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Rooted in Barbarous Soil

An Introduction to Gold Rush Society and Culture

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The morning of Wednesday, July 4, 1849, found the sailing ship *Henry Lee* at 29° 54' latitude, 77° 44' longitude, off the mid-Pacific coast of South America. Aboard were the 122 men of the Hartford Union Mining and Trading Company, bound for the gold fields of California. Organizing themselves as a company in Hartford, Connecticut, in mid-December 1848, the Argonauts had set sail from a pier on the East River, New York City, on the morning of February 17, 1849, on what would prove to be a seven-month and ten-day voyage around Cape Horn to San Francisco. On that Wednesday, July 4th, the men of the Hartford Union Mining and Trading Company, assembled on deck for Independence Day festivities, were enjoying, in the words of one of their members, John Linville Hall of Bloomfield, Connecticut, "fair winds, a gentle sea—bright skies—a bland, delicious air—health—cheerfulness—and peace."[1] The men had awakened to a gunfire salute, the ringing of bells, and drum rolls announcing the dawn of the birthday of the Republic.

How sweet it was! A little more than a month earlier, having sailed past the Falklands, the *Henry Lee* had rounded Cape Horn amidst ferocious storms and gales and freezing weather. As the ship tossed to and fro atop the titanic waves, the men of the Hartford Union Mining and Trading Company had huddled in their cabins throughout the short, short days and long, long eighteen-hour Antarctic nights. Many of them were wondering why they had left Connecticut in the first place. Hall himself was a printer; miraculously enough, he had brought a printing press and type with him aboard the *Henry Lee,* which Captain David Vail allowed him to install in a mid-ship stateroom. There, in the dim light and assisted by two other printers aboard, Hall wrote and produced a journal of the seven-month voyage.

Thus, in this instance, the Gold Rush began to document itself from the day the *Henry Lee* set sail from its pier on the East River. The Gold Rush would be about

Pick in hand, gold pan on his knee, a pistol stuffed in his belt, the Forty-niner Joseph Sharp confidently stares at us from across a century and a half of time—one of the tens of thousands of bold young adventurers who came to gather the golden harvest and transformed a distant pastoral province into a populous, prosperous, urbanized state. *Courtesy Bancroft Library.*

action—about the sheer physical adventure of it all—but it would also be an enterprise documenting itself all the while in an absolute torrent of letters, journals (including Hall's innovative shipboard publication), newspaper reports, contemporaneously published books, memoirs (published then or later), sketches, paintings, daguerreotypes, and later recollections. To borrow historian Louis B. Wright's phrase, the Gold Rush was about culture on the moving frontier: about the way that Americans imaginatively encountered the gold-rush experience or later remembered it and how they fashioned these encounters and memories into various forms of popular culture and art. The scholars represented in this volume, then, are linked to John

Linville Hall across 150 years in their mutual effort to memorialize and make sense of the gold-rush experience.

In his essay "No Boy's Play: Migration and Settlement in Early Gold Rush California," Malcolm Rohrbough analyzes how communities formed and reformed, or formed and dissolved, throughout the entire process of coming to California during the gold-rush years. Comprised as it was of Connecticut Yankees of similar background and values, the Hartford Union and Mining Trading Company represented, perhaps, the tightest possible community en route to California. Each member, after all, had bought into the project as an investor-entrepreneur in a joint-stock company pledged to a communal effort in California and elected their own board of directors and management. Their plan was to sail the *Henry Lee* as close as possible to the gold fields (their knowledge of California's geography was somewhat shaky) and commence mining operations, based out of the ship.

And what could be more communal than the exhilaration of that Fourth of July day on the high seas in the Year of Our Lord 1849 as, at half past ten in the morning, the company assembled on deck of the *Henry Lee* for speeches, readings, the singing of hymns and patriotic songs, and an astonishing twenty-five toasts, "pledged in bumpers of cold water," to the Fourth of July itself, the memory of George Washington, the heroes of 1776, the president and vice-president of the United States, the Army, the Navy, the flag, the genius of liberty, the fair sex, the Hartford Union Mining and Trading Company itself, and Cape Horn ("safely clear of your territories, may we be excused from paying our respects to you again, *old fellow,* especially in the winter"). At mid-point, toast number thirteen was to "California, The El Dorado of our hopes. May we not be disappointed, but find stores of golden treasures to gladden our hearts, and make ample amends for the ills and trials of acquisition. May our families and friends be enabled to rejoice in our success, and all end well."[2]

