment of Africans/African-Americans under slavery was, and presumably is, exempted because the “. . . intent [of slavery] is to preserve a group on a different level of existence, . . . but not to destroy it” (*Problem*’ 67). One can already see Lemkin’s political accommodations. After Lemkin’s experience in Madrid, the horrific results of the world’s inaction as witnessed in the events of the Second World War, and the resistance Lemkin endured from the victorious nations Lemkin likely recognized the need to curtail his social justice agenda (or possibly sell-out non-whites) in the face of the Southern Dixiecrats and other white racists in the U.S. Congress, not to mention the U.S.’s European allies who were engaged in their own struggles to hold on to their far flung colonies.¹³ Not receiving Congressional support from the most powerful post-World War II nation would have certainly doomed Lemkin’s crusade. And like it or not, African Americans, Native Americans, and Third World peoples were at that time, and still are, a liminal political force, and as such, expendable.

In any case, Power relates the concerns of the U.S. government in a 1950 Senate Subcommittee that assures that, “Genocide does not apply to lynchings, race riots, or any form of segregation” (qtd. in *Problem*’ 67). Surprisingly, Power shows little tolerance for the inclusion of U.S. slavery: “. . . only a wildly exaggerated reading of the genocide convention left Southern lawmakers vulnerable to genocide charges” (*Problem*’ 67). Additionally, Power addresses Native America as well by implying that the violence of the U.S. nation-state does not fit either Lemkin’s vision or the United Nations convention because so-called “lesser acts” must be part of a larger program. Violence against a specific group “could not be carried out in

¹² See Rosemary Radford Ruether’s work *America, Amerikkka: Elect Nation and Imperial Violence* (2007), specifically chapter four, “Manifest Destiny and American Empire: 1890-1934” and chapter five, “America’s Global Mission: The Cold War Years, 1945-1989” for a survey of both the overt and undercurrents of racism that informed the U.S. political structure of Lemkin’s time (100-172).

¹³ See Robert Edgerton’s *The Worldwide Practice of Torture* (2007) chapters two “Torture During the ‘Mau Mau’ Rebellion and Elsewhere in Africa” and chapter four “Torture During the Algerian War, 1954-1962” for an introductory discussion to torture during the decolonial era (15-28; 55-68). Also see Rita Maran’s *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French-Algerian War* (1989) as another example of the omnipresence of violence in the decolonial process in the post-World War Two era. Not to mention the revisioning of torture as “enhanced interrogation techniques” in the post-9/11 world (Temple-Raston; Shepard). When Euro-American societies need to enact extreme forms of violence, rarely do laws or morality stop it.

isolation. They had to be a piece of a plan to destroy all or part of the designated group” (*Problem*’ 66-67). In fact, in Power’s essay “never again,” Power decries those who would link genocide to practices perpetrated in the United States:

Thanks to international and national politics, and the demands of individual member states over the last fifty years, the word “genocide” itself lost salience—misused, overused and generally abused. To begin with, the Convention, which defined the crime as “a systematic attempt to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, or religious group as such,” was both under-inclusive (excluding Pol Pot’s attempted extermination of a political class) and over-inclusive (potentially capturing a white racist’s attempt to cause bodily injury to a carload of African-Americans).

Thus, according to Power, the five hundred year, cultural, metaphysical, and legal ideologies and practices of racism and racist violence that emerged during the colonial era and continued unabated into the United States (practices and beliefs that form the very core of the historiography of denial) exists beyond the pale of genocide. The violence against individual African Americans during and after Jim Crow in, but not exclusive to the South, is divorced from a larger “plan to destroy”?¹⁴ The complicity between business and the state to end Radical Reconstruction in favor of a return to a white supremacist racial order of things lacked the logics of a systemic practice?¹⁵ The dispossession of one tribe’s land and forced termination of centuries old traditions exists in isolation from the hundreds, if not thousands, of other *federally* enforced dispossessions; this national policy is not systemic?¹⁶ The forced sterilization of an unknown number of women of color existed in isolation and apart from any other racist

¹⁴ To gain a greater understanding of the systemic nature of lynching and the “American” South see *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (1951), Stewart Tolnay and E.M. Beck’s *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynching, 1882-1930* (1995), Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900* (1997), and Philip Dray’s *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (2002). And these four texts represent only the smallest sample of texts dealing with the systemic practice of lynching in the United States and its holistic impact on not only African Americans, but all racial minorities in the United States.

¹⁵ The classic study of the ultimate collapse of Reconstruction of Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction* (1990). However, another study highlighting the systemic interventions of both racial and economic ideologies that led to Reconstruction’s failure is William Gillette’s *Retreat from Reconstruction: 1869-1879* (1979).

¹⁶ A recent work showcasing the systemic nature of the violence against Native America is MariJo Moore’s *Eating Fire, Tasting Blood: Breaking the Silence of the American Indian Holocaust* (2006). And in addition to the works cited in-text, Andrea Smith’s *Conquest: Sexual Violence and the American Indian Genocide* (2005), David K. O’Rourke’s *How American’s First Settlers Invented Chattel Slavery: Dehumanizing Native Americans and Africans* (2005), and George Tinker’s *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (1993).

system?¹⁷ Seemingly, all the aforementioned, and countless other unmentioned events, exist in isolation. Racism in the U.S. existed as the happenstance actions of random individuals¹⁸ not linked by ideologies and practices of state, unrooted in the foundational logics represented by de Tocqueville's disappearing Natives or the Founder's 3/5th Compromise.

Strikingly, Power eschews a critical engagement with the U.S. government's stated exclusion of certain groups in spite of Lemkin's initially inclusive imagination of genocide that became increasingly proscribed in the face of political power wielded by a very racist government.¹⁹ Lemkin had to forego any idealism to suit the racist political realities of the day. Likely, in Lemkin's view, some protection against genocide proved better than no protection. His strategic, albeit troubling, savvy is implied in Power's recognition of the political climate in late-1940s and 1950s U.S.; though as noted above, Power sees these fears as ultimately baseless:

American law-makers were petrified that African- or Native Americans would haul the United States before the International Court of Justice on genocide charges, or that other states would infringe upon American national sovereignty. By the time the Convention had finally become U.S. law [in 1988], the Congress had attached so many reservations²⁰ that ratification was rendered largely meaningless. For instance, by requiring that the United States would never be brought before the ICJ on a genocide count, the Congress barred the United States (under rules of legal reciprocity) from filing charges against other nations . . . The United States has tended to further international law, only so long as it does not find its sovereignty impinged or its practices or officials called before international judiciary bodies. (Power, "never again")

Why Power fails to critically engage this resistance remains surprising. Or why Power fails to acknowledge Lemkin's increasingly proscribed vision of genocide is equally confounding. Again, in the context of so scathing an indictment of the U.S.'s twentieth century inaction in the face of genocide, there is very little reflection on the origins of a twentieth century culture that easily turns its back on genocide. Power misses an opportunity to mine the long-standing

¹⁷ See Elena Gutiérrez's work *Fertile Matters: The Politics of Mexican-Origin Women's Reproduction* (2008), Mark Largent's *Breeding Contempt: The History of Coerced Sterilization in the United States* (2008), and Harry Bruinius' *Better for all the World* (2006).

¹⁸ See Joy James: chapter one, page twenty-three.

¹⁹ Senator H. Alexander Smith commented that the conventions "'biggest propagandist' . . . was 'a man who comes from a foreign country who . . . speaks broken English.'" Smith continued that he was "'sympathetic with the Jewish people,' but 'they ought not to be the ones who are propagandizing [for the convention], and they are.'" Despite having invented the concept of genocide, Lemkin was not invited by the Senate subcommittee to testify in congressional hearings on ratification" (Power, *'Problem'* 68). This experience signifies the racism pervasive in the U.S. Congress; this also signifies how keenly aware Lemkin had to have been over the nature of pushing the definition of genocide to encompass too many minority groups and experiences in the United States.

²⁰ See Appendix Two for a full account of the U.S.'s reservations. The major reservation being that before the U.S. submits to any international tribunal, it must consent.

historiography of denial that enables the U.S. to ignore, anywhere and anytime, the mass murder of people of color.

It is important to return to an earlier comment by Power to understand this omission. Power notes that part of the difficulty the U.S. public experiences digesting the need for legal protection against genocide stemmed from the general public's disbelief that people get attacked for simply "being," as opposed to doing (*'Problem'* 36). The following criticisms are made with ample respect for Power and the ultimate aim of her work. However, this argument could only be uttered from within the relative privilege of whiteness and its historiography of denial.²¹ In the United States there is a long-standing and, for the willing, a readily accessible history of people being attacked for simply being "black," "female," "red," "yellow," "queer," and so on. With little thought numerous instances of racist attack after attack come to mind where "being" was the only "crime" in question. These include the repeated massacres of Indigenous peoples (1492-1890), *de jure* slavery (approximately 1619 through 1865), lynchings of Mexicans and African-Americans (18th through 20th centuries), Jim Crow (1880s through 1960s), the post-Frontier reservation system (1890s to the present), the Tulsa Race Riots (1921), depression era deportations in the Southwest (1929-39), the Zoot Suit Riots (1942), the Stonewall Riot (1969), Matthew Shepard (1998), Jasper, Texas (2002) and on and on. Power's under-analysis of race on this matter marks a significant and inherent problem with *'A Problem from Hell'* and is a tell-tale manifestation of the historiography of denial.²² Like the historiography of denial so fiercely

²¹ Power, like many white Europeans and Euro-Americans, fails, at a fundamental level, to acknowledge the realities of race and its forceful impact on the daily lives, as well as the histories, of people of color. To dismiss the reality of violence for "just being," denies fundamental flaws in the "American" way of doing business; to say that such violence is beyond the "American" experience represents the logic of a community that can live free of these pressures, and live beyond the need for empathy as well. Langston Hughes's work "Northern Liberal" (1963) is an excellent literary expression of this: "And so / we lick our chops at Birmingham / and say, 'See! / Southern dogs have vindicated me— / I knew that this would come.' / But who are we to be / so proud that savages / have proven a point/ taken late in time / to show how liberal I am? / Above the struggle / I can quite afford to be: / well-fed, degreed, / not beat—elite, / up North. / I send checks, / support your cause,/ and lick my chops / at Jim Crow laws / and Birmingham— / where you, / not I / am" (541).

²² This blind spot is remarkable given the substantial bibliography that exists in English concerning debates of genocide as a factor in the history of the United States prior to Power's reduction of *the* age of genocide to the 20th century and somewhere other than U.S. soil. It is even more remarkable after reviewing Power's bibliography. Several key texts appear there, for instance, Ward Churchill's *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present*, and Todorov's *The Conquest of the America: The Question of the Other*. Regardless of the theoretical approaches to genocide these two texts assume, the question of genocide in the Americas, and elsewhere, is raised. This again, raises the question as to how Power can simply dismiss it, without a critical discussion? The failure to address the question of racism in the legal struggle for the Genocide Convention, in Lemkin's eventual, and I assume, strategic exclusions of minority groups and events based on his own exclusion from the debate, and inherent in the very understanding of genocide as a relatively modern event invite criticism—especially given the weight the book has received. The book itself is a harbinger of the depth of denial in the United States—Power, as one of most recognized contemporary human

critiqued by Silko, Penn Hilden, Guha, Lipsitz, and Omi and Winant, to name only a few of the critics used in this dissertation, there exists a tremendous blind spot regarding the unique histories of people of color in the United States in Power's work, a blind spot with a centuries' long narrative.

Rather than rise to the ethical and moral challenge of Lemkin's expansive pre-World War II vision, Power's study of genocide denial embodies one of the key privileges of the U.S.'s historiography of denial and whiteness. Power confesses: "The easy thing—which [I have] done most of [my] life—is to block the facts out. Once you are in a position where you have to process the facts, you are stuck" (Interview by Robert Birnbaum). She continues by arguing '*A Problem from Hell*' exists in a context where: ". . . the very fact of genocide . . . was beginning to permeate our [the West's] culture, that we'd focus so much on the genocides that were out there in the scholarly community but not on this issue of America [and its policy of non-intervention]" (Power, Interview by Robert Birnbaum). Power's work, again, offers insights; as a nation, she notes the United States' citizenry possesses the uncanny ability to "shield [themselves] from actually processing the atrocities" (Interview by Robert Birnbaum). In the United States, genocide remains largely limited to the Shoah and its documentaries on public television, fictional representations at the cineplex, the evening news, and museums, and the genocide always occurs in some other place and time; the perpetrators are also always someone else. Genocide is infinitely removed from daily life, and certainly the "American" historical experience. Because of the nature of genocide's representation in the United States, the citizenry in general, never *must* grapple with genocide conceptually, or otherwise—unless one makes a self-imposed pilgrimage to a site of memory, be it epic films like *Schindler's List*, the after-the-fact Western lamentation that is the film *Hotel Rwanda*, or the commemoration of Europe's twentieth century genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C.²³ In these personal pilgrimages, seeing genocide becomes a matter of individual choice, a consumer item for the conscientious and a marker of one's morality—however, it is largely a pilgrimage for the self. As Power's personal confession reveals, the

rights advocates, fails U.S. communities of color and their on-going struggle for historical recognition as survivors of genocide and seekers of not hand-outs, but social justice.

²³ For Power, this lack of response contradicts the culture of Holocaust remembrance in the United States. For example, Power observes that situated on the Mall in Washington, D.C., next door to the Jefferson, Lincoln, and Washington Monuments, is the National Holocaust Memorial (Power, Interview by Elizabeth Farnsworth). Power's frustration arises from the inaction in a culture steeped in the rhetoric of "never again" (*'Problem'* xxi). This contradiction clearly highlights the power and nature of genocide denial in the U.S. historiography of denial. The national recollection of and resistance to genocide are purely performative, or so narrowly defined as to be laughable: "Never again" meaning "never again will Germans kills Jews in the 1940s Europe" (Power, Interview by Robert Birnbaum). For instance, seven weeks into the genocide in Rwanda, then President Clinton informed the U.S., and indeed the world (including the killers in Rwanda), that the United States would only intervene in humanitarian causes if there were "American" interests at stake—the lives of hundreds of thousands of Africans not being such an interest. This indifference fits nicely into the history of the United States (*Frontline: Ghosts*). This further confuses as to why Power herself cannot identify the long-standing tradition of denial in the United States where people of color have always been targets for simply "being" non-white, regardless of the perpetrator.

racially privileged can ignore the facts of both history and contemporary events: just “block them out” while as a society daily pilgrimages of remembrances are enacted. This is, in fact, a manifestation of the Hegelian historiography of the immaterial and ultimate inaction. Rather than contest the merits of saving lives (in the best case of intervention), or not, the contest becomes a struggle, if at all, about a definition or a tourist’s angst as s/he wanders the halls of a memorial.

