Transnationalism as Metahistoriography: Washington Irving's Chinese Americas

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In the April 1872 issue of *Shen Bao*, China's flagship private newspaper, a loose translation of "Rip Van Winkle" was published under the title "A Sleep of Seventy Years 一睡七十年." Possibly the first piece of American fiction in China, "A Sleep of Seventy Years" appears without any paratextual information or mention of Washington Irving, a mere sliver of a story sandwiched between an admonition about hearsay and gossip and a report on the violations committed by British missionaries on the Yangtze River. The story itself bridges these two articles by addressing historical crisis and the way such news is often delivered. In "A Sleep," Wei finds himself in an oasis in the mountains where he is met by three Daoist saints. After imbibing their liquor, the young scholar falls asleep only to wake up 70 years later. Bearing the distinct imprint of "Rip Van Winkle," Wei only registers the passage of time when he notices that his rifle (火枪) has rotted. Like Rip, he returns to a village where everyone else has aged. Wei learns that he has completely bypassed the domestic life into which he thinks he had just entered (his wife and son have already died), discovering that his newfound social identity is consigned to nostalgic chit-chat. "A Sleep of Seventy Years" might pass as any other folktale but for two important clues: the modern rifle and the specificity of 70 years. Like "Rip Van Winkle," this tale capitalizes on the structural suitability of a before-and-after story for conveying pessimism about contemporary historical happenings without having to go into details. Only here, the historical referents are changed: the 20 years of Rip Van

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Winkle's slumber becomes the 70 years of European incursion into China, including the punitive and humiliating Opium Wars and the unequal treaties that followed[1]; the American Revolution blanked out by Rip becomes the death throes of the Qing dynasty for Wei.

The attribution of "A Sleep of Seventy Years" to "Rip Van Winkle" is open to debate, and perhaps such ambiguity of origins is a fitting problem for a story about abeyance.[2] Unassisted by any corresponding milestone in Sino-American relations, any attempt to pin down the source of the story would have to turn to imagined transnational flows.[3] At the same time, the appearance of "Rip Van Winkle" in China, through whatever real or imagined transnational channels, suggests on both sides a shared interest in the alternative forms of literary–historical management offered by unrecoverable time and experience. Further, the shared literary form between America and China, tantalizingly represented by "A Sleep," also reveals the importance of one nation to the other's sense of history, even when it seems absent. For however much "A Sleep of Seventy Years" appearing in newsprint in China in 1872 might say about American literature's global reach prior to the twentieth century, there is another story here about how China impacted the historical consciousness of American literature in the early nineteenth century. Long before Rip Van Winkle went to China, China had come to "Rip Van Winkle" and its tendentiously formed America. And as elusively as Irving runs through the Chinese story, China also runs through his. This essay demonstrates how Irving used China's immanent presence in America to puzzle out geopolitical configurations of the new nation that will never come to pass, and how the juncture where China met American historiography opened up for him opportunities for reflecting on the psychosis of writing history and then living in it.

1

Whom does Rip Van Winkle encounter in the mountains before his 20-year sleep? According to the consensus of his fellow villagers and many modern readers, Rip consorts with none other than the ghosts of "Hendrick Hudson" (782) and his men. This identification allows Rip to go back and make sense of the oxymoron of the "grave roysters" (776), their doomed revelry capturing perfectly the pathos of Hudson's cohort marooned by their mutinous crew on their abortive second trip to the New World. But since the characters can only conjecture, there is no way to ascertain whom Rip actually sees. The same event that takes Rip out of historical time (he sleeps through the American Revolution) forces him to hand over his sense of historical management to his community, which fashions what might otherwise be personal reverie into a historical encounter, albeit a bizarre one. After some deliberation, the community settles on Hendrick Hudson, the regional hero of Dutch America's past. An inspired choice, Hudson appearing as a return of the historical repressed accomplishes the "resol[ution of] national history and personal memory into folk temporality" (M. Warner 791). Yet "folk temporality" turns out to be as discursively unstable as real–politico time, and the "folk" hero here raises as many questions as the anxieties he assuages. For it is important that it is Hudson, and not some other historical figure's eidolon, whom Rip and the lay historians in his village decide he sees. The story "Rip Van Winkle" originally appeared in the same collection of "posthumous writings" of the fictitious Diedrich Knickerbocker that includes *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* (1809). "Hudson" might have suggested to Irving's contemporaneous readers Henry Hudson's misguided execution of the Dutch East India Company's orders to "seek a northwest passage to China," recounted in *A History of New York* (427). Readers might have remembered that Hudson, in failing his directive, inadvertently laid the foundations of an extensive Dutch settlement in the area now known as the Hudson River Valley. "Hudson" is shorthand for an emergent system of counterfactual historiography for the new nation, one that configures America along a transpacific axis with China at the far end. To telescope my argument: Rip's encounters in the Kaatskill Mountains mark an eclipse, specifically of the historical alternative of a massive, mercantile Dutch regime successfully stretching from west to east that never came to pass.

In "Rip Van Winkle," China is located directly at the other end of the speculative tunnel created by Rip's supernatural encounter, a spectral manifestation of what Wai Chee Dimock, in separating Irving from his Anglo-American circuits and making him into a transnational figure, refers to as the "unerased habitat" in his work (39). China represents one such inerasable place in Irving's Dutch America, which is itself a fast-disappearing habitat. In two far lesser-known but strikingly similar stories called "Dolph Heyliger" and "The Storm-Ship," collected in *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), Irving more transparently connects China to America's vanishing pasts even as he underscores China's symbolic status as a communal memory machine. The same evil spirits that roll through the Kaatskills in "Rip Van Winkle" roll through "Dolph Heyliger," where they are "nothing more nor less than a spell of these same wizards [who] prevent[ed Hendrick Hudson's] getting to China in this direction" (338). In "The Storm-Ship," the "peals of thunder" heralding the entrance of the roysters in "Rip Van Winkle" precede the appearance of a Flying Dutchman-like ghost ship in Hudson Bay.

As in "Rip Van Winkle," the local villagers are first alarmed, but quickly grow accustomed to the supernatural phenomenon, which they rationalize (and thus historicize) as one of the many hauntings of "Hendrick Hudson, and his crew of the Half-Moon; who, it was well known, had once run aground in the upper part of the river, in seeking a north-west passage to China" (342). The space reserved for America's eventual nationhood is, in both "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Storm-Ship," displaced by a ghostly historical alternative, a vignette of Hudson and his crew forever stuck in the senseless and the ludic after their abortive China trip.