Alas, such would not be the case. Arriving in San Francisco in September 1849, Captain Vail sailed his ancient 500-ton ship, still supplied with a year and a half of provisions, up the Carquinez Strait to Benicia looking for gold fields within striking distance of the ship. There were none; and within weeks, perhaps even days, the happy band of brothers who had celebrated the Fourth of July on the high seas began to break up into groups and travel by small boats upriver to Sacramento for further deployment into the Mother Lode. It was at Sacramento that the company, faced by the realities of California geography and the difficulties, at the time, of large-scale corporate mining, disbanded; and the men set off, singly or in groups, into the Mother Lode.

Within a year, twelve young men, fully 10 percent of the original company, were dead. Twenty-six had returned to Connecticut with approximately $1,280 each to show for their effort. Seventy-seven were still in California, averaging some $1,239

per man in cumulative earnings. The general average of earned money for the surviving members was $1,116 each. When one deducted the cost of passage and equipment from this sum—and this averaged some $350 per man—it would have been hard to return to toast number thirteen on the high seas ("May we not be disappointed, but find stores of golden treasures to gladden our hearts, and make ample amends for the ills and trials of acquisition") without some irony and much sadness.

Hall himself returned to Connecticut in May 1850 and became a minister. The *Henry Lee* was towed down to the mudflats off the foot of Washington Street in San Francisco and turned into a storehouse, soon to be absorbed by the expanding city. And yet, the themes of Hall's shipboard journal—hope, community, physical challenge and danger, the exhilaration of being young at that epic time and journeying into El Dorado itself—reverberated, as Rohrbough captures so well in his essay, throughout the entire gold-rush experience and down into our own era.

There were predominately Connecticut men aboard the *Henry Lee.* Such monoethnicity, however, as Sucheng Chan asserts so well in the essay "A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush," would not be the case in the Golden State. Living with her physician husband in a log cabin in the Mother Lode settlements of Rich and Indian bars in March 1852, Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe, writing under the pen name Dame Shirley, was amazed by the languages she heard all around her. "You will hear in the same day," Dame Shirley wrote in her Letter Fourteenth, "almost at the same time, the lofty melody of the Spanish language, the piquant polish of the French . . . the silver, changing clearness of the Italian, the harsh gangle of the German, the hissing precision of the English, the liquid sweetness of the Kanaka, and the sleep-inspiring languor of the East Indian."[3]

The Gold Rush, as Dame Shirley was experiencing it, represented an unprecedented instance of internationalism in world history. It can be argued, in fact, that the California Gold Rush more than any other event up to that time firstly and most boldly dramatized the increasingly global nature of American society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Aside from the fact that the United States had been administering California since 1846 as a military territory, it can even be argued that the Gold Rush, in its first phases at least, was an intrinsically international—rather than American—event. Eventually, after 1849, California would settle down as an American state. In the first phases of the Gold Rush, however, the exact future of this polyglot implosion and explosion of global peoples remained, for the time being, uncertain: which is perhaps why, aside from the immemorial imperatives of racism, Americans seemed especially anxious, as Sucheng Chan so vividly dramatizes, to establish hegemony over all other peoples in the gold fields through miners' taxes and other forms of intimidation. Never before in the brief history of the American Republic, then a mere sixty years since the adoption of its Constitution in 1789,

The residents of Sierraville, high in the Northern Mines near Yuba Pass, turn out to have their picture taken, sometime in the 1850s. A supply center more than a gold camp, and later a farming and logging town, Sierraville took on the appearance of a traditional American community—with women and children figuring significantly among the population—earlier than most gold-rush towns, which long remained overwhelmingly masculine in character. *Courtesy Bancroft Library.*

had Americans, at that time still predominately an Anglo-Protestant people, been challenged to deal, simultaneously, with such a variety of races and peoples: not only with every variety of European (including the English and speakers of English from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), but with large numbers of Asians (Chinese in the main, but also Polynesians from Hawaii, then termed Kanakas, and some Filipinos), as well as Hispanic miners from Mexico, Chile, and Peru—not to mention some 150,000 to 170,000 Native Americans and a small but significant remnant of Spanish-speaking Californios (Spanish, Indian, and African in their blood lines) and African Americans, slave and free, from the eastern states. For a

people, the Americans, who had not yet settled the question of slavery (which the rest of the English-speaking world had earlier abolished, at least in theory), and who as a population were aggressively white, aggressively Protestant, and aggressively superior in their racial attitudes, the Gold Rush posed an ecumenical challenge of unprecedented magnitude.