Thus, Power’s work fails to achieve what it could have, and ultimately reifies the dominant U.S. historiography of denial. It is when Power discusses U.S. complicity in the commission of genocide, as understood within the context of Lemkin’s definition, that Power’s argument again stumbles. In a 2004 essay, “never again: The World’s Most Unfulfilled Promise,” Power reminds the United States that its promise, indeed the world’s promise, of “‘Never Again’ is in fact ‘Again and Again’” (1). This is a simple, but powerful restatement of the main thesis of *A Problem From Hell*. In “never again,” Power provides an underdeveloped, but key historical contextualization, of genocide as practice: “Though genocide has been practiced by colonizers, crusaders and ideologues from time immemorial, the word ‘genocide’ which means the ‘killing’ (Latin, *cide*) of a ‘people’ (Greek, *genos*), had only been added to the English language in 1944 to capture this special kind of evil” (underline added). In “never again” Power sees genocide as a timeless problem regardless of the relative novelty of the term encapsulating the crime. Though in *A Problem from Hell*, Power addresses genocide as a legal and policy problem of the twentieth century. This limited focus contradicts the understanding of genocide as predating history, “from time immemorial”: “Champetier de Ribes, the French Prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials, [speaking of the Shoah, states] ‘This [was] a crime so monstrous, so undreamt of in history throughout the Christian era up to the birth of Hitlerism . . .’” (Power, “never”). This belies the very principles laid down by Lemkin himself, and contradicts Power’s previous statement regarding the timelessness of genocide. This startling revisionist approach removing genocide from (pre)history (“time immemorial” reduced to “undreamt of” until “Hitlerism”) allows Power’s work to avert its gaze, to fail in its own reckoning with the longstanding nature of “evil” and the U.S.’s historiography of denial. This minimization assures that the U.S. emerges as, at worst, a bystander to evil (which buttresses Power’s main thesis of inaction), and at its conflicted best, liberator in the post-World War II era and possible liberator of the future. Power traces this, again, through the rise of a culture keenly aware of genocide and its memorialization, and then admits, that in the United States, despite the rhetoric and museums, “the promise of ‘never again’ counted for little,” but only in the last half of the twentieth century (Power, “never”). For Power, while the United States fails to act in earnest recently, genocide as practice is *not* a foundational aspect of U.S. civil society—a shared belief with the formative narratives of de Tocqueville, Kipling, Boas, and the Alamo’s keepers. Power’s work fits into this group, and thus her work, like the historiography of the United States, is fraught with firm denial. Genocide is as old as the human condition, but is undreamt of until mid-twentieth century European fascism? Power’s book length study fails to account for genocide’s “immemorial” nature of the racist violence within the United States, and instead removes these practice from her history of genocide, keeping the U.S. safely aloof from the perpetrator’s and benefactor’s guilt. What is of greatest interest is the obvious discrepancy in the language used to historicize genocide: either it is something from “time immemorial” or something “undreamt of” until Hitler’s Final Solution.

Denial, “Undreamt” Dreams, and Historiography: White Power, Genocide, and the Privilege of Site Without Seeing

Robert Young, on the other hand, addresses the centrality of denial in Western historiography and the implicit import of centering previously silenced histories, in his extended 1996 discussion of the imperial practices of Western intellectual discourse in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. Young’s argument begins with a powerful and salient quotation from H  l  ne Cixous:

I learned everything from this first spectacle [the Algerian War of Independence]: I saw how the white (French), superior, plutocratic, civilized world founded its power on the repression of populations who had suddenly become ‘invisible’ . . . Invisible human beings. But, of course, perceived as tools . . . Thanks to some annihilating dialectical magic. . . . A commonplace gesture of History: there have to be *two* races—the master and the slaves. (qtd. in Young, *White* 1)

Thus, Young, with the help of Cixous, articulates the complex tapestry that is the political impulse behind decolonial critiques of the historiography of denial to expose the genocide and racism in the: “weave [of] capitalist economic exploitation, racism, colonialism, sexism, together with, perhaps unexpectedly, ‘History’” (Young, *White* 1). A controlled maintenance of historiography allows for continued cycles of exploitation that benefits those within the favored groupings of white, masculinist racial discourse and practice. This ensures the perpetual delay of both recognition by the powerful and justice for the aggrieved: Power’s self-conscious choice to *not* see oppression. The discursive undergirdings of the historiography of denial of the United States that constitutes this nation’s rise to prominence, and concomitantly constitutes the “imagined community” of the United States, permeates not only the domestic sphere, but flows beyond its national boundaries—“we” export “our” colonial and genocidal denial.

Implied by Young is that the historiography of denial, and its occurrences within the broader public, represents a vehicle by which a communal body internalizes the concepts expressing who and what it means to be a citizen and benefactor of a nation: the “who” and “where” of the nation’s origins (the same stories the DRT tells concerning the origins of Texas, but on a grander scale). Thus, the state, specifically the United States within the framework of this discussion, maintains a possessive investment²⁴ in how individuals in this country understand the role of genocide within the context of Euro-American historical discourse—how the United States and its citizens come to understand the imperial past and its costs (if any) and “benefits.” The United States, via enacted civic holidays, monuments, legislated curriculums, the Alamo, the West, and even Power’s study, maintains an interest in how its expansion and rise to superpower status appears in representation and is subsequently internalized by the citizenry as a mode for understanding this nation’s past, present, and future.²⁵ The decolonial act of

²⁴ Refer to footnote thirty-four, page twenty-one in chapter one.

²⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995) articulates two key concepts often utilized in dominant discourses of history. Speaking specifically within the context of the Haitian revolution (though he points to both slavery in the U.S. and the Holocaust), Trouillot states that both “erasure” and “banalization” are employed to erase the “facts or their relevance” of the revolutionary import of the revolt for Africans and

centering denial and genocide within U.S. state policy and practice, an act absent from Power's work, recasts U.S. historiography within a framework and practice of racialized, unjustified violence; this would represent a potential death blow for the providential, exceptionalist narratives of nation that imbue the U.S.'s national origin story in a sacrosanct history. A national historiography devoid of racialized genocide allows for a public posture, with a straight face (again consider the specific case-study of the Alamo), of interests in the greater good couched in color-blind policies, a contemporary manifestation of divine workings in past generations in the United States. The absence of racialized violence as genocide, whether in Samantha Power's work or the Alamo's narrative as "Shrine of Texas Liberty," empowers the historiography of denial, and silences voices of dissent given the critical mass of silence buttressing U.S. historiography. Robert Young, in chorus with Penn Hilden, James, Silko, Guha and so on, urges a more in-depth analysis of the role of violence in the ascendancy of not just the United States, but also the West in general.

Returning to the narrative exclusions of Power's work, by locating the "age of genocide" as a twentieth century phenomenon, Power reinforces the already widely accepted notion that whatever happened in particular to Native Americans and African Americans, was not genocide, and subsequently, these communities are free from any of the negative social, economic, or cultural legacies that would accompany surviving centuries of genocidal policy and practice. This position reinforces Benjamin's "weak Messianic" moment, the false liberation of only the empowered. Power's work, rather than a foil, becomes an additional reinforcing tool for the formative narratives of Manifest Destiny's logic. Granted, her work is more nuanced and clearly beyond the brute scientific racism of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, her absolution of the United States represents another cleansing effort, a cleansing of Benjamin's horrific "cultural treasures." Power reassures her readers (so long as they are heirs of Manifest Destiny's "triumph") that the foundational mythologies and ethos of the United States are valid because in the course of world history the gravest crimes are not "ours," and if "we" only begin to act in times of global crisis, the nation will ascend to its stated ideals.

Further articulating the interconnections between state, power, and a historiography of denial, and agitating for its recognition, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues:

Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how a people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental

Afro-Americans living in bondage (*Silencing* 96-97). On a more general level, Trouillot argues, "the joint affect of these two types of formulas is a powerful silencing: whatever has not been cancelled out in the generalities dies in the cumulative irrelevance of a heap of details. . . . The general silence that Western historiography has produced around the Haitian Revolution [and other "silenced" histories] stemmed from the incapacity to express the unthinkable, but it was ironically reinforced by the significance of the revolution for its contemporaries and for the generation immediately following" (*Silencing* 96-97). And I would argue that the act of a slave colony over-throwing the supposedly superior class of slave-owners still carries considerable rhetorical, historical, and political import today—otherwise, why is it still a largely unknown democratic revolution in the history of the West?

control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. (*Decolonising* 16)²⁶

In *Moving the Centre*, Ngũgĩ adds, “The wealth and power and self-image of a community are inseparable” (*Moving* xv). Simply, control of the national past, the denial of genocide and the construction of a providential narrative of progress in this case, within the U.S.’s historiography of denial and the Alamo specifically, defining “Americanness” not only proscribes the collective identity of the United States, and reveals the “order of things”²⁷ in the United States by excluding the genocides of colonialism, but also manages the self-perceptions of the communities impacted by genocide’s legacies, or non-legacies. The powerful know they are right because history reveals as much (recall history’s outcomes are a matter of providence/*Geist*). The disenfranchised learn that somehow, they have the chance to achieve because the freedom to do so exists. Failure becomes not a by-product of centuries of genocide and colonization; it is a result of internal personal and communal failure (or so the story goes).

Joy James in *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U. S. Culture* challenges both the DRT’s and Power’s assumed historiographic narrative. James argues: “White rights and reverse discrimination provide ideological ground for neoconservatives to advocate and neoliberals to ignore genocidal policies. The ascent from rightist racism to leftist racism is not as steep as we might like to imagine” (James 50). She continues by quoting philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s assertion that the only way to really help communities of color is for “whites” to stop naming “whites” and their histories as originators and care-takers of current racial inequalities (James 50). James concludes:

With no one (that is, no one white) held accountable for truly horrific conditions, the overthrow of white supremacy is now a black thing, a struggle for which African Americans become solely responsible. Žižek’s argument would move African Americans from a position of structural inferiority to one of equality or superiority, investing them with a special ability—the power to engender social

²⁶ Are these not the very terms that Lemkin establishes as genocidal conduct? Lemkin states, “Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the natural pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and colonization of the area by the oppressor’s own nationals” (Power, *Problem*’ 43). Additionally, Lemkin argues that stripping people “of all cultural traces of their identity,” and he identifies “mass deportation, economic exploitation,” as genocide (Power, *Problem*’ 40, 43). The very object of colonization, according to Ngũgĩ is the disruption of the “national pattern” of the Indigenous peoples, and the subsequent imposition of the colonizer’s way of doing and seeing. Colonization, slavery, Manifest Destiny, whatever one prefers to call it, demanded the utter destruction of what existed before the imposition of the imperial order—it is the relationship between destruction and nation building that U.S. historiography of denial necessarily obfuscates through a systemic, closely guarded, culture of violence.

²⁷ Foucault’s theories on the order and history of ideas and knowledges is instructive given his emphasis on the nature of power in the shaping of ideas and history—there is, in essence, no history without force, a force that is anti-democratic and exclusionary (Said, “Ethics” 31).

change unilaterally. The consequence of such a Horatio Alger mandate for racial harmony and equality is that genocide becomes reduced to autogenocide. . . . [Consequently,] The fundamental right of states and whites is to not be held responsible for racial oppression. (50-51)

Very simply, as both the DRT and Power in their different ways remove the U.S.'s history from within a framework of genocide, this argument ignores the long-standing and violently ingrained structural inequities of U.S. culture, inequalities that kill, inequalities that are byproducts of legal histories and violent acts (violence and acts systemically directed against people of color for just "being" non-white), and places the responsibility for continued racial inequality and violence squarely on the shoulders of the victims. Foregrounding race is not divisive or a paean to a "culture of victimhood," at least not to those individuals who must endure the results of "white" supremacist legal, cultural, social practices at the foundation of the historiography of denial. It may very well be divisive to those "whites" who would prefer to not have to grapple with the privilege of "whiteness," or as Power reminds us, to simply not see what one does not want to see. Consequently, Power's negative revisionist history is not innocent, regardless of its intent. Power, like the DRT, instructs the U.S. citizenry in a hierarchy of genocide even as genocidal events are explained away—the U.S. state is distanced from the events for which it is directly responsible. And the contemporary conditions of people of color in the United States are subsequently not the result of centuries of violence that ultimately benefit the U.S.'s white majority, but their own fault.