These Hudson-China texts serve as accordion pleats in the forward march of time by introducing a different historical track on which America remains as a way station in the China-Dutch empire that never was. Irving embeds "China" into his short stories and longer nonfiction, I argue, to tap a subconscious knowledge in the body politic that America could have been a Chinese-Dutch America. Borrowing A. B. Shamsul's notion of nations-of-intent, we could say that Irving's receding Dutch America foregrounds unfulfilled national and international configurations of national and international polities that compete within and against the standing nation-state.[4] As such, these Chinese-Dutch Americas "inhabit neither the plane of pure fantasy nor that of history," giving historical contexts to political configurations when any real possibility of such configurations has "already vanished" (Rubin-Dorsky 147–48, 115). The specter of Hudson and the *what might have been* appear with every historical event that further seals the fate of the Dutch empire in North America (the American War of Independence; the "capture of New Amsterdam, and the subjugation of the province by the English" ["The Storm-Ship" 343]). China and its odd-double, the sleepy New Amsterdam, loom over Irving's America as a reminder of its counterfactual beginnings, which conventional history cannot capture but which creative literary historiography can.

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Dutch America and China undergo the same historical–aesthetic management as can be seen in a later story, "Broek: Or the Dutch Paradise" (1855), which offers a short, disquieting sketch of an "amphibious little (Dutch) village" gone Chinese (230). A stagnant lake, a defunct pinnace (trading ship), gardens full of bobbing Mandarins, and townsfolk with unapologetically earth-bound, moribund mindsets—these images in "Broek" belong to the pervasive late-eighteenth-century European construction of China as an emblem of impeccably efficient management, orderliness, and perfect tranquility—a space outside of historical progression. This kind of China is not far away to Irving, however, but right at home. Rather than simply rehash a dystopic Orientalized Europe in miniature, this "broek" suggests that what appears to be a replica of China in "Amsterdam" may be nowhere else but America. The clue comes from Irving's disclosure that this "broek" was "modelled upon Van Bramm's description of those of Yuen min Yuen, in China" (230). Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest ("Van Bramm"), a member of the Dutch East India Company, was one of the first to put a miniature China in America when he replicated the Imperial Gardens in a town outside of Philadelphia in 1794. Called "China's Retreat," van Braam's park drew huge crowds of visitors daily. Irving's "Broek" is this first of America's theme parks with the American context erased, thus portraying a simulated Chinese America so unrecognizable that one cannot even tell it is America anymore. Presenting American topoi as an admixture of Dutch and Chinese iconography allows Irving to render a different picture of late-eighteenth-century America, one that is culturally atavistic, timeless, and unplaceable. A historical Chinese-Dutch recurs uncannily in his works. The drowsiness of "that village of great antiquity" ("Rip" 769) in which "Rip Van Winkle" is set echoes the "succession of drowsy ages" attributed to China in *A History of New York* (683): the ancient Dutch village and China are two sides of the same historical coin; they are each, in a perverse imagination, where the other should be in America's cultural past.

By suggesting that China represented to Irving an alternative configuration for the new nation that cannot be glimpsed through historicism alone, I take up Dimock's reorientational suggestion that we use textual practices to open up Irving's work to "alternate worlds" (39). For Irving, only alternate worlds can catch the residues of shifting discourses. His Chinese Americas reveal as much the significant role of China in early Republican thinking as Irving's own interest in clashing discourses of "differentiated histories" (Huang 6), especially those that mediated his sense of what is historiographically representable. To read the Chinas in his works is to acknowledge the contending forces of historical management in play *before* the grand récit of nineteenth-century American history (and its relationship to China) had hypostasized. Each Chinese America represents a different metahistoriographic investigation into why what Irving called "the art of history writing" makes some worlds and outcomes seem more or less plausible (*History* 401). Further, China-thinking occasioned for Irving a historical consciousness that reflects on how history skipped over, including alternative worlds that never come into being, can be filed away or internalized or accepted as a meaningless knowledge.

Uncertainty over the form that historical management would take in the nineteenth century, especially as it would impact the social being, contributed the most to the ways that each nation figured in the other's imagination. We are familiar with the ways Anglo-American texts (hegemonically) trained China's historical consciousness in the late Qing and early Republic period, but we are far less familiar with the reverse story.[5] China haunted Irving's musings on a historical consciousness that had to accommodate multiple possible historical trajectories in America's early republican period. In "Rip Van Winkle," for example, China's spectrality exists in the historiographically managed space of Rip's village, a conceptual space delimited by communal memory, amateur historiography, and human noise and chatter. To come back to the village, for Rip, is effectively to lift his encounter out of the supernatural and consign his own experience to a *deliberative* historicist process which finally determines that China, Hudson, New Amsterdam, and the US follow each other in lock-step progression. This act of ratification may be the only way for the villagers caught in drastic political transformations to make sense of themselves and their relations to each other, even as this measure proves unsatisfying. The point that the story registers is not the contrast between pre-Revolutionary America and post-Revolutionary America—that tension is but the story's conceit. The real argument of the story is that various pasts have to be retroactively assigned as specter and lore due to the tiring, disaffecting obligation to update oneself to political time. With "Rip Van Winkle" serving as the urtext of Irving's China-enabled metahistoriography, the rest of this essay recovers Irving's long and changing relationship with China as he configured it in *A History of New York*, *Salmagundi* (1807), and *Astoria* (1836). Together, these works show that, far from simply propagating an ideology (about China, about the typology of the Chinese, or about America's transpacific nation-building), Irving keeps up with the changing uses of China-thinking in early Republican culture to dramatize the various affects of historiography—namely the experience of holding oneself accountable to official history consolidated under discursive excess.