Today, thanks to a quarter of a century of unsentimental and frequently revisionist research, it is easy to see that by and large, as Sucheng Chan's essay as well as those by James A. Sandos ("'Because he is a liar and a thief': Conquering the Residents of 'Old' California, 1850–1880") and Irving G. Hendrick ("From Indifference to Imperative Duty: Educating Children in Early California") so thoroughly document, white Americans miserably failed to respond positively to the possibilities of the multiracial, multiethnic society that had materialized itself in California with, as historian Hubert Howe Bancroft would later put it, such a rapid, monstrous maturity.

The story told by Chan, Sandos, and to a lesser extent by Hendrick, is not a pretty story; but it is a true story, and it must be faced. Native Americans were hunted down like so much vermin, including their extermination by state-supported militia operation. Latino, Chinese, and, in many instances, African American miners were driven from the most promising of the gold fields or otherwise suppressed, beaten, or outright murdered, excluded from the protections of the court system, degraded in their fundamental rights and humanity. In assessing American civilization in that era—which is to say, when judging it from the perspective of the present, for all history is written to some degree or another in the present tense—the patterns of racial and ethnic suppression, so evidenced in the gold-rush story as developed by Chan, Sandos, and Hendrick, must be integrated into the larger pattern of America's two-century-plus struggle with racism and ethnic prejudice.

In one sense, the Gold Rush represented—although it was perhaps not recognized at the time—a wake-up call to the United States that it would at some time in its future have to deal with the global nature of American culture. True, that global nature was unclear in 1849. Indeed, it would still take another fourteen years, until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 amidst a terrible Civil War, merely to end—at least formally—the suppression of only one American people, African Americans, through the slavery system. The racial and ethnic sins of the Gold Rush, in other words, were being perpetuated by a people who would soon be laying down the lives of hundreds of thousands of young men and maiming the bodies and spirits of hundreds of thousands of others in, as Abraham Lincoln suggested in his Second Inaugural Address, expiation and atonement for its racial sins. The misbehavior of Anglo-Americans during the Gold Rush against their fellow nonwhite miners and immigrants, in other words, serves as a dark and ominous warning that there was something very wrong in the American national character and only a great Civil War could even begin to set it right.

Even as we assess these sins, however, we can find no point outside of history to judge the frequently depressing behavior of the Forty-niners as far as racial and ethnic matters are concerned. Bearing witness through these essays to a terrible burden of past oppression, we cannot exempt ourselves from continuities and responsibilities of prejudice and racial animosities down to our own time. The Gold Rush shows us clearly for what we were, a nation with strong racist and ethnic prejudices in its heart. The Civil War made us pay dearly for these sins, but bad behavior and the burdens thereof have continued down to the present. Not until all racism and ethnic prejudice is purged from American society altogether should we feel morally superior to the California miners chronicled in this volume. The most egregious forms and possibilities of their misbehavior have been curtailed by a century and a half of struggle, down to the civil rights movement in our own time; but the surviving traces of the Forty-niners' disease—hostility to people who are different, who are the Other—is as lingering and self-evident as today's headlines.

Even today, however—no, especially today, in our postmodernist era, so desperate to reconnect with Native American environmentalism and spirituality—we can feel the horror of the genocide leveled against Native Americans in the gold-rush and frontier eras. Such murderous misbehavior continued across three decades. Bret Harte, for example, was working as a newspaper reporter in Uniontown near Humboldt Bay in 1860 when he went out on the morning of February 26 to cover the handiwork of the four or five men from Eureka who with pistols, rifles, axes, and knives had butchered some sixty peaceable Native Americans, mostly women and children, as they slept in their rancheria outside the town. Horrified by what he saw and fearful of retaliation, Harte could only report it for the San Francisco *Bulletin* under the pseudonym "Eye-Witness."