Mary Louise Pratt offers yet another critical lens through which to view both the Alamo's exhibitionary complex and Power's work as symptomatic of U.S. historiography of denial. She identifies the concepts of "redundancy, discontinuity, and unreality" as the "chief coordinates" of "Euroimperialism" that are rooted in a unified logic of denial shared between "English-speaking peoples of the world" (M. Pratt 2). Pratt articulates this rhetorical violence as the notion of "anti-conquest" which, "refer[s] to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence [from imperialism's violence] in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (M. Pratt 7). The importance of her conceptualization stems from a shift from the "absolutist" arguments of empire, and instead, conveys a rhetoric of "passive" lordship (M. Pratt 7). The shift, emerging from a body of developing natural sciences, "created [a] . . . utopian, innocent version of European global authority [in which. . .] natural history provided [the] means for narrating inland travel and exploration aimed not at the discovery of trade routes, but at territorial surveillance, appropriation of resources and administrative control" (M. Pratt 39). Thus, the absolute violences of conquest disappear from the colonial project and are replaced with benign narratives of management, maintenance, and the "anti-conquest" central to the U.S.'s historiography of denial (M. Pratt 39). The "innocent" management of the natural world beyond the West fired the development of a historiography that crafted recognizable "inferiorities which further justified" domination, and certainly recast the violence of conquest within a framework of paternalism, a return to de Tocqueville, Kipling, Boas, the DRT, and Hegel's related historiography (M. Pratt 49, 68). Whatever negatives Western expansion may have brought with it, its introduction of civilization and culture far outweighed any negatives (M. Pratt 134-135).²⁸ As Locke argued centuries before, the land was

²⁸ It is vital to return to the intellectual histories represented in the first chapter by thinkers exemplified by Kipling, et. al. Edward Said asserts that the stories these writers tell "are at the

not in use, so the land, and all of the God-given plenty, needed to be developed. Thus, the destruction of that which came before the “modern” exists in an imaginary space of “imperialist nostalgia”—that which was destroyed, through no fault of the modernizing force of colonization, becomes, as de Tocqueville asserted, a moment of romantic memorialization (Rosaldo 68-74). It is thus a matter of “selective attention” to only the details of the past (for instance, Texan heroism, but not their slave-trading) that validates a benign U.S. imperial historiography and ensures the continuity of the cultural and social mechanism enabling genocide’s denial (Rosaldo 87). This “selective attention” is fundamental to both the DRT’s and Power’s work as they render the projects of slavery and Native American displacement as random, unsystematic practices unrelated to genocide, and certainly not the result of violence directed at peoples for not “being” white.

As a scholar of representation and genocide, Tim Cole observes the interrelationship between the “anti-colonial” and “imperialist nostalgia.” Cole argues that in the United States the discourse of genocide is shaped by “an event in European history . . . [that] is sufficiently ‘foreign’ and distant over time and space to be relatively unthreatening” (14). Cole’s focus is on the Shoah; however, he offers this vital aside that illustrates the U.S.’s interest in the event: “. . . allowing a foreign trauma to take up a central position means that national traumas may be dealt within the shadows, or ignored. Thus, the contemporary fascination with the ‘Holocaust’ may in reality be less about a concern with the Holocaust than about other, more internal matters” (14-5). Cole’s insight is central to further understanding Power’s imbrication within the U.S.’s historiography of denial to justify her works omissions of pre-twentieth century genocides, genocides largely perpetrated by European nations and the United States against peoples of color. Whereas, Power mindfully addresses the internal indifference to genocide in contemporary U.S. foreign policy responses, she fails to address the root of this policy problem. Namely, that genocide has long stood as a key component to the U.S.’s own internal policy practices—one must be very careful calling foul when one is as guilty. Norman G. Finkelstein argues:

It is much easier to deplore the crimes of others than to look at ourselves. It is also true, however, that were the will there we could learn much about ourselves from the Nazi experience. Manifest Destiny anticipated nearly all the ideological and programmatic elements of Hitler’s *Lebensraum* policy. In fact, Hitler modeled his conquest of the East on the American conquest of the West. . . . In

heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle of imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. As one critic has suggested, nations themselves *are* narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them” (*Culture* xii-xiii). The stories of the Colonial Americas and the early-United States were narratives woven by the victors celebrating their victories. These stories justified and distorted the violence relied upon to build the nation.

fact, it was the Nazi holocaust that discredited the scientific racism so pervasive a feature of American intellectual life before World War II. (144-145, 148)

Thus, both Cole and Finkelstein easily identify connections between “*the* age of genocide” and genocides perpetrated before the twentieth century in the Americas by the U.S. state for the benefit of its citizens, genocide celebrated in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex as progress and prosperity. Both also readily identify the rationale behind the denial pervasive in not only Power’s work, but also the wholesale denial of genocide in the Americas. To admit genocide would be to unmask U.S. historiography as complicit in genocide denial and expose the professed democratic roots of the United States as more akin to a state based on racial despotism. Rather than a land of heroics, progress, family, liberty, and justice, rather than an exceptional departure from European tyranny, rather than heir to the twins of “liberty” and “spirit,” the United States and its past would stand as a testament to—indeed a classroom for—some the gravest crimes of the Euro-American tradition.

The discussion of the historiography of denial has moved well beyond a specific focus on the Alamo as exhibitionary complex to denial as a metadiscourse. As a specific nexus, the Alamo is representative of how multiple cultural narratives (news accounts, fiction, film, museums) coalesce into a singular narrative of denial. Importantly, this singular location is representative of a global narrative of denial: the erasures of genocidal violence at the Alamo are symptomatic of erasures of genocidal violences on a national discursive level. Consequently, both the DRT and Power prove unremarkable in their denial. Both represent the ideologies of a critical mass of scholars of genocide. Consider the discussion in George L. Mosse’s *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. The prologue to the second printing in 1985 acknowledges a shift in the intellectual terrain from the first printing in 1978. Mosse comments that the 1978 edition inadequately addressed racism as an imperial practice, specifically within the Americas. However, he deals with this problem by dismissing it, by endorsing a historiography of denial. When studying the Shoah, a twentieth century event, one cannot argue from the position of “mistaken analogies” grouping imperial violence (“a by-product of a mistaken policy”) with the “deliberately planned and efficiently executed” work of the Nazis (x). In fact, Mosse’s previous assertion relies on the narrow logic that imperial racism cannot be fully understood “without taking full account of the development of anti-Semitism” (very true); however, where Mosse’s logic precludes the necessary complexity to fully grapple with genocide as a political/cultural praxis arises from the unwillingness to argue that the Nazi’s anti-Semitism cannot be fully understood without “taking full account” of European, and U.S., genocide in the centuries leading up to the Nazi’s policies. It is an ahistorical accounting of genocide from recent-past to distant-past—one *must* understand the Shoah to understand the treatment of people of color in the centuries before; one need not understand racism directed at people of color to understand the Shoah. This twentieth century event casts a very long, and retroactive, historical shadow, and by extension allows for a book like Power’s (not to mention an unperturbed historiography represented by the Alamo from which the U.S.’s and Power’s ideologies of denial arise) to never even begin a discussion of the role of genocide as past national policy in the U.S., even if the work’s aim is to discredit it. Genocide is one historical event where the twentieth

century event is precedent to the past—it is as if it sprang from the head of Zeus to enlighten concerning all that came before; it is without precedent or historical antecedent.²⁹

Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* nuances, but ultimately embraces, Mosse's argument and buttresses Power's work: "The repeated assertions that whatever the United States has done to blacks, Native Americans, Vietnamese, or others pales in comparison to the Holocaust is true—and evasive" (15). Novick shrewdly points out that ignoring claims of genocide in the U.S. represents a moral unwillingness to address historical fact in the Americas (a stance not clearly taken by Power); however, he makes a qualitative assessment (as does Mosse) that the comparison lacks the necessary affect or weight of a "real" genocide.³⁰ How

²⁹ Wole Soyinka, like Foucault (see note twenty-eight above), poignantly argues that power and preference lie behind that which is visible; an item only becomes a cultural icon when the will of the powerful allows the event, person, etc. to become manifest: ". . . objectively, the Atlantic slave trade [and I would add the enslavement and dispossession of people of color in the Americas] remains an inescapable critique of European humanism. In a different context, I have railed against the thesis that it was the Jewish Holocaust that placed the first question mark on all claims of European humanism—from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment to present-day multicultural orientation. Insistence on that thesis, we must continue to maintain, merely provides further proof that the European [and U.S.] mind has yet to come into full cognition of the African world [and Native populations world-wide] as an equal sector of a universal humanity, for, if it had, its historic recollection would have placed the failure of European humanism centuries earlier . . ." (38).

³⁰ Further decrying the centrality of U.S. denial, Chinua Achebe articulates the prowess of the cultural discourses of the West: "U.S. culture itself is a strong force of debilitation, not just against the Nigerian or African culture, but almost all other cultures around the world. It is difficult to stand up, to be yourself as you ought to, because the West, and America in particular, has so much power and influence. . . . It is where everything is coming from and the world is imperiled by its influence. . . . It is not easy to resist because it requires no effort or energy to accept it, no thought; it is so well-packaged, so seemingly attractive and, of course, it accompanies the economic penetration of the wealth of our country and people" (162-163). Achebe articulates the seamless indoctrination of his nation's people, as well as the rest of colonial Africa, into the Western way of seeing and thinking—"it requires no effort" to accept the "well-packaged" ideologies and products of the U.S. and the West. The economic incursion, coupled with the cultural invasion, manifest the symptoms of a neo-colonial state; such a state crafts a diseased concept of the Indigenous "imagined community's" collective sense of self as historical and contemporary beings. To return to the concept of the formative moments of subjectivity, the imposed subjectivity of the West on "third" world peoples, internal or external to the United States, not only disrupts the self's sense of her/his history, but also undermines the understandings of how/why the "third" world exists in a state of relative inequity. Not only do the masters not see genocide as a precursor to their economic, political, and cultural primacy, but the colonized are exposed to ubiquitous cultural and political messages—backed by force—that genocide, as a matter of historical practice, never happened and contemporary economic and political asymmetries are the result of qualitative differences in cultural progress. Again, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues in *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1992): "The entire economic and political control is effectively facilitated by the cultural factor. In any case, economic and political control inevitably leads to cultural dominance and this in turn deepens

does one qualitatively/quantitatively judge the Nazi project as *more horrific* than five hundred plus years of genocidal practices against Native America, centuries of Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and so on? Furthermore, what is the impact of dismissing the historical links Silko reveals between genocide in the Americas and genocide in twentieth century Europe? Silko, Cole, and Finkelstein readily identify historical antecedents of violence that informed the later genocidal events in Europe. Thus, this dissertation aims to question the value of this struggle over qualitative pain, academic inclusions and exclusions based on a politically compromised Genocide Convention, an unacknowledged investment in a white supremacists historiography of denial, and seeks to understand what is at the root of such a seemingly vacuous struggle—what is at stake in this contemporary word game? Are not all genocides and their resulting trauma abject? Why make one era's genocide more genocidal than another? This conflict is further expounded by David Stannard in *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*:

A secondary tragedy of all these genocides, moreover, is that partisan representatives among the survivors of particular afflicted groups not uncommonly hold up their peoples' experience as so fundamentally different from the others that not only is scholarly comparison rejected out of hand, but mere cross-referencing or discussion of other genocidal events within the context of their own flatly is prohibited. It is almost as though the preemptive conclusion that one's own group has suffered more than others is something of a horrible award of distinction that will be diminished if the true extent of another group's suffering is acknowledged. (151-152)

control. The maintenance, management, manipulation, and mobilisation of the entire system of education, language and language use, literature, religion, the media have always ensured for the oppressor nation power over the transmission of a certain ideology, set of values, outlook, attitudes, feelings, etc, and hence power over the whole area of consciousness. This in turn leads to the control of the individual and collective self-image of the dominated nation and classes as well as their image of the dominating nations and classes. By thus controlling the cultural and psychological domain, the oppressor nation and classes try to ensure the situation of a slave who takes it that to be a slave is the normal condition. If the exploited and the oppressed of the earth view themselves and their place in the universe as they are viewed by the imperialist bourgeoisie, then they can become their own policemen, no longer able to see any significant contradiction between their own condition and that of the oppressor nations and classes" (51). Thus, the emergence of a U.S. historiography of denial's accounting of U.S. reservations, inner-city "ghettos," to "third" world nations, accompanied by the values and lessons of the U.S. culture and economy instructs people of color about their place in the collective community of humanity. In the specific issue under discussion here, that of genocide, people of color are instructed that their histories, rooted in genocide, are secondary, or at least so different as to not be worthy of the term "genocide;" returning to Mosse, anything close to genocide in the Americas was really just a mistake, and in Power's analysis, seeing genocide requires a significant stretch, and for Novick, it "pales" in comparison. However, the greatest malady, so as to not blame the "victims," is the reassurance of the dominant group—a community's secondary status is something other than the measure of a systematic attempt at relegating entire communities to second, or third, class status, if not total extermination.

Stannard continues in “Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship”:

The willful maintenance of public ignorance regarding the genocidal and racist horrors against indigenous peoples that have been and are being perpetrated by many nations in the Western Hemisphere, including the United States—which contributes to the construction of a museum to commemorate genocide only if the killing occurred half a world away . . . [are buttressed by] narcissistic, false claims of uniqueness [that] are joined with brutal, racist denials of the sufferings of others, becoming two sides of the same debased coin. (198)

The U.S. nation-state, seeing genocide a world away, permits, if not encourages, Hegelian word games of history played not only by the DRT and Power, but other scholars of genocide (those who ultimately decide its meaning): This *is* genocide; that *is not*. Stannard situates the historiography of denial within what he calls a “brutal, racist” structure of state power enacted in the interest of silencing debate of U.S. led genocide. Thus, the state’s possessive investment in proactively furthering the historiography of denial that will benefit itself and further the U.S.’s dominant racialized, gendered, and socio-political orders does so only insofar as the nation willingly—to borrow from Stannard—embraces “holocaust denial.”

This historiography of denial elides the intense price of those destroyed within the crucible of Euro-American Modernity and the rise of the United States. Richard Drinnon’s *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating* traces the genealogy of My Lai in 1968 to the Puritan seventeenth century policies of extermination rooted, of course, in the racial biases imported from the Old World (3-64). However, unlike Mosse’s present-to-past historiography, Drinnon sees events in the recent-past as best understood through cumulative logics and events of *the past leading to the present*. For Drinnon, there is no United States in the Americas without a historical practice, a spiritual practice (as metaphysics would imply), of genocidal violence. Walter Mignolo furthers the scope of this argument into the present day by placing his research emphasis on Anáhuac in the sixteenth century—Mignolo demonstrates that the colonization of Amerindian cultures are “not behind us but [have] acquired a new form in a transnational world” (1). In spite of compelling academic argumentation illuminating both past and present violence against Indigenous communities in the Americas (to name only one), one fails to encounter this truth in the contemporary manifestations of national historiography—again, witness Power’s defining the twentieth century as *the* age of genocide, the DRT rendering chattel slavery invisible. Native America, not to mention African-Americans and to a greater and/or lesser extent other communities of color in the United States, is not even permitted inclusion in genocide’s definition or a broader historiography of violence and its legacies.