2

In the nineteenth-century Atlantic world, "China" reached discursive saturation and Irving, along with his American contemporaries, inherited sinology as a full-bodied field complete with its own internal philosophical, theosophical, and methodological contradictions. As John Kuo Wei Tchen, A. Owen Aldridge, Caroline Frank, and other cultural historians have documented, young America came into a longstanding tradition of China-thinking from the European Enlightenment which, when combined with the early republic's extensive mercantile trade with the Qing empire, meant that China and Chineseness broadly understood was a domestic staple, not a foreign concept in the new nation. Like the topic of land improvement, China was an indispensable part of early American self-education and thus a way of knowing the world and knowing within the world. In the case of Irving, many of the historiographic technologies at his disposal were made available to him from an eighteenth-century tradition of China-thinking—a transatlantic sinology that shaped emergent macrohistorical theories—and an emergent nineteenth-century philosophy of history that once and again made China an object of study. Taking up historical writing at the cusp of the professionalization of the genre in the US, Irving moved between these two very different discursive bodies, producing work that aggressively and consistently blurred the boundary between historical information and authorial fabrication. Unlike his professional successors William H. Prescott, Francis Parkman, and John Lothrop Motley, Irving spent a lot of his early career drawing attention to an odd self-cancelling tendency in historiography. History-writing was a Herculean task that, for Irving, has to announce its own preposterousness. This strand of thinking usefully explains China's operational importance in his oeuvre.

The macrohistorical–cosmogonic opening of *A History of New York* briefly reworks European sinology, although one would hardly know it from the way Irving presents this subject as so much nonsense piled on nonsense. Irving entertains the idea that Noah actually landed in China and was better known to the Chinese as Fohi, a theory that he claims is circulated by Chinese historians and corroborated by "Dr. Shuckford," who argued that Noah's ark, when the flood receded, "rested on a mountain on the frontiers of China" (400–401). The reference is to Samuel Shuckford's monograph *The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected, from the Creation of the World to the Dissolution of the Assyrian Empire at the Death of Sardanapalus; and to the Declension of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, under the Reigns of Ahaz and Pekah: Including a Dissertation on the Creation and Fall of Man* (1743)—a criminally long title that could have inspired Irving's own. Like his predecessor Oliver Goldsmith, Irving spoofs this body of historiography. In his *The Citizen of the World* (1760), Goldsmith runs through highlights from this long and well-established tradition in European historiography of integrating ancient China into a Noahic genealogy: the notion that "the Chinese are a colony of Egypt" and that "Noah and Fohi are the same" because "they have each but four letters" (103).[6] For Irving, recycling these macrohistories, which were quite significant in their time, becomes a playful distancing move from an earlier tradition. After deflating these Noahic theories, he goes on to discount a body of scholarship that advances an opposing thesis that instead of "Noah goes to China," America was "first discovered by the Chinese" (403). Irving cites Grotius and Vossius's claim that

"Peru was founded by a colony from China . . . the first Incas, being himself a Chinese" (407). Hugo Grotius's *De origine gentium Americanarum dissertatio* (1642) established a racial and cultural continuity between the Chinese and the Peruvians and Isaac Vossius's *Variarum observationum liber* (1685) claimed that Chinese diaspora populated the Americas.[7] Vossius and Grotius, mildly ridiculed in *A History of New York*, in fact forwarded groundbreaking models of Chinese diaspora that informed the rise of material anthropology.[8] Mentioned only to be satirized in *A History of New York*, these historiographic hypotheses in their time helped later historians bridge theology (sacred history) with the substantial empirical information collected from around the world.[9]

The state of sinology tracked the confused state of historical knowledge at the turn of the nineteenth century. The body of earlier historiography brought into view here all attest to the difficulty of harmonizing sinological data with Mosaic historiography and philosophy of history alike. This proliferation of Chinas was compounded by textual practice. Historians like Shuckford, John Webb, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, and Athanasius Kircher, whom Irving mentions in *A History of New York*, and many more all wrote histories of China without any firsthand experience of the country. These histories were often created (with quite imaginative leaps) from within "a great number of manuscripts" (Mungello 229). Both historiography and sinology (in this earlier nested form) were fields glutted with Jesuit accounts, European Orientalist monographs, lengthy European philosophies of history, and myriad false leads and dead ends. What seemed like authentic information one minute became bogus and outdated in the next. Deploying sinologies thusly shows how easily the production of historical knowledge can devolve into misinformation, frivolity, and hoaxing. This touches an irony in *A History of New York*: an insistence on writing "authentic history" (a claim made eight times in the work) frequently coincided with a tendency to parody historiography even as it was legitimated. Unwilling to settle on a style, *A History of New York* remains a mash-up of macro- and microhistories, lore, hagiography, travelogue, economic history, universal cosmology, and, not least significantly, painstaking surveys of other historians and current historical perspectives. Under such a mixed allegiance to historiography as this, the production of knowledge about China becomes a mirror image of Irving himself. China's very status as a cipher—an ideological invention of modern European self-making—renders it a testy subject; rigorous scholarship about China is always threatening to become bogus, filler information, and the same is true vice versa. Sinology, like historiography, takes the form of myriad citations and radical self-referentiality in a closed circuit of archival materials that might be either apocryphal or foundational. Irving deeply appreciated this kind of irony and his whimsical historiography in *A History of New York* thus shares a psychic affinity with the notion of China as a Western construction, as they both straddle the threshold of sense and nonsense.

Organized like an inverted triangle, *A History of New York* reveals a consolidating process that has to happen in the art of writing democratic histories: the messiness of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sinological histories would have to be cleared away for a stadial model. Irving wrote *A History of New York* as a drama of Wouter van Twiller, William the Testy, and Walter the Doubter, and other forgotten figures of Dutch America, and yet he runs a parallel conversation on nineteenth-century Anglo-European images of China because these images provided a mode of reference where perhaps no other could for what it means to live and write under shifting historiographic prerogatives. *A History of New York* indexes the switch from European sinological history-making, which we have just seen, to a revolutionary model and its attendant rhetoric of sleeping/awakening. In this paradigm shift, what happens to China is what happens to Dutch America. Repeatedly characterized as a "drowsy" people, the Dutch in New Amsterdam conform to the emergent late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century stereotype of China: a social equilibrium egregiously slow on the uptake in the face of imminent historical change. If a Chinese-Dutch America could have been America, China and Dutch America share the same fate in the nation-building discourses that made anything but a republic seem outmoded. Irving keeps China close to New York to show how historiography of transatlantic political philosophy turned the discourse of self-sustaining harmonious communities into the antithesis of American historical progress.