"A short time after," Harte wrote, "the writer was upon the ground with feet treading in human blood, horrified with the awful and sickening sights which met the eye wherever it turned. Here was a mother fatally wounded hugging the mutilated carcass of her dying infant to her bosom; there a poor child of two years old, with its ear and scalp torn from the side of its little head. Here a father frantic with grief over the bloody corpses of his four little children and wife; there a brother and sister bitterly weeping and trying to soothe with cold water the pallid face of a dying relative. . . . The wounded, dead, and dying were found all around, and in every lodge the skulls and frames of women and children cleft with axes and hatchets, and stabbed with knives, and the brains of an infant oozing from its broken head to the ground."[4]

Here, then, is portrayed a ghastly ground-zero point of racist criminality as seen through the eyes of a talented young writer who wished desperately to see the best in the gold-rush experience and would soon be doing so in a series of short stories that would win him international fame. For the moment, surveying the butchery, he must have seen California, as Henry David Thoreau saw California, as but one step closer to hell.

And yet, even as Chan, Sandos, and Hendrick tell their stories of persecution and suppression—and in the case of the Native Americans, outright genocide, frequently organized and supported by the state—they are also chronicling the foundations of a commonwealth, however flawed; and in that organization of a community were more than a few signs of hope. Of the peoples who came to California, no matter how much they were persecuted, none were driven out, or "ethnically cleansed" in current parlance, although there was more than enough reason for many of them to leave voluntarily in sorrow and revulsion. However clouded and compromised by Anglo-American misbehavior, a DNA code of diversity had once and for all been established for California, and this code would remain in force over the next 150 years until, by the year 2000, California once again echoes, as Dame Shirley first heard it echoing at Rich and Indian bars, with the languages—and the faces, and the hopes—of the entire human race. As Chan suggests, for example, the Gold Rush made of California an Asian place, and this Asian identity could never be erased. In the long run, the Chinese refused to remain victims. Even as they were being persecuted, in fact, as Chan shows, they protested their treatment in the name of the rich and complex civilization that had produced them. In the years that followed, the Chinese helped establish the foundations of California agriculture, achieved the western link of the transcontinental railroad (an example of Chinese engineering comparable to the Great Wall of China itself) and in the Sacramento Valley inaugurated a century-long effort at irrigation and flood control.

And as Sandos suggests, the Hispanic Californians were linked to a civilization that would in time also reclaim California for its own. Here, as in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, but with a more immediate and representative clash, were encountering each other two of the three dominant language and cultural groups that, along with the French of Canada and Louisiana, had most successfully colonized the New World. Despite all the negative things that must be chronicled—especially the betrayal represented by the Land Act of 1851, which placed the burden of proof of land ownership upon Hispanic Californians and thus drove so many of them into bankruptcy in the effort to pay their legal bills—the Gold Rush announced to Anglo-America that in its own cloudy and obscure way English-speaking peoples shared the New World with Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking peoples: that the United States was only part of a complex bi-hemispheric mosaic of races, languages, and cultures. The young men of the Hartford Union Mining and Trading Company, indeed all those who sailed to California around the Horn or later via the Isthmus of Panama, touching upon Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking cities, were having their first experience of such pan-American diversity. The most skilled and resourceful miners, moreover, the Chileans, the Peruvians, the Mexicans—people with a centuries-long knowledge of mining—established the mining culture of the

A southern Maidu, or Nisenan, holds a quiver of arrows for a studio portrait, about 1850. It was the near the Maidu village called Cullumah that James Marshall discovered gold in 1848, precipitating a mad rush of fortune seekers who overran Indian lands. The Maidu were among the early miners, though they chiefly worked for whites. With the outbreak of hostilities between the Maidu and Argonauts from Oregon Territory in March 1849, they were the first of the California tribes to suffer from American attitudes toward indigenous peoples, which within a couple of decades would decimate Indian numbers and nearly destroy their cultures. *Courtesy Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, N.24675.*

Gold Rush and taught the Americans how to mine. In southern California especially, Spanish-speaking Californios, who had defeated the American dragoons at the Battle of San Pascual on December 6, 1846, held onto their way of life well into the 1870s. One of them, Romualdo Pacheco, served briefly, from February to December 1875, as the twelfth governor of the state and after that went on to Congress.

The Gold Rush, in short, was about the amalgamation, assimilation, and transformation of peoples and cultures as well as it was about the suppression by the strong of the weak. Women, for example, were still some sixty years from their political emancipation when the Gold Rush broke out; but as Nancy J. Taniguchi points out in her essay "Weaving a Different World: Women and the California Gold Rush," the entire epoch is today understood to have been much more feminine than it was once thought to be. In times past—during, say, the centennial of the Gold Rush in 1949—the archetypal Forty-niner was depicted as a bearded white male in middle age wearing Levis and one of those Gabby Hayes hats with the front brim pinned to the crown. Today, thanks to the research efforts of a generation of historians, we see the Gold Rush as multiethnic and multicultural and bi-gendered. What stories might be told, for one thing, as Taniguchi suggests, regarding those women who dressed in men's clothing and, whether passing or being accepted by men as women of a special sort, took their chances alongside the other miners, pistols and bowie knives tucked into their belts. There were only a few of these, of course. Most women, again as Taniguchi depicts them, dressed in skirts and bonnets as they assisted their men in the mines, or ran boardinghouses, or in the case of Dame Shirley, achieved one of the first sustained interpretations of life in the mines, which became in turn one of the platform planks of gold-rush literature.

Later writers, Bret Harte and Hubert Howe Bancroft for example, tended to perpetuate the myth that all women were treated with respect, even reverence, in the mining towns and settlements, and even shady ladies were accorded a measure of respect. Yet the hanging of Juanita in Downieville in July 1850 for stabbing to death a man who was trying to break into her cabin underscores what is perhaps a more historic reality: namely, that it was not easy to be a woman in the Gold Rush, whether a woman were Anglo-American, Mexican, French, African American, or Chinese. With so few women around, sexual jealousy, followed by communal rage as in the case of Juanita, could also be an expected response along with the more trumpeted myth of punctilious chivalry. Women had to take care for their physical safety, and the court records from the era reveal that many of them suffered one or another form of assault. Yet the women of the Gold Rush did prevail in a predominately man's world amidst an overwhelmingly masculine atmosphere; and they prevailed up and down the social ladder and across ethnic lines. Protestant church ladies such as Sarah Royce, mother of the future philosopher Josiah, prevailed in keeping their families together during the long trek across the continent by covered wagon

and in the mines of Grass Valley. Other women, such as Sarah B. Gillespie of the Presbyterian Missionary Church at Macao, China, and Sister Frances Assisium McEnnis of the Sisters of Charity, came specifically for religious purposes. Jewish women tended to their families and saw to the Hebrew education of their children. Then there were the women, such as Mary Jane Megquier and the widow Mary Ball, who kept boardinghouses, or Mary Ellen Pleasant, a free woman of African descent who invested wisely in San Francisco real estate. Sarah Kirby managed the house at the Eagle Theatre in Sacramento, and hundreds of other women made respectable livings in cooking and domestic work, frequently in their own establishments. Elsewhere in the mid-Victorian hierarchy of social status were the women who tended bar or dealt the cards in various establishments. A woman such as actress Lola Montez, onetime mistress to the King of Bavaria, occupied a social niche of her own.

The sheer challenge of California—the physical challenges, the fluid and uncertain nature of society, female minority status compounded by mid-Victorian constraints, the sheer anthropological imbalance of it all—made of many women in California, whatever their background, pragmatic feminists. Eliza W. Farnham, for example, had lived in Illinois with her lawyer-writer-explorer husband Thomas in the early 1840s before removing to New York State, where she served as matron of women at Sing Sing Prison. With the death of her husband in San Francisco in 1849, while he had been exploring the Far West, Eliza Farnham's thoughts turned to California, to which she hoped to travel as escort to a group of respectable unmarried women in search of husbands. California, she and the three compatriots who ultimately sailed with her discovered, was not for the wilting, the neurasthenic, or the overly genteel. A woman who came to California, Farnham wrote in *California, In-Doors and Out; or How We Farm, Mine and Live Generally in the Golden State* (1856), should not expect a life of genteel leisure or even a society that would engage, at this point (of its development), "the higher orders of female intelligence." There was just too much work to do. "The necessities to be served here," Farnham noted, "are physical; washing linen, cleansing houses, cooking, nursing, etc. and I would advise no woman to come alone to the country who has not strength, willingness, and skill for one or other of these occupations; who has not, also, fortitude, indomitable resolution, dauntless courage, and a clear self-respect which will alike forbid her doing anything unworthy herself, or esteeming anything to be so, which her judgement and conscience approve."[5]

Farnham is less than obliquely hinting here that the sexual standards of California—or, at the least, what constituted respectability or acceptability—were different from those of the eastern states. A respectable woman in California, Farnham claimed, "will feel herself in an enemy's country, where she is to watch and ward with tireless vigilance, and live, unless she be very happily circumstanced, alone, entirely alone,

Two miners—one white, one black—work a claim on Spanish Flat in 1852. Most of the adventurers who set out for the new El Dorado were white Americans. But by the date this daguerreotype was made, some two thousand Argonauts of African ancestry had joined in the Gold Rush, which lured adventurers from around the world and created a society of such ethnic and cultural diversity that it was one of the wonders of the day. *Courtesy California State Library.*

and bear her trials in silence. None but the pure and strong-hearted of my sex should come alone to this land."[6]

The fact that a onetime women's matron at Sing Sing penitentiary was so obviously finding California morally compromised must in some way be connected to the flourishing culture of prostitution that prevailed in California during the Gold Rush and through the second half of the nineteenth century. Neither Taniguchi nor any of the other essayists in this volume, however, spend much time on this topic; which is to the good, for the prostitute, especially if she is depicted as having a heart of gold, has been overly sentimentalized in gold-rush and frontier lore. Taniguchi's essay is especially welcomed because it gives us so many more images of prevailing, surviving women to counter prior depictions of prostitution in gold-rush and frontier California, although here too, in the matter of whoredom, there is a valid history, and the story should be told.

On the other hand, there remains the question of sexuality on the gold-rush frontier; and few have treated this topic more tellingly than Susan Lee Johnson, both in her brilliant Yale doctoral dissertation of 1993, the basis of her new study *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush,* and her essay in this volume, "'My own private life': Toward a History of Desire in Gold Rush California." In *Three Years in California* (1857), the Scottish artist J. D. Borthwick described an evening in San Andreas, Calaveras County, in which the men of this all-male settlement gave themselves a ball, although not one woman was present. For several hours, men danced with men to the music of a fiddle and a flute. Some men played the part of women, and the dance caller announced each movement of the dance as if women were present. Men playing women signified their roles, Borthwick wrote, by wearing "a patch on a certain part of his inexpressibles," which is to say, large squares of canvas attached to the flys of their jeans.[7]

Prior generations of California historians, encountering such passages as this—and there are many in the multitudinous literature of the California Gold Rush—passed them by with hardly a notice or, when they noticed them at all, did so with a faint sense of disquiet. What could all this mean, anyway, and hadn't the historian best be getting on to more properly historical questions? Susan Lee Johnson, by contrast, belongs to a generation of historians for whom the ebb and flow of eros, its feints and masks, are at the very basis of historical experience, especially as sex reveals cultural attitudes and sexual arrangements reveal social power. In her provocative dissertation, "'The Gold She Gathered': Difference, Domination, and California's Southern Mines, 1848–1853," Johnson gathered a potpourri of outright evidence and subtle clues to suggest the intricacies of sexual/power relationships in gold-rush California: between white males and white women (this frequently in fantasy life alone, given the shortage of females in California), between white men and women of color (also frequently a matter of fantasy, but touched by hegemony as

well), between white males and available women, white or of color (also frequently a matter of dream wish but sometimes edging into actual activity), between white men and prostitutes, white or of color (and here she adds much new information and interpretation to an already developed field of research); and, most blatant in the matter of power, sexual relations between white men and Native American women, which provide Johnson her most fruitful opportunities for cross-cultural analysis. In one instance, moreover, we find a white miner strongly attracted to an African American woman on the right side of mid-Victorian propriety. Evidence of such situations is very hard to come by on the frontier.