Thus, Power’s work sits on the shoulders of a centuries old historiography of denial; the Alamo is this dissertation’s specific case study. It is now to the possibility of an alternative to the historiography of denial, a strong Messianic moment of history, that this dissertation turns.

Chapter Eight: Toward a Strong Messianic Moment: A Historiography of Accountability

“‘History,’ I tell my students, ‘depends on who you want to believe.’” (168)

—Ana Castillo, *The Guardians: A Novel*

“In a history as possibility there is no room for the inexorable future. On the contrary, the future is always problematic. I must also emphasize that understanding history as *possibility* implies recognizing or realizing the importance of conscience in the knowledge process, in the process of intervening in the world. History as a time of *possibility* presupposes human beings’ capacity for observing, discovering, comparing, evaluating, deciding, breaking away, and for being responsible. It implies their ability to be ethical, as well as their capacity for ethical transgression. It is not possible to educate for democracy, for freedom, for ethical responsibility within a deterministic understanding of history.” (113)

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation*

“The old version of the ‘White Man’s Burden’ was a call to bring civilization to the darker people of the world. The first lines of Rudyard Kipling’s poem set the tone for his ode to empire, to the false nobility of white supremacy:

Take up the White Man’s burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives’ need.

We long have known that what the ‘captives’ need is to be spared the alleged generosity and benevolent tutelage of white people. The ‘captives’ of white supremacy do not need the best that we white people breed; they don’t need our sons to run their lives. What they need from white people is for us to realize we are the problem. They need us to commit to dismantling white supremacy as an ideology and lived reality. The world does not need white people to civilize others. The real White People’s Burden is to civilize ourselves.” (96)

—Robert Jensen, *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege*

This conclusion will attempt to provide an understanding of why a strong Messianic moment, as an alternative to the “weak Messianic” moment, is both necessary and possible as a corrective to the providential/*Geist*-inspired historiography of denial. Confronting the narratives of genocide denial manifest in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex and the work of Samantha Power, this chapter will argue for a historiography of accountability, a historiography that is expansive enough to account for both the past progress and future potential of the United States’ promise as well as its most abhorrent acts. As already discussed, the historiography of denial demands a “deterministic understanding” of the narratives of U.S. exceptionalism, a narrative veiling violence behind the guise of a divine mission to civilize. Muted and recast as necessary

to protect or advance a righteous national cause and/or protect/educate the uncivilized, the nation's crimes remain invisible in history.

The importance of this work, as demonstrated by Power's book, emerges because the historiography of denial is not the sole province of museums such as the Alamo. It is not just "the stuff" of rarefied academic discourse. Rather, it is a hallmark of the day-to-day understanding of the United States and its policy practices. While the most tactless language of a divinely ordained Manifest Destiny and brazen expansion has faded, the sentiment of the U.S. as a nation above the rest, and beyond reproach, still exercises tremendous influence. As the following roundtable from the June 8, 2009 *McLaughlin Group* will demonstrate, a powerful political and cultural posture that sees no value in disputing the supposition that the U.S. is better than other nations remains, a supposition that is a key pillar in the façade of the historiography of denial:

Dr. John McLaughlin¹: Okay. Has there been a bit too much apologizing from the United States on Obama's part over too long a time?

President Barak Obama (from videotape): With my election and the early decisions that we've made, that you're starting to see some restoration of America's standing in the world. There have been times where America has shown arrogance and been dismissive, even derisive. The United States is still working through some of our own darker periods in our history. We've at times been disengaged, and at times we've sought to dictate our terms. We have to acknowledge potentially we've made some mistakes. That's how we learn. Unfortunately, faced with an uncertain threat, our government made a series of hasty decisions. In other words, we went off-course.

Dr. McLaughlin: He also added from Cairo, "In the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government." So he's gone pretty far, has he not, in apologizing....Is he bad-mouthing us?

Mr. Mortimer Zuckerman²: You're darn right he is, because we saved the Iranian regime after World War II from Soviet domination. The United States was the only country in the world that stood up to Soviet attempts to dominate Europe. I mean, we have done an extraordinary job. No other country in history, I think . . . has expended as much treasure and blood to try and preserve democracy and freedom in the world. . . . That is a ridiculous charge.

¹ Dr. John McLaughlin is a widely viewed and read political "insider." A former editor of the *National Review*. He is also a former speechwriter for Presidents Nixon and Ford. He is the creator and executive producer of *The McLaughlin Group* ("About").

² Mortimer Zuckerman is editor-in-chief of *U.S. News & World Report*. He is also chairman of the *New York Daily News* ("About").

Ms. Eleanor Clift³: It's factual. It's factual that we played a role . . . It is factual that we played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected government in Iran. He acknowledged all the areas that the rest of the world looks at us and loathes us for. He acknowledged it.

Dr. McLaughlin: Is he bad-mouthing the United States?

Ms. Monica Crowley⁴: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Pat Buchanan⁵: You're darn right he is. It's nothing good about the United States.

Ms. Crowley: It's not the truth, and it's not . . . and it's not an appropriate exercise of American presidential leadership. I am sick and tired of this man running down his country when he's on foreign soil. You hire a president to represent the United States of America. I guess he fancies himself as president of the world. . . . He doesn't need to keep saying it in every foreign speech. It is ridiculous. . . . It's ridiculous, and it is counterproductive. (*McLaughlin*)

This conversation is instructive; it demonstrates that on the political left and most certainly the political right⁶ in the United States, little tolerance for a public admission, much less discussion,

³ Eleanor Clift is a contributing editor for *Newsweek*. Her focus as a reporter is Washington, D.C. and its personalities as Deputy Washington Bureau Chief. She, too, is a consummate "Washington Insider" ("About").

⁴ Monica Crowley is nationally syndicated conservative columnist. She also served as a policy assistant to former President Nixon ("About").

⁵ Pat Buchanan is a nationally recognized conservative columnist and activist. He is a former policy advisor to President Nixon and Ford. He worked in the Reagan Whitehouse as Director of Communications, and has run for President three times ("About").

⁶ Post-Cold War nationalism in the West arose from the indulgence in forgetting, in washing the nation in logics of "American consumerism and amnesiac approach to history" (Gemündem 122). Gerd Gemündem argues that these emergent debates about nationality and nationhood occurred within a discourse dominated by the political right: "The antinationalist legacy of the 1970s and 1980s has left the Left totally unprepared for discourse about nationhood after 1989, and has thus allowed the Right to set the terms of the discussion" (130). While Gemündem's primary concern is German national identity post-reunification the theoretical relationship to the United States is salient. Reunification in Germany was generally celebratory, though not entirely unproblematic; these "shocks" of reunification forced a rearticulation of what it meant to be German. The United States on September 11, 2001 passed through its own incredibly shocking event that forced the national community to reckon with the meaning of "Americanness" and nationalism—in the days following the attack, flags bloomed on citizen's lawns, porches, garages, and so on with an unparalleled rapidity. And as in Germany 1989, the left was utterly unprepared to shape the contours of the debate. The political right, building on the collective culture and nationalist history of the United States proclaimed that the attacks were rooted in a hatred of "our" freedoms and prosperity. The discourse was steeped in flags, epic images of fire fighters, and soldiers on the wall in the name of freedom. The world, and everyone in it, was either on the side of freedom, or against it; just as post-Cold War Germany, the U.S.'s post-9/11 discourse has largely been shaped by the right.

of the past and present “sins” of the nation exists. Presumably, the overthrow of democratically elected governments in the interest of the politically expedient, as understood by the U.S., is justified and above reproach, not to mention the countless other direct and proxy actions of the United States across the globe, across centuries. With the exception of Eleanor Clift of *Newsweek*, the *McLaughlin Group* panelists recognize no merit in an honest accounting of past and ongoing violations of political and moral law, acts recognized by a significant proportion of the world’s population as wrong.⁷ It is as if the perceptions of the peoples and nations upon which the U.S. dispensed violence and destabilization simply need to see things from a U.S. perspective, or understand the harm imposed was good medicine for which they should be grateful—it is the benevolent “White Man’s Burden.” Though now it is also a burden shared by white women: Monica Crowley, syndicated columnist, is the most strenuous in objecting to President Obama speaking about U.S. mistakes, mistakes with often *murderous* consequences, as “ridiculous and counterproductive” (*McLaughlin*). The supposed greater good rooted in U.S. geopolitical readings of the world should be the focus. And these criticisms are not even challenges to the substance of the United States; they are largely cosmetic! Such is the depth of historiography of denial; not only does it erase the long-ago domestic violence of the earliest colonists, Texans at the Alamo, and the Western expansion, but this historiography seeps into the present and erases acts of state violence committed in the last one to two generations, acts witnessed by hundreds of millions of people of color. The historiography of denial demands that one must simply accept the United States’ good will while dismissing the perceptions of the darker nations, both past and present.

In a re-visioning of the biological racism and unabashed imperialism of the nineteenth century and the exceptionalism of the twentieth and twenty-first century, post-9/11 nationalism assert that it is only the “cynical” or the “counterproductive” that remind the U.S. “imagined community” of the lesser angels of the national history.⁸ Because of this, questioning the

⁷ For an extensive and eye-opening list of U.S. interventions, direct, covert, and proxy, see Ward Churchill’s *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality* (2000) chapters “That ‘Most Peace-Loving of Nations’: A Record of U.S. Military Actions at Home and Abroad” (39-85) and “‘A Government of Laws’? U.S. Obstructions, Subversions, Violations and Refusals of International Legality Since World War II” (86-301). Whatever one may think of Churchill since his academic issues at the University of Colorado, Bolder, the list he has compiled clearly indicates that the United States has assumed a very active posture around the world.

⁸ In the current post 9/11 political and cultural climate, to expose the U.S. for the imperial nation that it is, is to encounter claims that to do so is unpatriotic, cynical or too dark. Lynne Cheney is one of the most vocal critics of free inquiry: “I think when people were talking about moral values they were talking about patriotism, they were talking about love of country. I think, to put it even more generally, they were talking about an uncynical approach to our nation and to our national story. There is in the mainstream media—there has been, I think, in our political life, a real corrosive kind of cynicism, a notion that anytime anything goes right you have to sort of turn your nose up at it and say, ‘Well, it really wasn’t all that great,’ a kind of undercutting cynicism. And I think part of that moral-values question related to that, related to the idea that we ought to be able to say, this is a great country. We have made amazing progress in achieving human freedom for ourselves and for people around the world.” In other words, telling any other story about the nation than the one in almost every museum, monument and text book in the United

religiosity and its framing of divinity and progress at the foundation of the historiography of denial has never been attacked as more “unpatriotic,” or more necessary.⁹ The U.S. state argues it possesses the right to project its power, because of its past history as the “freest” and as contemporary heir of a tradition of liberatory progress.¹⁰ These present-day beliefs rise from and

States detracts from the undeniable growth in liberty—however, in the debate about values, I have always been under the impression that dishonesty is not a family value. So, what is wrong with calling the U.S. genocidal when our national histories reveal as much to those who care to see? This is not a far cry from George W. Bush’s dictum that the world is either with the U.S. or with the terrorists (“You”). To be a patriot is to endorse the narrative of “America” that demands loyalty and exists as a country that is, simply, beyond reproach.

⁹ This dissertation, a work constructed during wartime—a period of war on a stateless terror with no perceivable end—builds on Avery Gordon’s argument, “it is more important than ever that research specify the violence of representation and not abandon the terms of the crisis” (*Keeping* 10). At the onset of the “American Century,” extra-territorial imperial warfare was viewed as so uncharacteristic of the “American” character that: “. . . it both produced and required a ‘new national ideology’ capable of charging the [‘American Century’] with the task of fulfilling the incipient promise of empire. . . . to create a self-serving and naturalized narrative of origin and destiny, a narrative of nation, in this case, forged in the crucible of the monumental failure of that emancipatory form of nation building known as Radical Reconstruction” (Gordon, *Keeping* 20). With this logic in mind, the historic role of education—and its disciplines—are in the “service of [a] capitalist, antidemocratic, racialists state” that seeks to impose its interpretation on both events and narratives (by willful, patriotic submission, or by force if need be), the very narratives of nation-building that Canonize the amnesia securing the national past and present as democratic, progressive, and free (Gordon, *Keeping* 21-22). This slavish obligation to a “patriotic” narrative of “America” demands an alternative understanding of “good” and “bad,” a willful breaking of the rules to open the possibility of anti-imperial history, of anti-racist history, of a history that sees continual extermination of both people and ways of life as fundamentally central to the national project of the United States. In a time of war, the pressure to conform, to rally behind the flag, to support the troops, to keep “America” strong, and all that is profoundly powerful. That said, the pressure to conform and step blindly in line is not simply naïve, but a “social problem” promoting “fear, not courage; . . . acquiescence, not dissent; . . . inequality and deference to authority, not equality and self-governance” (Gordon, *Keeping* 71). The very pressures of conformity are, in fact, against the ideals the current war is currently being waged in the name of: freedom and social justice.

¹⁰ The self-image of the leading democratic nation is certainly contested; however, George W. Bush was re-elected in 2004 on a pro-war platform, and his Democratic opposition, John Kerry, also ran on a pro-war platform. Additionally, the 2008 Presidential campaign was populated by candidates more concerned with being perceived as hawkish on the “War on Terror” than correcting the egregious civil and human rights abuses enacted on both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. Because of a veiled imperial ambition cloaked in a never-ending “War on Terror,” the U.S. is currently comfortable projecting its self understood values of right around the world. While now President Barak Obama was very critical of the Bush approach to foreign policy during the election, Obama and his administration are embracing a number of elements of the “War on Terror” (even as they shy away from the term) that greatly trouble those invested in human rights and the rule of law (“Meet”; “Obama”; “Obama’s”;

ensure a complimentary continuity of the historiography of denial ordering of the U.S.'s past. The attacks against those, who anywhere and anytime, stand in opposition to the "American way" strike blows for the light of freedom and democracy against the darkened spaces of tyranny and barbarism: the "weak Messianic" America(n) building a better world. Those who act against the interests of the world, that is against the interests of the U.S., become criminals, savages, or terrorists needing restraint and "savage war" that only the U.S. can provide, and mostly through overt or covert military acts (Sardar and Davies 65-66). Thus, there is a narrative melding of the military actions of the U.S., those inspired by providence/*Geist* from the past that built the nation with those of the present that now supposedly protect; in any case, *all* these acts of violence become historicized as acts of justice and prevention in both the nation's and world's interest.