China was a central preoccupation of Anglo-American political liberalism and its historiographic conventions in the nineteenth century. Its irremediable association with ahistoricality in the nineteenth-century transatlantic turned on the mappabilty of an in-house concept—natural sociability—onto Chineseness. China had to be updated to a global timetable because Chinese civilization was too sociable, an idealized harmonious society that, by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, lost whatever prestige it previously had for the Western imagination.[10] In his essay for that bible of American scientific racism, *The Indigenous Races of the Earth* (1857), Francis Pulszky makes the unexpected, but ultimately ungenerous, claim that "In China all the citizens are politically equal: legally there are neither patricians, nor slaves nor serfs; neither privileged nor unprotected classes in the country. In short China is the country of enlightenment, of equality and of the bamboo,—

paternally applied to everybody, from the prime minister to the humblest tiller on the ground" (201). Along with Alexis de Tocqueville, Georg Hegel, and John Stuart Mill, Pulzsky makes the equality of conditions and opportunities which eighteenth-century Anglo-American saw as so exemplified and enforced in China as *the cause* of its cultural stagnation. In the late 1830s, Tocqueville asserted that China had reached a crippling stasis. The equality of conditions so crucial for egalitarian societies can lead to a democracy, or, Tocqueville warned, China. Nearly 20 years later, taking cues from Tocqueville, Mill repeats this warning to the West. Once a country reaches perfect equilibrium, it stops producing culture and drops out of history. Using China as an example, Mill demonstrates how rapidly social equality, by stalling progress, can turn into historical dead-weight. China's social makeup, which is identical to a democracy for the most part by Westerners' own count, becomes a liability in the grander scheme. This happens not least because democratic models demand the extension of stadial histories to other civilizations, which can then represent stages of varying degrees of *close but not quite*. Histories using stadial models would, ipso facto, require very different Chinas that would be entertained and disavowed.[11] It is no coincidence, then, that so many of American's nation-building texts, which grapple with the concept of democracy in praxis, chose to dismiss China perfunctorily as a stagnant civilization, one which fell out of historical time.

A History of New York shows how the increasingly fashionable image of China in cross-Atlantic discourse can work as a cognate for a no-longer extant America. Slowly switching from moderate Federalism to Jacksonian Democracy by the 1830s, Irving experimented with globally and retroactively deploying "democratic time." The final China he imagines thus fits neatly into a story of rupture and revolution: "The vast empire of China, though teeming with population and concentrating the wealth of nations, has vegetated through a succession of drowsy ages, and were it not for its internal revolution, and the subversion of the ancient government by the Tartars, might have presented nothing but an uninteresting detail of dull, monotonous prosperity" (313). Irving propounds here what he later dramatizes in "Broek: The Utopian Dutch Village," the similarity between precontact China and pre-Revolution New Amsterdam. Willfully outside of history and drowsily performing antiquity, the Qing dynasty China in *A History of New York*, as Rip in the story of his namesake, awakens from its slumber. By overdetermining the political impact of the Tartar rebellions and calling the rebellions an "internal revolution" and a "subversion of the ancient government," Irving can draw a parallel between China and the pre-Revolutionary America romanticized in the rest of *A History of New York*.[12] Both were sleeping but both would be abruptly rejoined to democratic historical time. The imaginative twinning of Dutch America with China necessarily implies that both have to submit to revolutionary heuristics since Dutch America would eventually make way for the new republic.

Irving not only reproduced China in the West as a way of disclosing historiography's own determinisms which can be applied forward or backward in time. He also calibrated it to reflect the predicament of those for whom historiography is an embodied practice. In a slightly earlier work, *Salmagundi*, Irving transforms the cultural theater of a Chinese-inflected America into a site of metahistoriographical experimentation. Drawing from an earlier trope from English literature as well as domestic anxieties around China-traders, *Salmagundi* deploys Chinese alterity for its reliable associations with an abstract fidelity to historicity that exacts its price primarily, as Lauren Berlant has observed, in the social postures of those who live in the historical present.[13]

A hodge-podge of characters and commentary, *Salmagundi* collects the bits and pieces that make up the fabric of civic life in early America. Obsessed with producing "authentick history," *Salmagundi* lacks the structural patterning and gravitas of *A History of New York* (350). Within the world of *Salmagundi*, things imbued with historicity present constant stumbling blocks in everyday living and knowing, if only because the status of the historical is casually, indeed flippantly, granted to any and everything that self-identifies as having a history, like the "history of a tile" (132); "the history of the famous Peach War" (209); the "history of Cinderella, Valentine, Orson and Bluebeard" (137), and the history of Mustapha Rub-a-Dub Keli Khan's breeches (179). The preponderance of histories generates a self-cancelling effect: if everything is history, nothing feels like history. *Salmagundi* allegorizes the idea of historical knowledge as diffused knowledge in the figure of Will Wizard, the Chinese contributor responsible for this nonsensical multiplication. An amalgam of the eighteenth-century European Orientalist trope of the Chinese sage and the typology of the early American China trader, Wizard represents historiography taken to absurd extremes.

As the odd, talkative member of *Salmagundi* returning to America from an extended stay in Canton, Wizard performs a Chinese identity chock-full of stock Orientalisms including a "waistcoat of China silk" which he "boasted" of as "the work of *Nang-Fou*, daughter of the great *Chin-Chin-Fou*, who had fallen in love with the graces of his person, and sent it to him as a parting present—he assured me she was a remarkable beauty with sweet obliquity of eyes, and a foot no larger than the thumb of an alderman" (121).

Burlesquing his own alterity, Wizard offers Chinese counterexamples as social critiques of cultural formations in the new republic, thereby lightly spoofing Goldsmith's Chinese traveler-critic, Lien Chi Altangi, who satirizes English society in *The Citizen of the World*. Goldsmith's original version (as well as Irving's adaptation) of Chineseness does not represent an inverse image of Anglo-Americanness. Instead, patterned after the follies of European sinology, the key characteristic of Chineseness inheres in something like a constant reference to obscure (even made-up) personages and histories that the audience would neither know nor care to look up.[14] In the figure of Will Wizard, Irving continues and updates Goldsmith's trope, yoking Chineseness to alternative topographies of historical knowledge and ways of traversing them.

Every character in *Salmagundi* adds to the miscellany of the historical present, but Wizard is the only one who carries unofficial transcripts of history in himself. In *A History of New York*, Irving mocked that the Chinese "deservedly rank among the most extensive and authentic historians, inasmuch as they have known the world ever since some millions of years before it was created" (400). Having so much history in themselves, according to this line of thought, the Chinese feel entitled to entice with unconventional historical connections, such as their "declar[ation] that Noah was no other than Fohi, a worthy gentleman, descended from an ancient and respectable family of Hong merchants, that flourished in the middle ages of the empire" (400). This fake Chinese history resolves what is in fact an American historian's dilemma: trying to forge an organic connection between European theology (the Noahic narrative) and early republic realities (the Hong merchants in the China trade).[15] Will Wizard is exactly an example of these Chinese historians who use the lost archive, which they alone can access by virtue of their nationality, to promise a reconciliation of incoherent historical realities. With a dead earnestness that makes him the butt of many *Salmagundi* in-jokes, Wizard repeatedly refers to lost materials that only he can recover. He claims that his "great uncle, by his father's side, [was] accidentally burnt for a *witch* in Connecticut," giving the family the name of Wizard (66). This archetypal American family history appears to be severed by Will Wizard, who as a Canton trader bears none of the recognizable traits of this genealogy despite his somewhat specious claim to such an ignominious pedigree (no witch was ever burned in Connecticut). Yet Wizard maintains that a roll of rice paper records the secret of his ongoing ties to this pre-Revolutionary ancestry. The existence of these "confounded Chinese manuscripts" is guaranteed by his friend Linkum Fidelius—a "sage" directly connected to Confucius—yet they never appear (236). Launcelot Langstaff presents one such manuscript to the readers, but it turns out to be an entirely nonsensical document that has none of the advertised secrets. Referring to another promising document that may or may not be the same manuscript, Wizard laments that he lost all but "one sheet of a stupendous bundle which still remains uninvestigated," a gift "presented to him as a literary curiosity, by his particular friend, the illustrious Ryp Van Dam, formerly lieutenant-governor of the colony of New Amsterdam" (306). In Wizard's mind, this uninvestigated archive serves as a weird bridging text between both Wizard's ancestry and Dutch America, from whence Van Dam hails. As implausible as it sounds, the Chinese scroll (if it ever appears) would restore crucial connections among the New England witch trials, Confucius's lost writings, and a hero from the Hudson River Valley.

The most tenuous of associations at work here strengthens the sense of China-thinking as the practice of historiographic tantalization. Figuring out the secret connection requires only that one follow up all the textual leads, find all the misplaced manuscripts, and decipher all the barely legible clues. Wizard may or may not ever find that Chinese scroll and thus reestablish himself as a historically continuous subject. *Something* in the lost texts entrusted to him links up ancient Confucian manuscripts to the history of pre-Revolutionary America from New Amsterdam through the witch-trials, and it can be yours for the having if you would only deign to "por[e] over old scrawls that would puzzle a whole society of antiquarians to expound" (304). Of course, nothing comes of these leads, since Wizard's China-America clues are navigable but not really navigating anywhere, and appetites for apocryphal histories and secret historical movements are whetted only to be spoofed. Tucked away in China somewhere or perhaps simply misplaced in the Cockloft library are possibly illuminating historical material for early America—yet they can only be referenced, never accessed.

Promoting a ratcheted attention to textuality, manuscript transmission, and historical loose ends that are "serious . . . or only bantering, no one I believe can tell" (237), Wizard embodies a facet of sinology cultivated since the first Jesuits in China: the wild goose chase of textual labor that is the precondition of historical recovery. And like much of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sinology, his earth-shattering historical discoveries can only exist in a closed circuit of manuscripts. The excessive self-referentiality of this historiographic practice impacts Wizard's social identity. Reflecting on Wizard's unsociable behaviors, Langstaff writes, "only let him get fairly in the track of any odd, out of the way whim-wham, and away he goes" (305). Wizard's "ransacking the library" disrupts his social life and "discomposed the fraternity" (304, 248). Looking too far and long down historical rabbit-holes also takes its toll on Will Wizard's physical person: "his whole face seemed to be converted into a folio leaf of black-letter," and "his countenance would curl up into an expression of gothick risibility, not unlike the physiognomy of a cabbage leaf wilting before a hot fire" (304). His liminality is further underscored by the other characters who "studied him as an antiquarian studies an old manuscript or inscription" (237). Of the entire cast of characters in *Salmagundi*, Wizard alone bears the brunt of the willy-nilly absorption of fake histories and all possible historical tangents. Internalizing the effects of historiographic confusion, as Rip Van Winkle does, Wizard has a hard time building communicative relationships that matter. Like Rip, Wizard performs the role of historian when his is, in fact, already a historical artifact.

Contra a reading of these cross-identifications between embodied historiography and the Chinese as symptoms of national or racial anxiety, Chineseness was, for Irving, a ready-made personification of unactualizable histories. Introduced as a type of social being in the new republic, Wizard succinctly shows the predicament of producing historical knowledge when what such production ought to look like was being reimagined. Chinese alterity afforded the most effective technology for a self-distancing version of American historiography not because it represented the encounter with the ultimate Other, as is commonly assumed, but because it allowed Irving to make good on the aesthetic debris in the clash of historical discourses—with the dissonance, not the histories themselves, as his immediate object of study.

In one of his last major works, which he advertised as real history written "without any labored attempt at artificial construction," Irving took up the pressures that America's transnational engagements with China put on historiography (*Astoria* viii). In *Astoria*, Irving wanted to repurpose Scott's historical romance formula to register the leftover effect of watching the twinned New Amsterdam and Chinese America slowly slide out of possibility and out of communal memory. The contrast between the mundane operations of the historical now and the romanticized visions of a disavowed alternative history would produce the optimal sensorium of historicity. Thus, Irving boasts that *Astoria* "possesses much of that unity so much sought after in works of fiction, and considered so important to the interest of every history" (viii). Never mind about historical facts; in this work, one could *feel* that history was happening. Here the possibility of a Chinese America—now spread across the Pacific—no longer seems as ghostly distant as the Hudson pasts but still retains its pathos by representing one of those configurations of the new nation that could have held out but didn't. The historical romance would be eked out of the life story of John Jacob Astor and his aborted fur-trading empire on the Pacific coast by juxtaposing transpacific configurations of the new nation with a single individual whose visions of such configurations were confounded.

Astor envisioned a commercial empire built on the China fur trade that would start in the Mississippi, extend northwest across the Rocky Mountains, regroup in the Columbia River basin, and expand across the Pacific to China by way of the Sandwich Islands. Astoria speaks both to earlier inter-Atlantic phenomenon where "the Far East serve[d] as a fantasy space for mercantile capitalism" (Markley 4) and a shift toward transpacific commercial solutions to domestic problems in American debates from the 1820s through the 1860s. Irving describes the international fur market that makes round trips to Canton, where China's voracious appetite for pelts results in such "immense prices" for Canadian sea-otter that "[i]t was as if a new gold coast had been discovered" (*Astoria* 24). The richness and detail of Irving's research are matched only by the appeal of China's markets as a commercial fix for a nation beset by economic woes that would culminate in the panic and revulsion of 1837.[16] In his introductory comments, Irving felt that Astoria alone would fulfill Jefferson's call for a "commercial empire beyond the mountains, peopled by 'free and independent Americans, and linked with us by ties of blood and interest'" (619). In Astoria (the utopian empire), one could look out onto the Pacific from a "fortified post and port at the mouth of the Columbia River" at a prosperous trade empire bolstered by "direct and frequent communication with China" (619).

To the counterfactual question posed indirectly in his stories—what if Hudson *had* discovered the Northwest Passage?—Irving has given us one version of the answer in *Astoria*. What the Dutch East India Company (VOC) failed to realize in the 1610s, the new republic of America might have accomplished in the 1830s, building on the trading infrastructure of the VOC (and its subsidiary, Astor's Pacific Fur Trading Co.). In many respects, Astor's dream of a republic that just keeps extending west until it joins up with the Far East is another of several Continentalist projects centered on China since and before Henry Hudson.[17] For complicated political and historically contingent reasons, the transpacific extensions of the US as envisioned by as disparate figures as Alexander MacKenzie, Thomas Hart Benton, and Astor never passed. And as far as Astoria was concerned, the terms of the 1848 Oregon Treaty—terms which Irving helped draft—reconfigured American-Anglo-Indian relations in that region in ways that foreclosed any further possibilities of a de-nationalized, transpacific commercial republic. From this perspective, *Astoria* provided Irving with another chance to engage in counterfactualism to experiment with the historical formula. Irving could exploit the pathos of destinarianism by pairing current historical reality with a previously alternative future before the notion of a transcontinental America—a continuous grouping of federal states stretching from east to west—seemed inevitable.

Not only does *Astoria* recreate deeply contingent moments in American literary history that cannot be overwritten with a deep sense of historical inevitability, as Robert S. Levine cautions in *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (2008), it also tries to capture contingency as an affect, an occupational hazard for historians. Finding a "highway to China" (5) for both Astor and the genre of the historical romance runs into all kinds of messiness, which is reflected in the paraliterature. Astor had approached Irving with "a regret that the true nature and extent of his enterprise and its national character and importance had never been understood, and a wish that [Irving] would undertake to give an account of it" (*Astoria* vi). Even if his project failed, Astor still wanted to go down as someone who tried to make history. When Irving set on the narrative, however, the two senses of making history became fused. The metahistoriographic ticks came back, commencing with Astor's complaint that collecting the multitudinous history of those islands was "ridiculously contemptible" and "would require volumes" (qtd. in *Astoria* 79). Even to start the project, Irving had to employ his nephew Pierre to sort through a staggering amount of paperwork, including journal entries (by Astor, Lewis, and Clark, Ross Cox, Gabriel Franchére, Henry Breckenridge, and a "Mr. Long" [viii]), ledgers, news clippings, contracts, and miscellaneous correspondences—all of which left him with a work one reviewer criticized for its "rambling and somewhat disjointed nature" (C. Warner 305).

In the narrative, energy reserved for making history is often frittered away in the miscellanies of policy-making, tribal bickering, unimportant conversational asides that overspill its generic boundaries. Contingency takes the form of the presentiment of the fast-paced switches in historical possibility from which even transpacific ventures were not excused: Hudson, Jefferson Benton, John Floyd, William Seward, Asa Whitney, Astor—this list only shows how quickly different versions of Chinese America fell in and out of favor. Trying to keep his transpacific utopian project afloat becomes a fool's errand for Astor, the legitimacy of that project pulled at the edges by paradigm shifts back on the East coast and in "the East." In the Sandwich Islands, for example, Astor and company find the king Tamaahmaah nothing like the "magnanimous monarch" of romanticized visions of the East, but indeed more like a "shrewd pork merchant" (*Astoria* 77). Tamaahmaah figures out that he can export his island's sandalwood to Canton directly instead of letting Astor's fur company act as middleman, and when his cargo returns not in the form of goods and monies, but as a hefty bill for custom fees and other anchorage charges, he decides to "have harbor fees [for Hawaii] also" and "[i]n this way . . . turned his China speculation to account" (42). Once and again, Astor and his men fail to see the interchangeability of the official account to one such as Tamaahmaah who, feigning commitment to the older, romantic model of colonialism and sovereign reciprocity, turns out to be much better versed in the language of transpacific credit and trade economies. Astor's attempt to make history by establishing a US–China commercial empire across the Pacific ends in the shipwreck of the *Tonquin*, a catastrophe that echoes the fate of Hudson's *Half Moon*. The project, however, really ended long before then not only because the US had become, in a providential fashion, more like the contiguous US, but also because the route to China was beginning to seal itself off to historical romance.

Rather than the hubris of overexpansion, the pathos here, I would contend, obtains in the forfeiture of historiographic coherence in transpacific narratives. As Yunte Huang astutely argues, American expansionist projects fracture in the Pacific because the Pacific and Far East already have their own transpacific realities and discourses in play. The Pacific is not a frightening empty space where political visions go to lose their coherence; rather, it contains a number of irreconcilable politico-historical realities, each of which has to realize it is only one of many. Astor does not comprehend the existence of a constantly changing official narrative to which he must hold himself accountable, or the changing narratives deployed in the Pacific, or, finally, that numerous third parties must uphold his understanding of the possible. *Astoria* circles around the themes of "disaffection" (165) and "departure from the plan" (617), conditions that bespeak the incoherence of having to conduct an (inter)national project under irreconcilable rubrics, each with their own fantasies of what transpacific spaces can and should provide. A still further failure lies in Astor's own "the departure from the plan," which produced "a series of cross purposes, disastrous to the establishment" in such a way as to prevent Astor's agent, Mr. Hunt, from "execut[ing] faithfully, and to the letter, the part marked out for him by the master mind which has concerted the whole" (*Astoria* 617). Having his grand plans once and again foiled by narrative asides and changes of plans on the part of agents, functionaries, and intermediaries, Astor's fate resembles Jonathan Lamb's revisionary reading of Captain Cook's fate in the Sandwich Islands. Consigning oneself over to alternative systems of accountability in the Pacific means being neither able to account for oneself nor hold the official plan in place.[18] Constantly surprised by a transpacific politic that no longer operates in the old predictable ways, Astor struggles with the changing configurations of his nation-of-intent; this turns him into a historiographic artifact.

Astoria, then, charts the inevitable overtaking of the space reserved for romance by historical realities that do not lend themselves readily to historiography. It chronicles the sheer dispensability of the subject who sets the romance into motion only to be left by the wayside of its tedious operations. We have Rip Van Winkle all over again, except this time the dislocated past that slides out of historical possibility by becoming history is not Hudson's counterfactual Chinese America, but Astor's counterfactual version. For Irving, China-thinking closely parallels historical thinking that must continually recalibrate itself according to a changing political climate that, in turn, reflexively ratifies the particular historiographic convention chosen in the first place.

As we have seen, the new nation in Irving's works compulsively manages the past and collectively determines on the acceptable and unacceptable forms of history-making in the public forum of conversation and in the production of text. Rather than authoritative closure, "Rip Van Winkle," "A Storm-Ship," *A History of New York*, *Salmagundi,* and *Astoria* offer the contending voices of historians and their speculations. These works dramatize the "relay through which the historical can be said to be sensed before it is redacted" (Berlant 66), an experience that translates in the end into the "ongoingness of adjudication, adaptation and improvisation" (54). If Irving's engagements with China qualifies him as an early American transnational writer, we also see that his transnationalism neither writes the literature of American expansionism nor critiques it by offering alternative worlds, but one that gets Irving as close as possible to representing what it might mean to live in a transitional period. The time of Chinese Americas is transitional because history is changing along with historical possibility and because the ways to manage it and possess it are changing as well.

3

Nearly three quarters of a century after his first Chinese America, Irving's own writings may or may not have gone to China. Transculturation makes folk settings that feel unique to "Rip Van Winkle" appear irrefutably local in "A Sleep of Seventy Years." Yet the question of attribution—is "A Sleep of Seventy Years" really an adaptation of "Rip Van Winkle"?—fades in significance in light of a greater insight that the same problem offers: the Chinese America/American China that can only seem to exist in intertext is already slipping away, and the dissolution of its contours turns into the proving ground for a new type of historical management. The Chinese "Rip Van Winkle" appears to be a straightforward case of the transmission of historical consciousness from the West to China before the end of the Qing dynasty and the new republic, a phenomenon which has drawn a lot of critical attention in the past decade. Disguised as timeless folktale, “A Sleep of Seventy Years,” like “Rip Van Winkle,” actually pushes consequential events to the fore; the political changes/trauma of the recent past fill up the discursive space opened up by the storyline’s central enigma. The sleepy themes in the story turn out to have a demystifying effect because to read the texts properly is to self-historicize correctly: no one can read “Rip Van Winkle,” including the villagers in the story, without realizing that the Revolution is missing or that it may only have produced a superficial change in the village. As Michael Warner notes, “America here looks if anything too historical,” with “at least three cultures and four polities occupying the same ground in rapid and confused succession” (790). “A Sleep of Seventy Years” is also a story about forgetting that does not want the Chinese audience to forget, which may be why it shows up between an article coaching the readers on how to sift out real news from fake news and gossip and another article detailing the perfectly avoidable drowning of a dozen Chinese children by a Christian missionary on a boat ride from Yang Zhou. Theoretically, if you read the three in a row you will come out a more responsible, better informed, politically mobilized national subject.

But if the story has as its goal the transmission of historical consciousness to China, “Rip Van Winkle” is an odd choice for a template. According to the logic of Irving’s many historiographic experimentations in and outside of fiction, as we have seen, there is a way to mark history’s passing such that, when you realize you have skipped over it, the only thing you need to do is agree to be one of the people who can wear that knowledge as a social badge. In both stories, amnesia represents the proper way to register the parallelism between forgotten pasts and the historical present but “registering” the parallelism also marks the extent of the troubles one needs to take. If “A Sleep of Seventy Years” does indeed come from “Rip Van Winkle,” the choice of this storyline complicates the critical commonplace that the introduction of Western texts goaded China into an often misdirected sense of its own ahistoricism and political slumber in the face of foreign incursion. “A Sleep of Seventy Years,” for example, does not care to point out to its readers the fact that the original story may come from the West. In the event that horizontal reading across the pages of the newsprint does not occur, the story has made little provision for successful delivery of historical consciousness in its opening remarks. Among the many tales of men who stumble into the mountains and slumber away for hundreds, and even thousands of years, the scholar Wei’s story is advertised as but another version, no timelier or more urgent. The weak ties to the original story resonate with the sluggishness of historical consciousness modeled in "Rip Van Winkle" itself. Perhaps the Chinese readership will see the story and suddenly realize all of the costs of its being asleep to Western incursion in the past 70 years, or it won't; the story does not care too much either way.

"A Sleep of Seventy Years" avails from "Rip Van Winkle" a particular kind of historical consciousness, one which, premised on the application of a before-and-after frame to history's passing, is not painful in and of itself. In fact it is as easy as waking up from a deep sleep. But because this historical consciousness has no real function in a storyline designed to make it moot, it must be ultimately acquiesced to, painfully this time, as a social identity. In the post-Revolution American village to which he returns, Rip provides the only point of contact with the past and so has to tell his story over and over again to have any social purpose in the transformed environment. But because he now serves as the town's folk historian, he can never participate in real historical time. Elections go on without him; Rip has no real sense of current events. A similar fate awaits the scholar Wei. Socially out of commission, Wei "disappears into the mountains never to be seen again" (178). With his vanishing into the mountains rendered in a stock phrase from Chinese lore ("bu zhi suo zhong"), the story erases its global ties.[19] As the Irving examples prove, in nineteenth-century literature, Sino-American relations are often to be found under purposed erasure. But the real point is that these texts—through concealing their global affinities—use the metahistoriography afforded by those very affinities to narrate the mundane fate of the subject who wakes up to other people telling him that history has changed.

Notes

1. The First Opium War took place between 1839 and 1842, and ended with the unequal Treaty of Nanjing. The Second Opium War (1856–60) ended sometime after the signing of the Treaty of Tientsin, considered the greatest impingement on China's sovereignty in the nineteenth century.

2. For Patrick Hanan, "A Sleep of Seventy Years," is a prime example of "transculturation," a term Hanan uses to describe the strategic process of recoding foreign cultural products with local signifiers. One can hardly tell "A Sleep of Seventy Years" apart from any other piece of Chinese lore, except that a few details and its publication timing feel *weird*. See "A Study in Acculturation—The First Novels Translated into Chinese," *CLEAR* 23 (2001): 55–80. Another possibility is that "A Sleep of Seventy Years" is not a translation of "Rip Van Winkle" at all; after all, Irving's name is nowhere to be found, nor do the names of any author or translator appear

with the story. Moreover, the trope of a lazy scholar who falls asleep in the mountains only to wake up an epoch later is a popular one in China, appearing as early as in the sixth-century story Ranka (爛柯山记). In the case that the two stories do not result from any transcultural exchange, the appearance of "A Sleep of Seventy Years" and its similarity to "Rip Van Winkle" speak to a kind of "unexpected affinity," described by Zhang Longxi in *Unexpected Affinities* (2007) as coincidences in literary production attributable to similar historical contingencies.

3. The only thing we know is that an Englishman, Ernest Major, founded *Shen Bao*. See Natascha Gentz's chapter "Useful Knowledge and Appropriate Communication: The Field of Journalistic Production in Late Nineteenth Century China" in Rudolf G. Wagner's *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910* (2007).

4. See Shamsul's "Nations-of-intent in Malaysia," *Asian Forms of the Nation,* ed. Stein Tonnesson and Hans Antlov (1996). The concept has been used by counterfactual historians to explore the politics of imagining, longing for or charting out territorial entities that could have been.

5. For discussions of how the nineteenth-century reception of European and Anglo-American texts in China prompted its own sense of ahistoricity and national consciousness, see Lydia Liu, *Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (2005) and "Translating National Character: Lu Xun and Arthur Smith," *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity* (1995); and Haun Saussy's *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China* (2001).

6. "Fohi" is the Western phoneticization of "Fu Xi," the mythological first emperor of China whom Jesuits learned about from their survey of Chinese lore—information then transmitted to people like Samuel Shackford. Fo, or China's presumed spiritual figurehead, was a site of contention in the European proprietary debate over whether China can be fitted into Biblical history. See J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. 4: Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (2001), 123–32.

7. According to Grotius, Peru's "first man," Mancacapacus was "a Chinese who, as he was a man of wonderful genius and spirit, learning that men of his own race were in possession of good lands across the sea, but were subject to no common rule, crossed over there, collected them, scattered as they were, into a body, and set up a Government for them and their posterity on the model of the Government of China." See *On the Origin and Native Races of America*, trans. Edmund Goldsmid (1884).

8. See Margaret Hodgen's *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1964) for an overview of Grotius and Vossius' roles in this discipline.

9. See Paoli Rossi's *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico* (1987); Nicolas Wickenden's *G.J. Vossius and the Humanist Concept of History* (1993); and R. J. Arnold's "'Learned Lumber': The Unlikely Survival of Sacred History in the Eighteenth Century," *English Historical Review* 125.516 (2010): 1139–72 for discussions on Shuckford and Vossius as transitional figures in early modern historiography.

10. China's social model was, according to Pocock, "viewed by the Enlightened as the continental alternative to Europe, perhaps the utopia in which metaphysics and

revelation had never arisen to disturb the natural sociability of mankind; the agrarian and commercial *État policé* (civilized state)" (255). But even then, the image of China as a "self-subsisting galaxy of sociability" (257) was not looking so good. Guillaume-Thomas Raynal et al.'s *Histoire des deux Indes* (1770)—the most instructive text for early American sinological inquiries—was already toying with the idea of China's natural sociability as a liability.

11. See Haun Saussy's *Great Walls of Discourse* for excellent coverage of the ways that coping with the impact of Jesuit and Chinese texts on philology forced the West to revise its own historiographic practices.

12. The "Tartar Revolution" refers to a series of Muslim/Tatar uprisings in Xinjiang, Shanxi, and Gansu (regions around the Tarim Basin) from the 1750s up to and beyond the time of Irving's writing.

13. In her most recent book, *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant explores the affective experience of the historical present and its drama of continuous social adjustment.

14. Irving refers to these in his biography of Goldsmith as Goldsmith's "species of mock history" (186). See *Oliver Goldsmith, a Biography* (1854).

15. Hong merchants refer to the Canton conglomerates in the Sino-American trade, a significant topic of discussion in Irving's social network which included his China-trader friend Henry Ogden.

16. Irving was directly affected by the economic depression. After a round of Jeffersonian embargos that left merchant elites and artisanal industries on the East Coast in the lurch, the period from 1810 to 1830 saw the collapse of Irving's family's import–export business (the P. and E. Irving Company).

17. According to Richard Kluger in *Seizing Destiny: How America Grew from Sea to Shining Sea* (2007), America's mid-nineteenth-century transpacific commercial fantasy must be contextualized within a Henry Hudson narrative and as a part of an ongoing "contest between Britain and America for sustainable title to the Northwest" which "owed less to maritime problems than to overland treks from the east, starting in the 1790s when Alexander MacKenzie set out on behalf of the Montreal-based North West Company, fur traders, in quest of a western waterway from Hudson Bay to the Pacific" (327). Sifting out various forms of answers to Jefferson's "dreams of the United States . . . as the new gravitational center of trade and civilization," Anders Stephanson in *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (1995) would place Astor as a close relative of China-merchants and affiliates like Asa Whitney and William H. Seward who appealed to technological innovations to "recast territorial empire in a commercial, yet destinarian, register" (58). (Though, it must be added, Stephanson takes care to differentiate this moment in history from geographical determinist destinarianism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century).

18. See the chapter "Making Babies in the South Seas" in Lamb's *The Things Things Say* (2011).

19. A more literal translation of the ultimate line of the story in the original Chinese, "数日后入山去不知所终," might be: "After some days, [he] went into the mountain [and no one] knows how he ended up."

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