Most dramatically, Johnson chronicles the erotic or semi-erotic ties among Anglo-American miners. These attachments ranged from the stylized sublimation of the all-boy miners' dance to highly emotional friendships charged with homoerotic feeling, to strong suggestions of homosexual behavior and, in one instance, to the even stronger possibility of a lifetime homosexual union. Through a close reading of one miner's diary, moreover, Johnson explores new territory: the inner life of erotic memory and longing (and possible autoerotic release) that constitutes the most subtle topic of all her investigations. The vigorous and virile young men of the Gold Rush, in short, and most of the middle-aged men as well, were swept into California on a vast and powerful tide of eros as well as economic ambition. The assessment of eros as a force in history is only beginning. Provocatively, Johnson brings it to the Mother Lode. Never again, thanks to Johnson, will readers of gold-rush literature pass uncomprehendingly through passages in diaries about all-men dances, daydreams of girls back home, passionate friendships and sleeping partners among men, frequently brutal and sometimes touching encounters across race and ethnicity, voyeurism, and the more garden varieties of sexual expression.

If eros represented a subtle but persistent, and sometimes powerful, force in the Gold Rush, so too did religion. Eros and religion are linked, after all, as profound encounters with the forces of life and death. As Steven M. Avella suggests in his brief but encyclopedic inventory of religious life on the gold-rush frontier, "Phelan's Cemetery: Religion in the Urbanizing West, 1850–1869, in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento," the global nature of the Gold Rush was also reflected in the arrival in California during these years of the world's great religions, including the religious practices and sensibilities of Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the other religious practices of the Far East, such as the Chinese devotion to the Queen of Heaven.

Christianity, of course, whether in its Protestant or Catholic variations, held dominance, which can be expected, given the origins of most miners. Next came Judaism. So strong was the Jewish presence, in fact, especially in San Francisco, Stockton, and Sacramento, that frontier California can lay claim to having been uniquely shaped by Jewish values and sensibility, most notably in the city of San Francisco, where Jews from the first constituted an influential elite. But then again: the entire history

of the American West demonstrates a special affinity between Jews—old American Sephardics and German immigrants, each of the Reform persuasion—and the frontier. In so many ways, these groups found in the Far West, California especially, their promised land.

Although rarely considered as such, the Gold Rush also represents a key chapter in the history of Protestant-Catholic relations in mid-nineteenth-century America. The Gold Rush came, first of all, at the end of a decade of anti-Catholic agitation leading to the Know Nothing movement. In his *Plea for the West* (1835), New England minister Lyman Beecher cast the entire frontier as a competition between the Protestantism of the Atlantic states, moving West, and the Roman Catholicism of Latin America, moving northward up the continent. At some point, Beecher argued, one or another of these religious forces must prevail. The entire history of Protestantism in California during the Gold Rush and through the 1850s, in fact, can be read as an effort by the largely New England-originated missionaries of the American Home Missionary Society to capture California as a Protestant commonwealth, a New England on the Pacific Coast. As the Reverend Timothy Dwight Hunt put it preaching to the New England Society of San Francisco on the December 22, 1852, anniversary of the landing at Plymouth Rock: "You are the representatives of a land which is the model for every other. You belong to a family whose dead are the pride of the living. Preserve your birth-right . . . Here is our Colony. No higher ambition could urge us to noble deeds than, on the basis of the colony of Plymouth, to make California the Massachusetts of the Pacific."[8]

Roman Catholics, most obviously, had other ideas, as suggested by the Franciscan missions themselves, the early presence of Jesuits in higher education in Santa Clara and San Francisco, the speedy elevation by Rome of San Francisco into an archdiocese, the equally speedy appearance of teaching Dominican sisters in Benicia and nursing Sisters of Charity in San Francisco and elsewhere, and even, as Avella points out, the presence in San Francisco of a Chinese priest fluent in Italian. While Yankee and Southern miners tended to be Protestant, Irish (including the Australian Irish), French, Chilean, Peruvian, and Sonoran miners tended to be Roman Catholic, as were the Californios and some Native Americans, the descendants of the Spanish mission neophytes. For some observers, moreover, California was more than just a place where Catholics could be found; California was, as the Reverend Hugh Quigley, a priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco writing in the late 1870s put it, a natural melding ground between immigrant and native Catholic peoples.

Avella's central theme, however, is not religious competition or even the nativist *noir* of the First and Second Vigilance Committees, through which Know Nothing and Masonic elements sought to suppress a feared Irish Catholic presence in San Francisco, but the way, rather, religion offered an immediately available matrix for personal and social identification in a ferociously fluid society. Whether in Protestant