Because of the contemporary U.S. worldview rooted in the "war on terror" it is of vital import that the historiography of denial, "our" roots and justification of "our" claims to advance freedom, be interrogated. The continuity of the "weak Messianic" impulse is not an innocent one; it is one that allows for the perpetuation that violence "over there" committed against "them" keeps the nation and world safe. From the initial stages of conquest recast as god's plan for North America, to the Texans saving Texas from a lesser race, to divinity's hand in Manifest Destiny, and on into Power's twentieth century denial, the United States categorizes these acts of violence, often genocidal violence, as the highest forms of achievements and manifestation of the best ideals. From the "light on the hill" to the "only superpower," the "weak Messianic" narratives of the U.S.'s historiography of denial furthers the self-professed, but violently enforced, narratives of progress, freedom and family. These claims, as noted, are not innocent; they stem from narratives that have been historically empowered by the heirs of genocidal conquest, a conquest hidden behind a veil of lies wrapped in a profane application of the "divine."

The violent reaction against President Barack Obama's mild criticism of the U.S. as a nation "off course" is telling—the guilty take the truth to be hard. And it is the hard truth, a strong Messianic moment, a historiography of accountability that will demand the Alamo incorporate genocidal chattel slavery into its representation of itself as a "shrine" of freedom, a historiography of accountability that will acknowledge disappeared and exterminated Native Americans from the imagined West, a historiography of accountability that will demand that *the* age of genocide honestly reflect the historical continuity of centuries of genocide in the Americas. A historiography of accountability will force a grappling with the interplay of white supremacy, the national sense of promise, and genocide denial in the United States.

Seeking an Ambivalent Patriot: A Reflection on U.S. History and Truth

The historiography of denial represents a question of power, ownership over the past, and its accounting, and generally the historiography of denial demands a simple narrative, a narrative of good versus evil, us versus them, truth versus falsehood. Consider the words of Michel-Rolph Trouillot: "We are never as steeped in history as when we pretend not to be, but if we stop pretending we may gain in understanding what we lose in false innocence. Naiveté is often an excuse for those who exercise power. For those upon whom power is exercised, naiveté is always a mistake" (*Silencing* xix).¹¹ The naïve "truths" of history are a matter of "invisible"

¹¹ The concept of "cultural memory" [as a concept that] signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one" (Bal vii). Not only is it a

power exercised by the socio-cultural privileged enforcing their truths by means of largely unnoticed cultural mechanisms, for instance the DRT's management of the Alamo's exhibitionary complex. When considering the power of the historiography of denial, its prevalence, and a lack of a widespread level of critical engagement with it, it reminds that power is the currency behind visibility, as well as invisibility. Samantha Power reminds that the option to not see manifests the structural power behind personal practice.¹² Additionally, Power states that only "extreme" stretches of legal logic would hold the South, and the broader U.S., accountable for genocide because centuries of institutionalized, legislated slavery and Native America's history are histories Power opts not to recognize (much like Monica Crowley's more recent position on past-U.S. foreign policy actions). Power's work advances the position that the African American and Indigenous communities who are heirs to the institutional legacies of slavery and genocide are the unfortunate victims of misguided, random actions.¹³ Thus, Power maintains the binary construct that argues the United States is a largely good, if an ineffective, or at times, apathetic nation—but "we" are not perpetrators. Mosse claims that the genocide (though he would not term it genocide) of imperialism was a by-product of a mistake or only understood when seeing it through the retroactive prism of the Shoah; whereas, the violence of fascist Germany was deliberate, *really* genocide, and defines the contours of all such acts of violence. This distinction categorizes these events in distinct hierarchies: one is evil (Nazi violence), the other a fluke and, as such, not evil, just misguided. Mosse similarly maintains the binary logic of the U.S. as good versus evil elsewhere.¹⁴ Novick articulates a moral basis for comparative consideration of the twentieth century genocide in Nazi Germany with the past, but dismisses contiguous historical connections between past and present, also, again, perpetuating the binary thinking.¹⁵ To re-invoke Power, the failure to acknowledge genocide simply continues the process;¹⁶ though the United States may no longer be engaged in domestic, military-based genocide, genocide remains a contemporary cultural and historical praxis manifest in the enforced, and viciously, defended historiography of denial. Power, Mosse, and Novick ally themselves, wittingly or not, with the contemporary regalia of power and further the denial that represent a continuity of the "weak" Messianic narratives represented by the Alamo's exhibitionary complex as well as Power's work.

The historic weight of these multiple narratives of historiographic denial almost completely bury already marginal histories. Foucault insists that "in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*" (qtd. in Said, "Ethics" 7). With the twentieth

shared, or collective, act of imagination and remembrance, "cultural memorialization as an activity occur[s] in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future" (Bal vii). This active mode of remembrance is that which ties the modern to the historical, and within this connection are the practices of power in memory. What a society recalls, and how it remembers it, are matters of power. What is at stake in the moments celebrated? Why is this, that, and the other thing forgotten, or viewed as ancillary to the major events of a culture's history? Whatever the case, it is, ultimately, a matter of collective choice, and in the U.S. the backward gaze of history sees the divine (Bal vii-viii).

¹² See chapter seven, page 129.

¹³ See chapter seven, pages 125 through 129.

¹⁴ See chapter seven, pages 136 and 137.

¹⁵ See chapter seven, pages 137 through 139.

¹⁶ See chapter seven, pages 129 and 130.

century as the central “monument” of genocide (it is, after all according to Power, *the* age of genocide), genocide in the United States’ past finds little room for serious, uncontested expression. The records, “documents,” of one particularly ideologically salient narrative, the Shoah as the U.S.’s touchstone for understanding all genocides for example, are transformed into the larger-than-life status of monument.¹⁷ The Shoah, then, possesses enough national importance to merit permanent enshrinement as a distinctly “American” event through its narrative embedding in the exhibitionary complex that is the National Mall¹⁸ in Washington,

¹⁷ The centrality of Shoah memory as monument is advanced by Peter Novick in his book, *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999). Explaining the import of social narrative Novick argues: “The most significant collective memories—memories that suffuse group consciousness—derive their power from their claim to express some permanent, enduring truth. Such memories are as much about the present as about the past, and are believed to tell us (and others) something fundamental about *who we are now*; they express, or even define, our identity. For a memory to take hold in this way it has to resonate with how we understand ourselves: how we see our present circumstances, how we think about our future” (170). Also, see Huysen below.

¹⁸ By far, the most “American” museum is the National Mall in Washington, D.C. It is arguably the preeminent location representing the “collective” values of the United States. This is the Federal Government’s official statement on itself—a statement made in monuments, museums, and other buildings. According to C.M. Harris, Washington, D.C. was George Washington’s “nationalist formula for the ordering of the new nation, of projecting national meaning on a site that was both practically and theoretically a tabula rasa” (527). The capitol, and its center piece the National Mall, arose from the shared logics of Roman neoclassicism and a belief in the value of public architecture. Furthermore, the capitol was viewed as a potential “centripetal force at the center of the country” that would unite and prevent a return of confederation (Harris 534-535). Even Jefferson, with his fear of monarchical government, shared Washington’s vision of a symbolic national character, though the architectural scale and institutional power of the central government were points of disagreement (Harris 529). Whatever the points of disagreement between the political and cultural architects of the early U.S., Washington, D.C. was to rise as the seat of the United States of America, and with this rise came a measure of national symbolic importance. Its symbolic meaning lies in the very geography of the city: “No one commenting on the design of Washington, D.C., has been able to overlook the apparent incongruity between the city’s radial avenues and formal landscaping, reminiscent of European autocracies, and the egalitarianism professed by the new republic. Bilateral symmetry in landscape and street design, we know, enforces a sense that the proper view is available only along a single axial line—a line sometimes emphasized by placing fountains or monuments along it, like gunsights. Radiating avenues compel the attention of the city’s residents [and visitors] toward monumental buildings, symbols of the city’s power, at its heart; conversely, they provide those at the center with a range of perspectives commanding the whole city and suggesting that only from the center can the whole city be understood The populace is encouraged to look for orientation to the center The king in turn is encouraged to think of his city as the image of the world, which his wisdom comprehends and his power set in order” (Dougherty 23). Whether such popular or royal imaginings really took, or take, place, the city, the Mall, was built with the idea of setting in stone the new nation, of representing its power and place to not only the citizenry, but to the world. Thus, from its inception the Mall was meant to lie at the heart of the Federal City and as the site of the most important monuments in Washington, D.C., the Mall holds the most sacred

D.C., along side the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial and so forth. It has been granted a sacred space within the “imagined community” of “America” alongside the moments of this nation’s foundational mythology. The state, and its constituency, symbolically embraces this European event as “our” own.

Compare the deafening silence in the U.S. related to the genocides perpetrated by this nation with Andreas Huyssen’s 1994 observations about the Shoah in *Twilight Memories*; Huyssen describes the primary difficulty in representing the Shoah as its “ubiquitousness, even excess of Holocaust imagery in [Western] culture . . .” (255). Blending the ideas of Trouillot and Huyssen with the exhibitionary complex, the “ubiquitousness” of Holocaust representation introduces the public, if willing to see, to the “power” of historical access Trouillot speaks about. As civil subjects in the United States specifically, and the West in general, one cannot evade the horror of European genocide in the twentieth century—it is, after all, ubiquitous and its presence disciplined into the U.S. ethos through its location in both Washington, D.C. and its status as a prominent cultural icon.¹⁹ Similarly, after Power, one cannot ignore the prevalence of inaction in the face of genocide in the twentieth century (Power, ‘A Problem’ 65-70). This heightened

and central national symbols. The Mall represents what Juan Eduardo Campo terms an “American Pilgrimage Landscape”—it is a place where “Americans” come to partake of “American Civil Religion” to participate in the “production of patriotic loyalty to the United States”, and this is done through the Mall’s symbolic “interconnection of God and country, commemoration of heroes . . . martyrs, and the attribution of patriotic significance to the natural landscape” (44 ,48) The few buildings in the verdant open-space of the Mall evoke the titans of U.S. history, their values, and elevate them to national deities. Within the sacred space of the nationalist pilgrimage, the lives and legacies of the enshrined becomes a matter of religiosity—to revere these symbols, the Holocaust Memorial Museum included, becomes national imperative as the project of “American” democracy is revealed, symbolically, to be built on upon the legacies of the monumentalized ancestors at the heart of the nation’s geographic and memorial center.

¹⁹ The representation of genocide is by-and-large focused on the Shoah. There is tremendous academic interest in the Shoah: Dominick LaCapra's *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (1994), Jeffery Shandler’s *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (1999), Hilene Flanzbaum’s *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (1999), Alan Mintz’s *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (2001), Yehuda Bauer’s *Rethinking the Holocaust* (2001), and Judith Doneson’s *The Holocaust in American Film* (2002); these texts represent but a small sampling of the books published in the last fifteen years. Additionally, the Shoah maintains tremendous popularity as a topic for a significant number of Hollywood films, both documentary and docu-drama. The number of films is too extensive to note here; however, what follows is only a cursory sample: *Verdict on Auschwitz* (1993), *Life is Beautiful* (1997), *The Devil’s Arithmetic* (1999), *Conspiracy* (2001), *Fate Did Not Let Me Go* (2002), *Secret Lives: Hidden Children and Their Rescuers During WWII* (2002), *Out of the Ashes* (2003), *Frontline: Memory of the Camps* (2005), *God on Trial* (2008), and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2008). It would be a challenge to locate an equal number of popular culture films dealing with issues of genocide related to minority groups in the Americas, and this is the urgent question behind this dissertation, why does the discussion of genocide take place in a monovocal voice? There is a larger historical context for genocide, one beyond Europe and one also perpetrated by Europeans.

cultural awareness, as Tim Cole points out above, forces the observer to confront genocide, but a genocide temporally and spatially removed from the U.S.²⁰ The U.S. remains a nation not guilty of perpetrating genocide; the narrative of the U.S. as the home of liberty and justice remains largely intact. This exclusivity, this continuity of exceptionalism, manifests in the logics so prevalent in the works of the DRT, Mosse, Novick, and Power: genocide is *always* over there. Subsequently, the formal inclusion of Europe's most infamous genocide on the Mall coupled with the exclusion of America's genocides from the Mall as the central exhibitionary complex of "America" constructs a façade of values on the Mall and in the broader U.S. culture, and consequently strengthens the historiography of denial as contemporary practice of the United States.

There is no "heroism" in denial, in disassociating U.S. histories of genocide (*our* national acts) while remembering the national crimes of others (though, certainly, remembering these crimes is, in-and-of-itself, of value). There is no "progress" or "justice" in half-truths. However, there is a profound positive effect for the nation's privileged; the disassociation permits a continuity of the binary thinking where there is only good and bad, us and them, freedom and tyranny, and the nation happily rests on the good side. This narrative simplicity protects the exceptionalist narratives as understood at the Alamo, on the Mall, and in U.S. historiography in general. The struggle to alter the historiography of denial by introducing silenced histories of genocide should be, and often is, central to the struggle for justice—the battle is always, though not exclusively, representational—the dead are forever dead, but need not remain silenced.

It is with this in mind that I return to the question of how the occlusion of U.S. genocides from public discourse permits the continuation of the historiography of denial in which the "other" becomes unwillingly enmeshed and then systematically forgotten or defined as necessary victims of progress. The contemporary nation, progress, and freedom remain rooted in an understanding, a religiosity, of national origins. This religiosity, this divine self-understanding, easily permits the exclusion of stories that trouble the simple good/evil, freedom/tyranny, right/wrong mythologies embedded in the U.S.'s exceptionalist narratives, those "weak Messianic" moments. The reliance on these binaries remain central to the self-conception of the nation both as politically and spiritually right in its actions, both past and present. The genocidal violence of nation building becomes, necessarily, good:

Apocalyptic visions inspire genocidal killers who glorify violence as the mechanism that will lead to the end of history. . . . The Puritans, who hoped to create a theocratic state, believed Satan ruled the wilderness surrounding their settlements. They believed that God had called them to cast Satan out of the wilderness to create a promised land. That divine command sanctioned the removal and slaughter of Native Americans. This hubris fed the deadly doctrine of Manifest Destiny. . . . The ecstatic belief in the cleansing power of apocalyptic violence does not recognize the right of the victims to self-preservation or self-defense. . . . They are seen instead through this poisonous lens as pollutants, viruses, mutations that must be eradicated to halt further infection and degeneration within society and usher in utopia. This sacred violence . . . allows its perpetrators and henchmen to avoid moral responsibility for their crimes. The brutality they carry out is sanctified, an expression of not human volition but

²⁰ See chapter seven, pages 135 and 136.

divine wrath. The victims, in a final irony, are considered responsible for their suffering and destruction. They are to blame because . . . they have defied God. Those who promise to cleanse the world through sacred violence, to relieve anxiety over moral pollution by building mounds of corpses, always appeal to our noblest sentiments, our highest virtues, our capacity for self-sacrifice and our utopian visions of a purified life. It is this coupling of fantastic hope and profound despair . . . that frees the conscience of those who call for and carry out the eradication of fellow human beings in the name of God. (Hedges 31-32)

Providence/*Geist* commanded the early settlers, the Texans, and the pioneers into the wilderness to claim the land for a righteous cause, and to cast evil out. Whatever violence happened was necessary and holy violence. Those doing the killing did not do so out of joy, racist hate, or greed, but out of a duty to providence and nation. Any guilt fades away and the national mythology remains unsullied; remembering the Alamo demands recalling only the DRT's construction of it as a "*shrine* of Texas liberty." This foundational worldview of seeing a divinely appointed mission of nation-building achieved through profound acts of violence is not too far a cry from the present religiosity that informs the United States' view of its role in the world today:

The American idea of itself as God's elect nation has functioned mostly as such a false ideology that justified the appropriation of Indian and Mexican land and the expulsion or destruction of these people or their reduction to exploited labor. Identifying the elect nation as Anglo-Saxon Protestants privileged this group against Indians, African-Americans, Mexicans, Filipinos, Chinese, and other people defined as 'non-white.' A cult of militaristic virility sought to locate women as dependents and domestic labor . . . The rhetoric of innocent and good America against irrationally evil terrorists was [again] unleashed full throttle after the 9/11 terrorist attacks . . . George W. Bush particularly favors a religious rhetoric that weaves together the language of apocalyptic warfare with that of messianic mission. . . . America, God's chosen people, is once more pitted against God's enemies. This language of apocalyptic warfare assumes an American redemptive mission to the world. (Ruether 260-261)

And though the U.S. is relatively new, historically, to the post-9/11 world, the impulse for exporting violence because "we" are right to do so is a long-standing tradition closely enmeshed with the foundational, providential understanding of the U.S.'s role in the world.²¹ Providence/*Geist* demands subjugation of America's, Asia's, and African's lands and peoples in the name of progress and justice, and this march continues. The foreign policy now enacted by the United States across the Middle East and the popular perception of the U.S.'s "War on Terror" reconstructs the Puritan's errand, the Texans' Manifest Destiny and to reference the late-twentieth century, a "remoralize[d]" U.S. sense of self that does not seek wealth but a "'global democratic revolution'" rooted in a logic of purifying violence (Grandin, *Empire's* 5-6, 227).²²

²¹ See Chomsky *Imperial Ambition: Conversations on the Post-9/11 World* (2005), 184-189.

²² Trouillot's work begins in the distant past; he sees the project of the academic today, in a world of global flows of everything from ideas to bead work, to "reassess the challenges that

typify our times in light of history” (Trouillot, *Global* 1, 3-4). Thus, to understand the modern, one must look into the past—how did “we,” as a society, arrive here? One cannot know the modern United States, its racisms, its oppressions, its progresses, without the measuring stick the nation’s histories on these matters—it is not mere chance that the social sciences arose during an era of “nationalist fervor . . . and colonial domination” (Trouillot, *Global* 4). As telling as what one finds on the page are those items one must look between the lines for, or for that matter outside of what has come to be recognized as History: what does Euro-American nationalism, racism, and genocide necessarily exclude? (Trouillot, *Global* 1, 3). Trouillot continues: “I have insisted so far that the West [, the United States as the major Western nation of the moment,] is a historical projection, a projection *in* history. But it is also a projection *of* history, the imposition of a particular interface between what happened and that which is said to happen. As anchor of a claim to universal legitimacy, the geography of imagination inherent in the West since the sixteenth century imposes a frame within which to read world history. Thematic variations and political choices aside, . . . this framework has always assumed the centrality of the North Atlantic not only as the site from which world history is made but also as the site whence that story can be told. Eric Wolf (1982) has argued that the human disciplines have treated the world outside of Europe as people without history. One can more precisely claim that they were also treated as people without historicity. Their capacity to narrate anecdotal parts of the world story was always subsumed under a North Atlantic historicity that was deemed universal” (Trouillot, *Global* 12). Thus, silences, erasures, forced extinctions never figure into the production of history because the march towards a better tomorrow, on the shoulders of a progressive past, permeate Western history. Thus, the silences teach us as much, if not more, about how the United States cares to remember itself and its deeds—just as Trouillot argues “the West” is fiction; similarly, the United States is a fiction defined by that, who, and what is excluded—and why. In the United States, all things were made possible within the imperial crucible of conquest, enslavement, extermination, displacement, and so on—hundreds of Little Big Horns enabled Euro-American history to be the voice of Indigenous historiography in North America for centuries. Millions of sets of shackles stilled the hands of Africa-America, and freed the hands of their “masters” to write the Black Atlantic for centuries. Theft, guns, and neglect silenced and conquered, post-1848 communities of Mexicans in the Southwest, again, enabling their history to be written by self-interested Euro-Americans. The violence of which I speak rarely graces the canonical discourse of the United States. All of this national violence deeply matters—Trouillot reminds that the state, recognized or not, is an omnipresent force. Making this claim often is difficult to prove, Trouillot notes that the state possesses no “institutional or geographical fixity, its presence become more deceptive than otherwise thought, and we need to theorize the state beyond the empirically obvious” (Trouillot, *Global* 80-1). There are the obvious locations of state power: the military, the police, prisons, the tax collector, elected officials and so on. However, what is of most interest to this study are those manifestations that are seemingly disembodied from obvious manifestations of state power—that state is as much a part of civil society as civil society is of the state: “state and society are bound by historical bloc that takes the form of the social contract of—and thus, the hegemony deployed in—a particular social formation” (Trouillot, *Global* 83). Thus, the state is more than the sum of its bureaucratic parts and its laws—it is also the social mores, attitudes and beliefs of civil society (and generally a hidden history of force—states are forged in “a process that requires time, constant intervention, and much political power”) (Trouillot, *Global* 84). The contemporary state, is then,

While this may seem a departure from the task at hand, a discussion of the historiography of denial and its foil, a historiography of accountability, this brief survey of the role of violence in the U.S.'s past and present illustrates how the function of "weak Messianic" violence is the norm as is its Janus-face, denial. The United States would not be the United States without genocide, and as already demonstrated, the violence is consistently rewritten as something good for all parties involved. Whether looking back to seventeenth century Puritan New England or the tribal regions in Pakistan in 2009, violence is the answer. This continuity of good violence intermingled with the belief that the violence supports a divine cause is a crux of the historiography of denial, and begs the question of what a strong Messianic moment would be.

A Strong Messianic Moment: Violence, Divinity, and the Disaffected

This may seem a ridiculous statement, however, this is not meant to be a religious or spiritual argument; rather this dissertation means to situate the religiosity of the "American" mythology and expose the prominence of the theological underpinnings (whether it be rooted in Christian providence or a philosophical *Geist*) in crafting and maintaining the historiography of denial. As such, this historiography of denial that will be confronted and questioned on its spiritual terrain. Thus, a return to Benjamin becomes necessary to initiate this discussion.²³ In imagining a historiography of accountability, a strong Messianic moment, Benjamin states, "To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for redeemed mankind has its past become citable *in all its moments*" (254, emphasis added). The half-truths that populate current U.S. historiography result in, by implication, a "fallen" state; the false binaries that insist on a righteous national project permit only a partial understanding of the U.S.'s past. The denial of the genocidal violence, violence that would likely make the divine turn her or his head away, must cease and be acknowledged in the interest of a "fullness" of history and ultimately national redemption. This, of course will not be easy; Benjamin continues,

. . . The class struggle [and the struggle of other oppressed groups] . . . is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined spiritual things could exist.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is not in the form of the spoils which fall to the victor that the latter make their presence felt in the class struggle. . . . They have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers. . . . To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. (245-255)

a popularly held belief, and I argue this shared belief is rooted in history, a history already noted written by a hand that when not wielding a pen was busy stopping communities of color from producing their own histories. The curtailing of history was, and is, also an eradication of civil society, and a subsequent denial of nationhood—the history of the "other" could not fit within the singular, and ontologically fixed, history of the United States (Trouillot, *Global* 83).

²³ See chapter one, pages seventeen through twenty-one.

²⁴ This comment is in response to Hegel: "Seek for food and clothing first, then the Kingdom of God shall be added unto you" (qtd. in Benjamin 254).

A historiography of accountability, then, is struggle. The struggle, however, is not for the “finer things,” but demands memories that promote danger, “crisis.” These schisms, these points of rupture, represent those very memories that question the tales of the victors. These counter-narratives told from the perspective of the silenced manifest the historical facts of genocide, the archives of suffering and destruction enabling the “progress” and prosperity of the dominant. It is not only the uttering of these truths, but the transformation of the nature of history and how it is promulgated that is called for:

. . . The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of Antichrist. Only the historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious. (Benjamin 255)

The espousing and stating of the facts of “crisis” are not enough—stating that the U.S. perpetrated genocide is, in-and-of-itself important but ultimately meaningless if only an utterance—the nature of history’s production and maintenance (for the purposes of this dissertation, the exhibitionary complex and national discourse on genocide) must be fundamentally transformed. As Benjamin reminds, the Messiah did not come simply to redeem but also to destroy. Consequently, the historiography of denial, the history of lies that denies the genocide of conquest behind a veil of “weak,” or false, Messiahs, must be exposed forcefully and permanently.

Again, this is no easy task. The historiography of denial exists at the core of the U.S.’s national narrative and rests within an invisible national framework of history that interweaves the worst acts with the highest ideals. Hannah Arendt articulates the interconnectedness of the West’s highest ideals with its basest impulses:

Historically speaking, racists have a worse record of patriotism than the representatives of all other international ideologies together, and they were the only ones who consistently denied the great principle upon which national organizations of peoples are built, the principle of equality and solidarity of all peoples guaranteed by the idea of mankind. (161)

It is the combination of race-hate, “love” of nation, and providence that exists as a bulwark against a strong Messianic moment. White supremacy in the United States is omnipresent yet invisible behind the shroud of patriotism and love of country. Love of country, of family, and of liberty, essentially, accounts for the destruction of Native America, the celebration of past slavers, and the insistence that whatever methods enacted built the prosperity of the present—remember the Alamo after all. The nation, its building, and its future exists within a racist discourse that ignores the negative consequences of its so-called righteous mission. The myth of the empty continent and its “civilized” settlers haunt those who are not “civilized,”

. . . the pioneering spirit, errand into the wilderness, the obliteration of another society, and the continual sense of enterprise, that enterprise is good for its own sake, especially because a Book says so. It doesn't matter that the enterprise means killing people, bombing apartment houses, emptying villages. But it's enterprise of a particular kind, the kind associated with a new settler society. And with it goes a tremendous hostility to traditional societies, which are posited as backward, primitive, reactionary, and so on. (Said, *Power* 47)

While the violence and its legacies haunt communities of color in the U.S., the genocide of the Americas hides behind the divinity of its chosen peoples and their "enterprise." "Progress" demands forgetfulness, or it demands a rendering of the violence as justifiable means given the "glorious" ends. Subsequently, the historiography of denial manages one of the most remarkable tricks ever. It recasts racism as patriotism, slavery as tutelage, genocide as natural, and all of these become neatly bundled within a framework of divinely mandated progress.

This racism masquerading as love of country is not lost or forgotten; rather it still functions as a lynchpin in contemporary U.S. racial discourse; it still justifies violence against people of color on a global scale. To move this discussion to the early-twenty-first century, Noam Chomsky highlights the dangerous interconnection of contemporary state power and justifiable violence:

A large part of the popular constituency of the Bush people is the extremist fundamentalist religious sector of the country, which is huge. . . . And Bush has to keep throwing these people red meat to keep them in line. . . . But throwing red meat to that constituency is very dangerous for the world, because it means violence and aggression, but also for the [United States], because it means seriously harming civil liberties. (113-114)

Edward Said assists in further understanding how one, a benefactor of these narratives, willfully surrenders individual freedoms for the sake of national advancement:

The way I put it is this: the homogenization of a certain level of consciousness by the media and by, I would say, also, the system of primary and secondary education. I think that's where a lot of it takes place, where one is taught to be patriotic, to understand certain, carefully selected aspects of history of this country, and so on. It's very powerful. . . . It's also characteristically, I think, a kind of anesthetization of the critical sense. In other words, you take it for granted that, "Well there's nothing that can be done about it," and "They're doing it," and "After all, they're always right," and "We are defenders of freedom," and so on, and so forth. (*Power* 206)

Chomsky and Said situate the fundamental logics of the historiography of denial as key practices in the political educational and cultural systems of the United States. As the nation feeds "on the red meat" of so-called enemies of the state, now abroad (these enemies previously resided in the wilderness or just the other side of the Frontier), U.S. civil society imbibes the race-hating patriotism of a selective historiography that insists the state acts only with the best interests of *everyone*; the U.S. *is* the global ideal today, just as it was in the past. Consider the Alamo's

representation of slavery vis-à-vis Joe—whatever the narrative, Joe loved and affectionately served his master to the end, ensuring the enslavement of his descendents. “Busted Luck,” one of the few named Native Americans in the Alamo narrative, dies on the walls of the Alamo defending the very Texan cause that would facilitate his tribe’s genocide. The violence, this “anesthetization of the critical sense,” manifests in the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex (bad people of color are killed, good people of color assimilate) and in Power’s displacement of genocide beyond the U.S.’s borders and history.

These narratives are, however, pure farce. The religiosity of the “War on Terror,” just as the religiosity of Manifest Destiny and “errand into the wilderness,” represents the logic of Benjamin’s Antichrist. The current “patriotism” fails to recognize that the world, can, and does (often with absolute justification) push back. Leon Litwack argues,

On September 11, 2001, those hellhounds²⁵ forced all Americans, white and black, to recognize what it was like to live with terror and random violence. It is an experience, a history, that black Americans and Native Americans know all too intimately, since they have lived it for four centuries and continue to live with its legacy. The ongoing response to 9/11 in the nation’s media exhibited total amnesia about their past—the heritage of a nation founded by slave-owning champions of liberty. Most Americans reveal a continuing blindness to crimes against humanity inflicted on other Americans, crimes condoned by the state and the courts. How else can we explain the repeated assertions by political leaders in the wake of 9/11 that the United States is attacked and hated because it is so free, so exceptional, still that “city upon a hill,” that beacon of liberty. (139-140)

Litwack indicts the false religiosity that perpetuates the white supremacists mythologies from Plymouth Plantation, to the Alamo, and through the as yet realized final frontier. The divinity of this historiography represents no divinity at all; rather it issues a call to forget and press the agenda of violence and extermination forward. This divinity demands lies. However, this is not the only historiographic narrative available; it simply happens to be that which serves the powerful. It is this narrative of power that a strong Messianic moment, inevitably, must challenge. The god of power must be supplanted by the god of truth. Subcomandante Marcos writes, “The powerful fight against humanity. The dispossessed fight and dream of humanity. This is the true history. And if it does not appear in primary school textbooks, that is because history is still being written by those above, even though it is made by those below” (275-276).²⁶

²⁵ Litwack is referring to Robert Johnson’s blues song, “Hellhound on My Trail”: “I got to keep moving, I got to keep moving / blues falling down like hail / blues falling down like hail / Uumh, blues falling down like hail / blues falling down like hail / And the days keeps on ’minding me / there’s a hellhound on my trail, / hellhound on my trail, / hellhound on my trail” (qtd. in Litwack 139).

²⁶ Subcomandante Marcos’ sentiment mirrors that of Indigenous communities in Central America who experienced the dehumanizing logics of U.S. foreign policy during the 1980s. The historiography of denial, and its visceral, lived impacts, do not only impact the people of color in the United States. As the U.S. emerged within a genocidal program of violence, this mentality also informs its political and economic practices around the world. Three relevant commentaries on this, commentaries written from “below” are: Elvia Alvarado’s *Don’t Be Afraid Gringo: A*

Litwack and Marcos envision a history from below as a pathway to recognizing the long-denied costs of “progress.” History from below is the strong Messianic moment, a historiography of accountability in that it demands a more complex understanding of the past, or the nation’s origins and the costs and consequences of the growth of the country.

Ambivalence in Practice: Accountability at the Alamo and Beyond

Edward Said illustrates the potential of a history that is “citable in all its moments”:

The figure of Columbus himself is a highly controversial one, but he has been domesticated, sanitized into this wonderful hero who discovered America, whereas, in fact, he was a slave trader, he was a colonial conqueror, he was very much in the tradition of the *conquistador*. Now, which is better, to prettify and sanitize or to admit the truth? And there is this ridiculous idea that if you don’t do this inventing of tradition, which will produce a hero figure, who’s basically a conqueror—you threaten the fabric of society. I say just the opposite—the fabric of society, particularly American society . . . contains many different elements, and one has to recognize them. I think children are perfectly capable of understanding that. It’s the adults who don’t want to understand that for base reasons. (*Power* 393)

Sanitized history permits the perpetuation of the “anesthetization of the critical sense” necessary for the historiography of denial. Rather than allow for a holistic, problematic rendering of Columbus as both the first European to land in the Americas *and* a slave trader and violent conqueror, the U.S.’s historiography of denial centers only the aspects, highly filtered aspects, of Columbus that validate the progressive narrative of the United States. Columbus must be a figure who set in motion the never ending march toward liberty and progress. Just as the Alamo’s defenders must be seen as only the most heroic men with the loftiest of values: family, individual freedom, and utmost respect for virtue and morality. The outcomes of chattel slavery and Native American extermination as both systemic policy and practice cannot be acknowledged in the Alamo narrative. What is done, however, to address the histories of people of color in Texas, specifically, is to introduce figures representing “diversity”: Joe, Hendrick Arnold and Busted Luck, for instance. These faces of color do represent diversity; however, they do not represent diversity of historical perspective. These figures embrace and further the values of their Euro-American compatriots. They do not forcefully challenge the sanitized narrative of the Texans’ racial perspectives or practices. Superficial diversity, in-and-of-itself, continues the “weak Messianic” moment. Robert Jensen asserts,

Instead of focusing on diversity [as a solely representational issue or practice], we should focus on power. The fundamental frame for pursuing analyses of issues around race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class should be not cultural but political, not individual but structural. Instead of talking about diversity in race,

Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart (1987), Mark Danner’s *The Massacre at El Mozote* (1994), Elaine Katzenberger’s anthology *First World, Ha Ha Ha! The Zapatista Challenge* (1995), and dead prez’s “Wolves” (2000).

class, gender, and sexual orientation, we should critique white supremacy, economic inequality in capitalism, patriarchy, and heterosexism. We should talk about systems and structures of power, about ideologies of domination and subordination—and about the injuries done to those in subordinate groups, and the benefits and privileges that accrue to those in the dominant groups. . . . It is possible to not be racist (in the individual sense of not perpetrating overtly racist acts) and yet at the same time fail to be antiracist (in the political sense of resisting a racist system). Being not-racist is not enough. To be a fully moral person, one must find some way to be antiracist as well. Because white people benefit from living in a white-supremacist society, there is an added obligation for us to struggle against the injustice of that system. (78, 80)

The mere introduction of dark faces who mimic the attitudes and actions of their Euro-American masters, appears on the surface as greater inclusivity; however, when, as Jensen, argues the superficial representation overlooks the substance of the U.S.'s racist history; white supremacy carries the day and the historiography of denial subsequently persists. To be a forceful corrective, an honest account of slavery and Native genocide must be included. An ambivalent history of the Alamo would illustrate that Joe must obey his masters not out of love, but deference and fear; the brutality of slavery as represented by the block, the whip, the brand, and the bit must mark the Alamo, as well as the cry for liberty. "Busted Luck's" bad "luck," if it can be called luck at all, should be marked not as a horse accident and bad luck hunting, but by the Texans' charging scalp bounties, stealing land, and the wholesale killing of entire Indigenous communities both in and beyond Texas. These images must stand beside suggestions at the Alamo's door to remove one's hat as s/he enters a shrine. The shrine, for a historiography of accountability, must embrace the ambivalence of nation-building; the Alamo must speak for all its dead—those who died within, and those who died because the cause of those within triumphed. Travis' "line-in-the-sand" represents the blood of many forgotten heroes; these heroes just happen to be run away slaves, "uppity" African Americans, Kiowas refusing forced relocation, Comanches fighting for their families—these heroes, and their deaths, were also present on that line, whether by choice or not.

A historiography of accountability will acknowledge the shameful nature of past U.S. historical practices of calming providence's will as justification for its actions. Arundhati Roy states,

So here we are, the people of the world, confronted with an Empire armed with a mandate from heaven (and, as added insurance, the most formidable arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in history). Here we are, confronted with an Empire that has conferred upon itself the right to go to war at will and the right to deliver people from corrupting ideologies, from religious fundamentalism, dictators, sexism, poverty, by the age-old, tried-and-tested practice of extermination. Empire is on the move, and Democracy is its sly new war cry. . . . Death is a small price for people to pay for the privilege of sampling this new product: Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (bring to a boil, add oil, then bomb). But then perhaps chinks, negroes, dinks, gooks, and wogs don't really qualify as real people. Perhaps our deaths don't qualify as real deaths. Our histories don't qualify as history. They never have. (*Ordinary* 47)

A historiography of accountability confronts a consumer with an understanding, that to this point, freedom has not been free. But unlike the mantra of those who use this cliché to support warfare in the name of “America,” those who have been paying the price for the freedom and the prosperity of the West are those who have been excluded from its shrines of “freedom.” Those who celebrate humanity from below still struggle with those who write history to acknowledge what freedom, progress, and the protection of white families have meant to communities of color, not only in the United States, but around the world. Roy continues,

To slow a beast, you break its limbs. To slow a nation, you break its people. You rob them of volition. You demonstrate your absolute command over their destiny. You make clear that ultimately it falls to you do decide who lives, who dies, who prospers, who doesn't. To exhibit your capability you show off all that you can do, and how easily you can do it. How easily you could press a button and annihilate the earth. How you can start a war, or sue for peace. How you can snatch a river away from one and gift it to another. How you can green a desert, or fell a forest or plant one somewhere else. You use caprice to fracture a people's faith in ancient things—earth, forest, water, air. Once that's done, what do they have left? Only you. They will turn to you, because you're all they have. They will love you even while they despise you. They will trust you even though they know you well. They will vote for you even as you squeeze the very breath from their bodies. (*Cost* 79)

To this point, history and the historiography of denial has been used to “break the limbs” of communities of color. When a Mexican American walks into the Alamo, s/he is the enemy of freedom. When an African American walks the grounds, their histories of bondage introduced in the name of liberty is denied. The general absence of Native Americans from the Alamo narrative simply completes the cycle of extermination. And when Joe and Busted Luck appear on the scene, a familiar face is welcomed—what choice is there? All that is left is a white “America.” There is only one history enshrined in the Alamo's exhibitionary complex, and its representation narrative remains, actually, falsely simplistic. And Roy concludes,

The U.S. empire rests on a grisly foundation: the massacre of millions of indigenous people, the stealing of their lands, and following this, the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of black people from African to work that land. . . . “Stolen from Africa, brought to America”—Bob Marley's “Buffalo Soldier” contains a whole universe of unspeakable sadness. It tells of the loss of dignity, the loss of wilderness, the loss of freedom, the shattered pride of a people. Genocide and slavery provide the social and economic underpinning of the nation whose fundamental values reject hate, murderers, and evil. . . . How has the United States survived its terrible past and emerged smelling so sweet? Not by owning up to it, not by making reparations, not by apologizing to black Americans or native Americans, and certainly not by changing its ways (it *exports* its cruelties now). Like most other countries, the United States has rewritten its history. (*War* 85-87)

And now, in the name accountability and Benjamin's strong Messiah who came to destroy, history, too must account for the misdeeds of its authors. In Linda Green's *Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan Widows in Rural Guatemala*, Green begins a chapter titled "Living in a State of Fear" with a Benjamin quote, "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that 'the state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (qtd. in Green 55). In a similar context, Greg Grandin invokes Benjamin's normalization of the rule of fear while discussing the history of state terror and violence in Latin America; like Green, he argues that when discussing the violence experienced by the Indigenous majority of Guatemala, that if it is removed from the long-standing historical tradition, in essence if it is denied, the violence becomes "naturalized." The violence of state, and its consequences (extermination and extinction) represent byproducts of a natural state of either cultural or political evolution. Those who die, again, are meant to die (Grandin, *Last* 172). Just as in Guatemala in the late-twentieth century, where state terror and random violence are widely recognized as having dire impacts on the entire nation, so too, did Texas exist as a society ruled by terror. At one time, any tree in Texas could be a lynching tree. Nearly every Native American lived in exile. This is the "state of emergency," that if incorporated into the Alamo's narrative, would begin to open the possibility of historiography of accountability. A consumer would have to reconcile the liberatory aims of the Texans (freedom, personal liberty, protection of family, and a prosperous future) with their barbaric practices (genocide, chattel slavery, and systemic rape and murder). Does this make the actions of the Texans during the thirteen day siege in 1836 any less brave; likely not. But it does raise questions about the society they established, and how they enacted "liberty." And why does this matter?

Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience*, mindfully points out that trauma, both personal and historical, is not a merely a physical or momentary experience. Rather it is what she calls a "break in the mind's experience of time" (61). These ruptures disorder events, challenging one's ability to understand one's place in the world. While Caruth's readings of trauma are primarily psychoanalytic; her foundational arguments claim trauma, especially that which is denied, must be confronted in order for both personal and social resolution. Denial is disrupted, and the facts become known only in acknowledging and speaking the trauma (37, 62). So, rather than simply replicate the historiography of denial, confronting Benjamin's "weak Messianic" moment, a strong Messianic moment demands accounting for multiple pasts (the heroic Alamo *and* the genocidal outcomes of the Texans' victory in order to reveal "the constellation of a past age . . . with the present without submitting to a historical continuum, to an order of origin and *telos*" (Niranjana 39). Thus, the constellation of competing narratives, in the case of the Alamo the heroic and the genocidal, will present a historical narrative that disrupts the "weak Messianic" historiography that demands the denial of the U.S.'s history of genocide, and will simultaneously open a historiography of accountability that challenges the exceptionalist *telos* of history, and reconciles two contradictory narratives of history that simultaneously exist within the national narrative: the U.S. becomes both beacon of hope and perpetrator of genocide. And as the nation moves forward, its citizenry will necessarily be asked to reconcile these narratives not only as narratives, but as both political and social practice.

Avery Gordon in *Ghostly Matters* develops Benjamin's notion of the "profane illuminations," these moments are:

. . . a discerning moment. It describes a mode of apprehension distinct from critique or commentary. . . . Profane illumination is a kind of conjuring that

“initiates” (Benjamin 1978:192) because it is telling us something important we had not known; because it is leading us somewhere, or elsewhere. . . . [Finally,] profane illumination is a way of encountering the ghostly presence, the lingering past, the luminous presence of the seemingly invisible. (205)

A historiography of accountability centers the profane, especially given the nature of the long-standing definition of the sacred within the U.S.’s historiography of denial. A “profane illumination” of the Alamo will speak the voices of the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of chattel slaves imported into Texas after the Euro-American victory. The “profane illumination” will demand a slippage of the national understanding of what exactly an antebellum, and subsequently Jim Crow-era, “shrine to Texas liberty” means. What is liberty when the ghosts of human property have no voice at the very monument that purchased their shackles? What is liberty in context of the Texans’ dealings with the Kiowa? The Comanche? History, a history accountable to all, then becomes a history read “with those who suffer” because history is “not the total sum of the actions and the interpretations of the victors but, rather, the reality of the sufferings of human victims” (Chopp 42, 74). This mirrors Frederic Jameson’s understanding that any effective, or liberatory, ideology is “necessarily Utopian” in the sense that it accounts for the “undiminished power of ideological distortion that persists even within the restored Utopian meaning of cultural artifacts, and reminding us that within the symbolic power of art and culture the will to domination perseveres intact” (*Political* 286, 299). A historiography of accountability is a call to do the “crude thinking” of history, to look at the ugly facts of privilege (Jameson, *Ideologies* 119). At the Alamo, to recognize courage and depravity, liberty and slavery, progress and destruction brings to light both the power of domination and the potential of history.

Without accounting for those who have raised the babies of privilege while forced to neglect their own, been bought and sold, or simply murdered for land, a democratic history will remain elusive, and subsequently, democracy itself will exist beyond the U.S.’s grasp (McClinotck 310). It is the confluence of imperialism, its economic systems, and the historical narratives of those who have benefited from the economic outcomes of genocide veiled as “progress” who have the most at stake when the narratives of the past are disrupted; a new system of progress must be invented (McClintock 358). If the Alamo really is a shrine to liberty, then allow those most in need of freedom to speak.

Benjamin challenges societies to “rescue tradition from conformity to power, a power that becomes the tool of the ruling class” (Ellis 191-192). History because it is written by the victors can either be a narrative of liberation or a continuation of the “weak Messianic” moment for those enslaved or exterminated in past generations (Ellis 121). Ellis clarifies:

Thus, for Benjamin, the past, as recalled in the present, has two possibilities: to legitimate or to critique unjust power. The tendency is to conformism, but this robs the past of its authenticity and, in so doing, robs the dead of their voice. Certain actions, although performed in behalf of persecuted persons, actually serves to affirm the persecutors. The task of the historian is to allow the voices of suffering to be heard, particularly by their children, who, while venerating their oppressed ancestors, tend to ignore their cries by persecuting others. . . . Even more dangerous is the emerging solidarity that follows: solidarity with other victors. . . . That is why the historian regards it as his or her task to “brush history

against the grain.” For Benjamin, the recovery of suffering is subversive and is carried out by those willing to brush the grain of acceptable speech and activity. Conformism is the way of betrayal; fidelity is the critique of the victorious, by way of committed thought and activity that takes seriously the dead and those dying in the present. . . . The present loses its univocal quality as the choices of the past are brought into view. The understanding of fidelity is broadened considerably, and the possibility of reconciliation emerges. Reconciliation is understood here not only in terms of the enemy, but in terms of oneself and community. Past and current events take on a new shading where forgiveness, as well as humility, is possible. Such memories challenge the victim and the victor alike even when they seem to have changed places. Reconciliation portends transformation. (Ellis 179-180)

It is this challenge toward reconciliation, and indeed all the heirs of historiography of denial, to revise history. To account for those upon whom liberty has been built, but not built for.

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Appendix 1

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

Approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly Resolution 260) A (III) of 9 December 1948

Entry into force 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII

The Contracting Parties,

Having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world, Recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and Being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required,

Hereby agree as hereinafter provided:

Article 1

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article 2

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article 3

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

Article 4

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.

Article 5

The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3.

Article 6

Persons charged with genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the State in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction.

Article 7

Genocide and the other acts enumerated in Article 3 shall not be considered as political crimes for the purpose of extradition.

The Contracting Parties pledge themselves in such cases to grant extradition in accordance with their laws and treaties in force.

Article 8

Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3.

Article 9

Disputes between the Contracting Parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfillment of the present Convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a State for genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

Article 10

The present Convention, of which the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall bear the date of 9 December 1948.

Article 11

The present Convention shall be open until 31 December 1949 for signature on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State to which an invitation to sign has been addressed by the General Assembly.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

After 1 January 1950, the present Convention may be acceded to on behalf of any Member of the United Nations and of any non-member State which has received an invitation as aforesaid. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 12

Any Contracting Party may at any time, by notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, extend the application of the present Convention to all or any of the territories for the conduct of whose foreign relations that Contracting Party is responsible.

Article 13

On the day when the first twenty instruments of ratification or accession have been deposited, the Secretary-General shall draw up a process-verbal and transmit a copy of it to each Member of the United Nations and to each of the non-member States contemplated in Article 11.

The present Convention shall come into force on the ninetieth day following the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

Any ratification or accession effected subsequent to the latter date shall become effective on the ninetieth day following the deposit of the instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 14

The present Convention shall remain in effect for a period of ten years as from the date of its coming into force.

It shall thereafter remain in force for successive periods of five years for such Contracting Parties as have not denounced it at least six months before the expiration of the current period. Denunciation shall be effected by a written notification addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 15

If, as a result of denunciations, the number of Parties to the present Convention should become less than sixteen, the Convention shall cease to be in force as from the date on which the last of these denunciations shall become effective.

Article 16

A request for the revision of the present Convention may be made at any time by any Contracting Party by means of a notification in writing addressed to the Secretary-General.

The General Assembly shall decide upon the steps, if any, to be taken in respect of such request.

Article 17

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall notify all Members of the United Nations and the non-member States contemplated in Article 11 of the following:

- (a) Signatures, ratifications and accessions received in accordance with Article 11;
- (b) Notifications received in accordance with Article 12;
- (c) The date upon which the present Convention comes into force in accordance with Article 13;
- (d) Denunciations received in accordance with Article 14;

- (e) The abrogation of the Convention in accordance with Article 15;
- (f) Notifications received in accordance with Article 16.

Article 18

The original of the present Convention shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations. A certified copy of the Convention shall be transmitted to all Members of the United Nations and to the non-member States contemplated in Article 11.

Article 19

The present Convention shall be registered by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the date of its coming into force.

Appendix 2

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: United States of America, Reservations

(1) That with reference to article IX of the Convention, before any dispute to which the United States is a party may be submitted to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice under this article, the specific consent of the United States is required in each case.

(2) That nothing in the Convention requires or authorizes legislation or other action by the United States of America prohibited by the Constitution of the United States as interpreted by the United States.

Understandings:

(1) That the term “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group as such” appearing in article II means the specific intent to destroy, in whole or in substantial part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such by the acts specified in article II.

(2) That the term “mental harm” in article II (b) means permanent impairment of mental faculties through drugs, torture or similar techniques.

(3) That the pledge to grant extradition in accordance with a state’s laws and treaties in force found in article VII extends only to acts which are criminal under the laws of both the requesting and the requested state and nothing in article VI affects the right of any state to bring to trial before its own tribunals any of its nationals for acts committed outside a state.

(4) That acts in the course of armed conflicts committed without the specific intent required by article II are not sufficient to constitute genocide as defined by this Convention.

(5) That with regard to the reference to an international penal tribunal in article VI of the Convention, the United States declares that it reserves the right to effect its participation in any such tribunal only by a treaty entered into specifically for that purpose with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Appendix Three

Alamo Timeline¹

- 1718 – Mission San Antonio de Valeros is founded.
- 1722 – Construction begins on the presidio San Antonio de Béjar.
- 1756 – Mission San Antonio de Valero reaches its maximum population: 328.
- 1773 – San Antonio becomes the capital of Spanish Texas.
- 1794 – Mission San Antonio de Valero is secularized.
- 1801 – Philip Nolan enters Texas to hunt. Spanish troops capture Nolan and his party. Spain increases military activity in the area over the next five years to thwart further encroachment.
- 1802 – The Mission San Antonio de Valero is converted to a military post. The Second Company of San Carlos de Parras (“The Alamo Company”) is stationed at the post.
- 1810 – Mexican War for independence from Spain begins.
- 1811 – Mexican Revolutionary forces seize the Alamo.
- 1814 – José Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara and Augustus Magee seize San Antonio, execute the captured Spanish military officials, and declare Texas’ independence. They are defeated the same year and San Antonio is recaptured.
- 1819 – Spain and the United States sign the Adams-Onís Treaty. Spain cedes Florida to the United States in exchange for recognition of Texas as Spain’s. The Sabine River becomes the acknowledged international border.
- 1821 – Treaty of Córdoba grants Mexico independence from Spain.
- 1822 – Empresario system established between Mexico and settlers from the U.S.
- 1823 – Mexico becomes a republic. The Mexican Congress grants Texas a seven-year exemption from Mexican tariffs.
- 1824 – Coahuila y Tégas become a single state; the state capital is moved from San Antonio to Saltillo.
- 1825 – The State Colonization Law is passed. This protects landowners from creditors, allows settlers to claim unsprayed land with a ten-year tax exemption, appoints Euro-American land agents to facilitate the application process, and allows colonists to retain their Protestant faith.
- 1826 – Tégas is reduced to a department under the Coahuila state government.
- 1826 – Fredonian Rebellion; quelled by Stephen F. Austin and his supporters.
- 1827 – Texas y Coahuila state constitution recognizes slavery, but prohibits the importation of slaves after November 1827.
- 1828 – Mexico’s central government becomes aware that Euro-Americans are illegally importing slaves and are also violating Mexican laws regarding courts and religion.
- 1829 – Mexico frees all slaves; Texans obtain an exemption from the national slave law.
- 1830 – Mexico issues Decree of April 6, halting the empresario system. This prohibits Euro-Americans from settling in Texas, creates new Mexican army outposts in Texas, forbids the importation of slaves, and cancels all outstanding colonization contracts. The law will be repealed in 1833.

¹ The primary sources for this timeline are *American Experience: Remember the Alamo* and the DRT’s *The Wall of History: The History of the Alamo*.

- 1831 – Mexico deploys customs agents to collect tariffs from the Texans.
- 1832 – Texans request separate state from Coahuila and a resumption of the empresario system.
- 1833 – Texans prepare a constitution for the proposed state of T exas. Stephen Austin travels to Mexico to make the case for more liberal relations between Mexico’s central government and the Texans.
- 1834 – As a result of Austin’s negotiations, Mexico repeals the ban on Euro-American immigration. However, Austin is jailed for calling for Texas statehood. Santa Anna becomes President of Mexico; he dissolves state legislatures and overturns the Constitution of 1824.
- 1835 – Open hostilities with Mexico begin; Texan forces drive Mexicans from San Antonio and establish the Alamo as a fortress.
- 1836 – February 23, Santa Anna’s forces arrive at the Alamo.
March 2, Texas Declaration of Independence approved at Washington-on-the-Brazos Convention.
March 6, the Alamo falls.
March 19-20, Col. James Fanin’s troops surrender to Mexican forces.
March 27, Santa Anna orders the execution of Fanin’s troops.
April 21, Santa Anna defeated by Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto.
May 14, Santa Anna signs the Treaty of Velasco, granting Texas its independence.
September, Constitution of the Republic of Texas adopted; Sam Houston elected President.
- 1845 – December 29, United States annexes Texas.
- 1846 – February 19, Texas becomes a state.
- 1848 – U.S. Army leases Alamo ruins and makes improvements.
- 1855 – U.S. Supreme Court upholds claim of title to the Alamo by the Catholic Bishop of Texas.
- 1861 – Texas joins the Confederacy.
- 1865 – Confederacy defeated; Texas begins Reconstruction.
- 1877 – Alamo Long Barrack and courtyard purchased by Honor  Grenet.
- 1879 – U.S. Army leaves Alamo.
- 1883 – State of Texas purchases Alamo church from Catholic Church.
- 1886 – Long Barrack sold to Hugo & Schmeltzer Company for use as wholesale grocery.
- 1891 – Alamo Plaza is used for special civic events.
- 1903 – Daughter of the Republic of Texas, Clara Driscoll, signs option to buy the Long Barrack property.
- 1905 – Texas Legislature grants custody of the Alamo to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.
- 1932 – Clara Driscoll donates \$65,000 to purchase lands adjacent to the Alamo.
- 1936 – Texas’ Centennial.
- 1938 – Alamo Museum completed.
- 1940 – The Cenotaph on Alamo Plaza is completed.
- 1950 – The Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library is dedicated and opens to the public.
- 1968 – The Long Barracks museum opens.

Appendix Four

The 1824 Flag

While it is debatable whether or not this flag ever flew at the battle of the Alamo, understanding its symbolism is important to better understand the issues at stake at the Alamo. The 1824 flag symbolically operates on a number of levels. First, the flag maintains the color scheme of the flag of Mexico: “By retaining of the tricolor they proclaimed loyalty to [Mexico] but insisted on the rights granted by the Constitution of 1824” (Maberry 10). For some, however, the flag emphasized the loss of rights, and a revolutionary spirit; the 1824 Flag was the first official flag of the Texans’ revolutionary government (Maberry 11). Whatever the actual history, the 1824 Flag and its revolutionary implications wove its way into the Alamo’s exhibitionary complex.

Appendix Five

“The White Man’s Burden”
by Rudyard Kipling

Take up the White Man’s burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives’ need;
To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man’s burden—
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain
To seek another’s profit,
And work another’s gain.

Take up the White Man’s burden—
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.

Take up the White Man’s burden—
No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper—
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go mark them with your living,
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man’s burden—
And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard—

The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—
“Why brought he us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?”

Take up the White Man’s burden—
Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloke your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man’s burden—
Have done with childish days—
The lightly proffered laurel,
The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers!