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The Frenchman's Gaze

Pierre de Saint-Amant's Travels in the Oregon Territory, 1851

MELINDA MARIE JETTÉ

IN AUGUST 1851, Frenchman Pierre Charles Fournier de Saint-Amant arrived by boat at the mouth of the Columbia River after a stop in Port Orford. Attached to the French consulate in San Francisco, California, Saint-Amant had instructions to survey the Oregon Territory and report back on commercial developments in the region. He documented his eighteen-month journey to the Pacific Slope between 1851 and 1852 in a lengthy account, *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon*, published in 1854.¹ His first impressions of the lower Columbia River suggest a keen eye with regard to economic conditions and the activities and aims of Euro-American newcomers, but they also reveal a more limited vision of the Native peoples of the region. Saint-Amant remarked on the abundant forests of the Lower Columbia, the large steam-powered sawmill near Astoria, and the system of commercial marine traffic, which relied on special river pilots to bring ships across the Columbia Bar. He noted population growth and economic development in the interior valleys, notably along the Willamette River. He observed that the “fecundity of the soil, which reveals itself in the high mountains as in the depth of the large valleys — all of it has you feel, all of it affirms, that you enter into a continent more vast than the one from which you arrive.”² In the Frenchman's initial observations, he saw few if any Indians along the southern bank of the Columbia River and made but a brief notation that the Chinook lived on the north bank

Although Saint-Amant's initial description of the Lower Columbia seemed to announce that his travelogue would focus exclusively on the enterprise

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PUBLISHED IN PARIS, FRANCE, Pierre Charles Fournier de Saint-Amant's memoir, *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon*, recounts the Frenchman's travels on the Pacific Slope in 1851–1852, during the California Gold Rush.

and activity of the Anglo-American settlers, *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon* presents a more intricate portrait of the Oregon Territory. His accounts point to a region in transition during the early 1850s, just a few years removed from the first western overland migrations, the Oregon Treaty of 1846, the Whitman Incident, and the Cayuse War. Saint-Amant's sojourn in the Oregon Territory provides a unique, although far-from-unbiased perspective, on the social landscape, spaces, and places of the Pacific Northwest — that of a European traveler. Taking into consideration his own cultural attitudes and perceptions, his travelogue presents historians with useful observations about a period in Pacific Northwest history that marked a first phase of settler colonialism.³ A vast western colony of the United States, the Oregon Territory government had been in existence for only two years in 1851. Although Anglo-Americans were increasingly migrating to the region and seeking complete control of the region's society, economy, land, and resources, Saint-Amant's narrative suggests that the actual state of affairs was more complex.

Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon joined a growing body of nineteenth-century European travel literature that developed during the emergence of high imperialism, the rise of industrial capitalism, and the expansion of modern transportation and communications systems. European travel narratives were intellectual instruments that helped build and shape Western expansion across the globe, beginning during the early modern era from 1500 to 1800.⁴ Equipped with the tools of Western scientific advancement and the philosophical principles of the Enlightenment (and later inspired by the sensibility of the Romantic movement), European explorers and travelers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries set out to observe, document, and categorize the places, peoples, and natural histories they encountered worldwide. Their published travel narratives generated a readership in European metropolitan centers that could galvanize political support for colonial endeavors.⁵ Travel writers in the nineteenth century also created a space where Europeans defined themselves in relation to the colonized subjects portrayed in the travelogues.⁶ In this way, European travelogues contributed to modern nation-state building while also “interacting with enlightenment natural history to produce a Eurocentric form of global or ‘planetary’ consciousness.”⁷

Similar processes accompanied American territorial expansion and Anglo settler colonialism in North America — the American version of imperialism.⁸ Beginning with the publication of the *Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* in the early 1800s, nineteenth-century literature on the trans-Mississippi West crafted a particular image of the Pacific Northwest that heightened interest in the distant hinterland and shaped Americans’ notions of Oregon. American exploring expeditions, fur traders, missionaries, filibusters, government officials, and overland settlers promoted a vision of the Oregon Country as an Edenic landscape largely — and divinely — emptied of its Native population, one that awaited colonization by enterprising American settlers. Long before the Oregon Treaty of 1846 designated the forty-ninth parallel as the boundary between the United States and British North America, American imperialists, cartographers, and boosters claimed sovereignty over the Pacific Northwest. In their view, the American citizenry would advance the republic by bringing the resources of the region to their full productive capacity. Like their European counterparts, American settlers and travelers documented nation-state building in the Pacific Northwest through published letters, journals, and travelogues grounded in racialized notions of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant superiority.⁹

In *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon*, Saint-Amant offers a counterpoint to this Anglo-American image of Oregon that came to dominate the Pacific Northwest by the mid nineteenth century. He documented historical realities that American chroniclers either sought to elide or did not think worthy

of note, such as the presence and activities of French Canadian and French Catholic missionaries as well as the long-standing French-Indian communities in the region. Saint-Amant's travel narrative also presents perspectives on the Indigenous inhabitants that evoke Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "transculturation." Western scientists, writers, and travelers sought to unilaterally define and categorize the cultures they encountered in colonial "contact zones" — that is, "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."¹⁰ Indigenous peoples, however, actively engaged with European colonizing projects on their own terms, and their agency, adaptations, and perspectives shaped Western travelogues, including Saint-Amant's *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon*.¹¹ Although Saint-Amant endeavored to firmly situate French Canadian laborers, Indians, and other non-elites whom he met into racial, gender, and class hierarchies, their actions and attitudes belied his best efforts.

Examining Saint-Amant's travel narrative allows for a broader understanding of transnational dynamics in Pacific Northwest history. It also provides an opportunity to reconsider connections and communications beyond the Pacific Slope as well as the ways in which outside observers portrayed the region to overseas readers.¹² Saint-Amant's perceptions of the Oregon Territory reflect unique social and cultural context. Although he supported European imperialism and prized Americans' entrepreneurial activities, Saint-Amant also recognized that the settler colonial system and the emerging capitalist economy were transforming the landscape in significant ways, with both systems carrying great costs for the region's Indigenous peoples. It is important to note, however, that racial, class, and gender attitudes and biases of the time period influenced Saint-Amant's travelogue, and his views about Native people in particular can be quite troubling, even disturbing, for modern readers.

DURING THE FIRST HALF of the nineteenth century, France experienced a series of political and economic crises as it evolved as a modern imperial state, including two revolutions in 1830 and 1848 and cycles of economic depression.¹³ The social and economic changes that accompanied industrialization and urbanization in France prompted a number of literate observers to worry about the potential for social disorder, class warfare, and a loss of moral values in a modernizing nation.¹⁴ Seeking to stabilize and unify France in response these internal political divisions and fluctuating economic conditions, French officials joined other Western leaders in the drive to establish overseas colonies, commercial markets, and military outposts. French activities in the Pacific, and by extension, the Pacific Slope, coincided with British and American expansionist actions throughout the 1800s.

THIS MAP included in *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon* (1854) traces Saint-Amant's travels in the Pacific Northwest from August to November 1851 and features both Native and settler geographies of the region.

THIS ENGRAVED PORTRAIT of Saint-Amant, published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1844, accompanied a short feature article on the Frenchman following his chess matches with the English champion Howard Staunton in 1843.

Saint-Amant's travels on the Pacific Coast in the early 1850s coincided with significant French immigration to California as a result of the gold rush, increased French trade with the growing city of San Francisco, and expansion of colonizing efforts in French Polynesia.¹⁵

Saint-Amant (1800–1872) was born in Lot-en-Garonne, a department in southwestern France, to a family of minor nobility impoverished by the French Revolution. As a young man, he served in the French Navy as the secretary to the governor of French Guiana in Cayenne from 1819 to 1821 and published a journeyman study on the French colony in 1822.¹⁶ By the late 1820s, Saint-Amant had married his first wife, Thérèse Rose Cheron, and embarked on a career as a wholesale wine merchant in Paris.¹⁷ Over the next two decades Saint-Amant was also a leading figure in French chess.¹⁸ During the Revolution of 1848, Saint-Amant served as an officer in a National Guard unit in Paris and supervised the defense of the royal Tuileries Palace. In December 1848, after

the French elected Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte president of the Second Republic, Saint-Amant, a confirmed Bonapartiste, sought a permanent consular post in California and later wrote that he had been promised such a position by the president.¹⁹ The official offer and funds to finance his voyage, however, were delayed. While he waited for the 1851 budget to be released, his second wife, Françoise de Saint-Amant, made her way alone to San Francisco in 1850 with a stock of merchandise to sell.²⁰ In spring 1851, Saint-Amant received an irregular, somewhat vague appointment as a “consular agent” to serve under Patrice Dillon, the French consul in San Francisco. Saint-Amant departed for California shortly thereafter. After cross-

ing the English Channel, he caught a steamship at Southampton in southern England that was bound for the Republic of New Granada. He then crossed the Isthmus of Panama and made the final leg of his journey via steamship to San Francisco, arriving on July 20, 1851.²¹

Why did Saint-Amant seek a consular appointment in the United States and how did he come to make an extended trip to the Oregon Territory during the summer and fall of 1851? The Frenchman seems to have had an adventurous streak and wrote in the preface to *Voyages on Californie et dans l'Orégon* that he wanted to see the Americas again, a place where he had first made his mark in French Guiana. He also most certainly sought to turn to his advantage his Bonapartiste loyalties, and seeking a patronage post for that support would not have been unusual in nineteenth-century France. A post in the United States could provide financial opportunities for Saint-Amant and increase his social status while studying a foreign nation on the rise, with his publications possibly leading to future government commissions. Indeed, Saint-Amant collected and published Françoise de Saint-Amant's letters describing her 1850 voyage to California a year later in Paris.²² Like many of the thirty thousand French men and women who emigrated to California during the gold rush, Saint-Amant and his wife seemingly sought to reinvent themselves.²³ In early August 1851, just a few weeks after Saint-Amant's arrival in San Francisco, Dillon instructed him to complete a survey of the Oregon Territory and report back on social and economic conditions as well as opportunities for French investment and trade in the region. Dillon arranged this deployment to give the Frenchman something to do, since he did not have funds to employ him in San Francisco. Saint-Amant eventually completed six reports on Oregon and California, which Dillon forwarded to the Foreign Ministry in Paris.²⁴ After publishing his travel narrative on California and Oregon in 1854, Saint-Amant wrote several additional books during the 1850s and 1860s.²⁵

AFTER CROSSING the Columbia Bar in August 1851, Saint-Amant disembarked for a brief survey of Astoria. His impressions of the area — a chronically underfunded port town with significant potential — are borne out by other existing documentation.²⁶ Having arrived from San Francisco, a city growing at breakneck speed, Saint-Amant was struck by what he perceived to be limited economic activity in Astoria. In Oregon, the gold rush led to an increase in demand for raw materials such as foodstuffs and lumber, but it also drew economic activity south as people migrated to gold fields in California and later to southern Oregon.²⁷ The underlying reasons for an apparent lack of federal investment in the Port of Astoria in 1851 were complex, owing to the federal government's limited tax revenues, which largely depended on tariffs

and excise taxes during the 1800s, the government's prioritization of the Port of San Francisco due to the gold rush, and the perception of the Oregon Territory as a hinterland. In addition, Saint-Amant either did not perceive at the time or did not record the added complication of the fierce nature of political battles during the early 1850s between Democrats and Whigs over appropriations, government largess, and federal appointments in both the Oregon Territory and the nation's capital, Washington City.²⁸

Saint-Amant's next stop was the growing town of Portland. The Frenchman described it as a "center and depot of commerce for importation and exportation" that had recently surpassed older settlements in the region.²⁹ Saint-Amant's impressions about steamship transportation between California and Oregon and the volume of trade on the Pacific Slope were in line with the realities of the Pacific Northwest's rapidly expanding market economy, and Portland was the central navigation point for a variety of American ships.³⁰ One of the Frenchman's most striking observations about Portland during the early 1850s was that the "capital is swallowed up with a feverish ardor," describing how early migrants profited from subdividing inexpensive tracts of land, spurring breakneck-speed building.³¹ Saint-Amant wrote that Americans owned and managed all large businesses in Portland, which is consistent with historical scholarship on entrepreneurship and economic development in the Pacific Northwest during that time period.³² His writings also document important connections between Oregon, French Canada, and France, which began during the fur-trade era of the early 1800s and continued later in the nineteenth century with French mercantile ambitions and joint transnational French and French Canadian efforts to revitalize and expand Roman Catholicism in North America and across the globe.³³

In Portland, Saint-Amant became acquainted with two prominent Frenchmen, O. Travaillot and Francis Ménès, who captained ships to bring French and Belgian Catholic missionaries to Oregon. Their efforts supported French Canadian Francis Norbert (F.N.) Blanchet, bolstering his Roman Catholic mission established during the 1830s. Travaillot captained the *Duc de Lorges*, and Ménès captained the *Le Étoile du Matin* for la Société de l'Océanie (the Oceanic Company), a French Catholic trading firm founded in 1845. The Oceanic Company combined the efforts of businessmen, Catholic Church officials, religious orders, and members of the French bourgeoisie who supported evangelization projects in the Pacific through annual subscriptions. After their ships became damaged crossing the Columbia Bar, both men settled in Oregon and became merchants. Travaillot went into business in Portland and Ménès in Oregon City. Conveying both his own class outlook and his support for France's commercial expansion in the Pacific, Saint-Amant noted that both men were fine business leaders, intent on aiding their countrymen in the region. He

IN THE EARLY 1850S, Portland was the largest town in the vast Oregon Territory that included the future states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and parts of western Montana and Wyoming. Front and Stark streets in Portland are pictured here in 1852.

even remarked that Ménès “honors the French name by the respect received amidst a society more in search of wealth than public esteem.”³⁴

After a visit to Fort Vancouver, Saint-Amant made his way up the Willamette Valley, stopping in Oregon City. He described the town as a small outpost with much less economic activity than Portland, but one that possessed important attributes for future development. Notable among these features were the Willamette Falls, “capable of powering 50 factories,” the possibility of a canal allowing steamships to ascend the Willamette River above the falls, and the town’s location as an entry into the fertile Willamette Valley. In reflecting on future economic developments, Saint-Amant approved of the 1850 Oregon Donation Land Claim Act (DLCA).³⁵ This legislation ordered a formal land survey of the Oregon Territory and established a regularized

system of land claims that stimulated further Euro-American migration and resettlement in the Willamette Valley in addition to other parts of the Pacific Northwest. As Gray Whaley has pointed out, the relatively rapid passage of the law — prior to the negotiation and approval of formal treaties with the Native peoples of the Oregon Territory — “speaks volumes about how seriously the legislators took issues concerning Native sovereignty.”³⁶

Saint-Amant’s preoccupation with economic development and the market economy in Oregon, combined with a decidedly elitist, Eurocentric mentality, led him to critique and devalue the Indigenous inhabitants he encountered throughout the Willamette Valley. His description of Natives visiting local towns captures his misperception of the resident Chinookan, Kalapuyan, and Molalla groups and their decades of contract labor, trade, and interaction with Euro-American settlers:

*The Indians, men and women, belonging to the neighboring tribes, who are referred to as “civilized,” appear daily in the towns to go for a walk, to see and be seen, or to trade. A few, a small number, will remain there for a short stay, but they only work long enough to satisfy their immediate needs. No matter how high are the wages that they receive, one can never count on them. They think only of a future of returning to their former poverty, to their nomadic and primitive life.*³⁷

In his remarks on the Willamette Valley, Saint-Amant also described the DLCA and the federal government’s desire to extinguish Indian land title in the region through the existing treaty process. Here Saint-Amant approved of both initiatives and repeated treaty commissioners’ frustrations with trying to locate and negotiate with Indigenous groups in the valley due to their seasonal migration to hunt, gather, and trade. Natives insisted on retaining reservations within their traditional homelands alongside the White settlements, which further irked the Euro-American settlers.³⁸

*One difficulty has recently emerged with several tribes: They are happy to recognize the [settler] property titles to the lands of Oregon and the compensation that is the result. But, partly imperiously, partly appealing to generous sentiments, they claim to continue to reside on reserved territories in the middle of the white population — with an ease of egress.*³⁹

Saint-Amant’s description of intercultural relations in the valley from the perspective of the Euro-American settlers points to an alternative reading of his narrative, one that evinces its transcultural lessons. Rather than simply reject the Euro-American economy and society outright, Indians sought to navigate a place on their own terms as they had since the arrival of overland

THIS MAP depicts major Native American groups in Oregon and Southern Washington during the early 1800s.

fur traders in the early 1800s. They remained committed to their own cultures, lifeways, and economic practices during a time when their populations were in serious decline due to waves of infectious disease (malaria, measles, tuberculosis, influenza, and meningitis), declining fertility, and loss of foodstuffs

and resources.⁴⁰ Indigenous peoples in the Willamette Valley bartered and traded with settlers and took positions as laborers for short- and long-term contracts in the fur trade and later in the settler economy.⁴¹ By engaging in these practices, they sought to adapt to new economic conditions and opportunities despite the difficult circumstances and the growing demographic imbalance. It is also important to recognize that the Kalapuyans and the Molallas negotiated a series of agreements with the Willamette Valley Treaty Commission in the spring of 1851. Although the U.S. Senate did not approve these initial treaties, a second round of negotiations resulted in several ratified treaties in the mid 1850s, and shortly thereafter, the Willamette Valley Tribes were forcibly relocated to the Grand Ronde and Siletz reservations. These reservations represented but a fraction of

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THIS ENGRAVING from a sketch by Alfred T. Agate depicts a Kalapuyan man in traditional clothing and headgear. Agate made the sketch as a member of the Wilkes Expedition party that visited the Willamette Valley in 1841.

their original homelands.⁴²

In his description of Oregon City, the territorial capital, Saint-Amant also documented Catholic and Protestant communities in the area. The town boasted three Protestant churches and was the archiepiscopal seat of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Oregon City. Archbishop F.N. Blanchet oversaw the area south of the Columbia, lived in “a palace worthy of St. Jean the Precursor,” and supervised “30 zealous and courageous priests, who without exception, were the objects of common esteem, even by those of dissident faiths.”⁴³ His brother, Augustin Magloire Alexandre (A.M.A.) Blanchet, Bishop of Nesqually, lived at Fort Vancouver and supervised the Catholic missions north of the Columbia River. In addition, there were three European Catholic orders in the region: the Jesuits, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate

headquartered in Marseilles, and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from Belgium. The European missionaries were all French speaking, and according to Saint-Amant, none of these missionaries were “ever the object of the slightest censorship.” The Frenchman clearly admired their great efforts to “propagate the providential influence of the Gospel.”⁴⁴

Promoting transnational religious colonialism, French Canadian, French, and Belgian missionaries in the Pacific Northwest sought to convert and “civilize” Indigenous peoples and minister to French-Indian families as well as the Americans and other immigrants resettling the region. This brand of religious colonialism promoted an idealized, hierarchical social order patterned after that of the Catholic Church. The French-speaking Canadian and European missionaries were wary of the religious diversity, democratic culture, and socio-economic changes that characterized antebellum America.⁴⁵

After a short stay in Oregon City, Saint-Amant also spent several days with French-Indian families who had settled in the French Prairie area between Butteville and Salem. These were the bicultural families headed by French Canadian men, former fur trappers with the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), and their Native and métis wives. Saint-Amant described these families in an affectionate if patronizing tone. In the Frenchman’s view, they appeared uninterested in increasing their economic output, and he saw several reasons for this state of arrested development. One was the apparent serf-like conditions they were held in by their former employer, the HBC, and by local creditors. Another factor was the agricultural abundance and mild climate of the Willamette Valley, which did not appear to tax the French-Indian families too heavily. Saint-Amant also criticized the French Canadians for their lack of attention to and ignorance of “sound doctrines of order and economy.”⁴⁶

Here Saint-Amant introduces a constant refrain in the travel narrative — grounded in his own cultural, class, and racial biases — that Indigenous and French-Indian cultural and economic practices were retrograde, leaving those groups ill-equipped to compete with Anglo-Americans’ more sensible and productive activities.⁴⁷ This perspective was in keeping with other French travelers’ views of the United States as a nation dedicated to enterprise, innovation, and modern economic development.⁴⁸ Saint-Amant saw cultural differences among Americans, French Canadians, and Natives, but he did not see the interconnections between their economies. Kalapuyans of the Willamette Valley, for example, had used fires, set at different intervals through the year, for large-scale landscape and wildlife management.⁴⁹ Those practices created the oak-savannah woodlands complex that first attracted French Canadians and their families during the 1820s and 1830s and the Americans who began arriving *en masse* during the 1840s. Additionally,

French-Indian families set up the first husbandry and farming operations in the valley, initiating long-term ecological change in the region that also attracted Anglo-American newcomers.⁵⁰

Saint-Amant did not limit his critique of French-Indian families to their farm management. The Frenchman saw the French Canadians as generous but weak in character and too indulgent with their children.

*The children have the disadvantage of favoring their mother's side rather than that of their father, and even among the first families, I heard the sad admission about their children, that of the ones who attended European schools, all the cities of [the] world did not equal their forests, their wild places. We shall not have long to wait for the disappearance of this settlement following the loss of the heads of the founding families. The Anglo-Saxon race has the sense of these aptitudes; they buy all of the farms that are for sale and circle from all angles the shares of the old Canadians, who [are] always fearful and often seduced by several thousand dollars in cash, a sum superior to any they have ever had in hand.*⁵¹

Saint-Amant criticized the French Canadian fathers for their lackadaisical attitude toward instructing their children to speak proper French and for permitting them to speak “Indian gibberish” (presumably Chinook Jargon). This was in keeping with the Frenchman’s disparaging description of Native women in French Prairie as unsophisticated drudges who were far from “claiming their own liberation as women” — a contrast with how French travelers tended to portray Anglo-American women in the United States as more independent than French women.⁵²

Saint-Amant did not see the vital roles Native women played in the Pacific Northwest during the 1800s. French Prairie was a matrilineal community in which French Canadian men established long-term partnerships with Indian women beginning in the early 1800s. Later in the 1840s, French Canadian voyageurs who retired from the fur trade and settled in French Prairie tended to marry the métis daughters of their elder compatriots. These marriage alliances allowed the men to gain access to important social and economic resources, including family ties, land, and communal labor assistance. Indigenous women also provided crucial domestic, productive, and reproductive labor. French Canadian men and their sons farmed and hunted while their wives and children farmed and gathered local plants.⁵³

On one level, Saint-Amant presents several salient observations about the French Canadians in French Prairie. Other contemporary sources confirm that their illiteracy and indebtedness created problems for the community during the 1840s and 1850s as more and more American overlanders arrived

THIS MAPS DEPICTS the territories of the Indigenous groups of the lower and central Willamette Valley along with the settler geographies of the 1850s.

by way of the Oregon Trail. Saint-Amant confirmed, however, that a significant number of community members decided to become American citizens to protect their real property and be eligible for land grants under the DLCA. They also demonstrated a strong commitment to their families and to the Catholic Church. Despite their illiteracy, French-Indian families used the court system to protect their assets by seeking assistance from literate French-speaking settlers and French Canadian clergy to file the necessary paperwork with the provisional and territorial governments.⁵⁴ Although there were successful farmers and several literate businessmen in French Prairie, Saint-Amant chose to conclude his description of the French-Indian community with the portrait of an outlier, a French Canadian named Antoine Masta.⁵⁵

A native of Lower Canada, Masta was a generous host who invited Saint-Amant to stay in his rustic cabin. He had taken a claim in the valley and married a young Native woman, Sophie Chinook, some ten years earlier, but he sold the land when his wife left him and returned to her people. To Saint-Amant, Masta was a man unbalanced by alcoholism and the woes that had befallen him. The French traveler noted Masta's great capacity for hard work, his hospitality and generosity, and his commitment to Catholicism, but also saw him as an unsophisticated peasant at a disadvantage to the incoming American settlers.⁵⁶ Saint-Amant's observations reveal his personal and cultural biases and sidestep the grueling conditions endured by French Canadian, Native, and métis laborers who manned canoe brigades and fur-trapping expeditions during the rise of the North American fur trade. By omitting the French Canadians' long-term contributions to this continental fur trade, Saint-Amant echoed bourgeois notions about the failings of the laboring classes rather than analyze the inequalities in a socio-economic system that had not offered Masta the same opportunities as Saint-Amant himself.⁵⁷

After departing the Willamette Valley, Saint-Amant returned to Fort Vancouver with two hired Indian guides from the Clowewalla Chinookan village at Willamette Falls. He noted they were sons of a local headman named Slacum.⁵⁸ Saint-Amant's reliance on local guides for his eastward travels to the Columbia Plateau reflects the long history of Native peoples' adaptation to economic changes in the Pacific Northwest. Their interaction also reminds us of the connections that the Chinookan peoples of the Columbia River and the Lower Willamette River formed — through trade and exchange, kinship, culture, and geographic knowledge — to areas farther afield, including the Pacific Coast and the Columbia Plateau.⁵⁹ Although Saint-Amant saw himself as an erudite European traveler, he was heavily dependent on the two Chinookan guides. Eliding their labor, knowledge, and skills — as he did in *Voyages en Californie et dans l'Orégon* — was

a hallmark of European travel literature. As Mary Louise Pratt has noted, by keeping the focus of the action on themselves, Westerner travel writers obscured the structures of European colonialism and diminished the agency of those subject to colonization.⁶⁰ And yet, Indigenous actors are there in Saint-Amant's narrative — active, adaptable, and mobile in their homelands as they confront the forces of American imperialism.⁶¹

At Fort Vancouver, Saint-Amant hired a boat with a few Americans to travel up the Columbia River. They had the Chinookan guides (and perhaps hired local Cascades Natives) bring the boat up Cascades Rapids on the southern bank, now located under Bonneville Reservoir behind Bonneville Dam, while Saint-Amant and the Americans used a double pulley system installed along the river to portage their baggage. The group hiked up above the rapids, where they met the guides with the boat. The sight of the Columbia River at the Cascades quite moved Saint-Amant, and he explained that this was the only important break in the long mountain range encompassing the Cascade Mountains and the Sierra Nevada. He noted that in the two days it took his party to travel up the rapids, they navigated “in view of [mountain] peaks covered in an eternal snow,” including Mount Hood, Mount Rainer, and Mount St. Helens.⁶²

In describing his arrival in the arid region of central Oregon (then termed Middle Oregon), Saint-Amant briefly discussed the history of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, the Whitman Incident of 1847, and the Cayuse War (1848–1850). In contrast to Protestant settler and missionary accounts, which accused French Canadian settlers and Roman Catholic missionaries of plotting with the Cayuse to attack the Presbyterian mission, Saint-Amant included the perspectives of those Cayuse who held Marcus Whitman responsible for the deaths of their people in the measles epidemic of 1847.⁶³ In Saint-Amant's assessment of intercultural relations on the Plateau, he saw that Catholic missionaries had much more successful relationships with the Tribes than did Protestant missionaries. He especially lauded the work of the Jesuits and the Oblates and complimented their level of education, dedication to studying and documenting Native languages, and saintly perseverance despite their geographic isolation and the difficult living conditions.⁶⁴ Saint-Amant even went so far as to suggest that the U.S. government should actively recruit Catholic missionaries to work among the western Indians. He was especially keen to highlight the fact that the Jesuit and Oblate missionaries were Europeans trained in the best missionary traditions that Europe had to offer. As such, he expressed unreserved support for the religious dimensions of European imperialism and a resurgent French Catholicism in pursuing an international evangelical mission.⁶⁵

THIS LITHOGRAPH from Pierre-Jean De Smet's *Oregon Missions and Travels over the Rocky Mountains* in 1845–1846 (1847) depicts the Roman Catholic mission at St. Paul in the French Prairie area of the Willamette Valley.

Saint-Amant continued traveling along the Columbia from the Cascades to The Dalles, and from there he journeyed on horseback to Fort Nez Percés, located at the confluence of the Columbia and Walla Walla rivers. As he proceeded farther east into the Columbia Plateau, the Frenchman made a series of observations about the region. Perhaps most notable was the immense size of the landforms, including the Columbia River and the great basalt rocks at The Dalles. He noted fertile valleys within the semiarid landscape (such as Grande Ronde Valley), the stream of Oregon Trail emigrants, and the small populations of Euro-Americans between Fort Vancouver and Fort Nez Percés, most of whom were attached to the HBC, the Catholic missions, or the U.S. Army.⁶⁶

Saint-Amant next launched into a rather extraordinary portrait of the Plateau peoples, which was at times insightful and at other times contradictory. He estimated there were about sixty thousand Indigenous people

in the region and identified the Cayuse, Shoshone, Nez Perces (Nimiipuu), Blackfeet, and Crows as the principal Tribes, due to their size and independent streak. He named the Spokane, Yakama, Palouse, Deschutes, Wasco, Pend'Oreilles, Coeur d'Alene, and Flathead (Interior Salish) as groups that had had more sustained contacts with Christian missionaries. Although Saint-Amant argued that the Tribes were progressively disappearing east of the Cascade Mountains as a result of intertribal warfare, attacks on Euro-American property, and a non-progressive society and culture, the Frenchman's subsequent description of the Natives' activities belies such an argument.⁶⁷ His use of the Vanishing Indian trope is reminiscent of the landscapes described by nineteenth-century European travel writers that featured the ruins of ancient civilizations, fading pre-modern peasant cultures, and so-called primitive civilizations facing various forms of colonization by European imperial powers. For Romantic novelists and travel writers, the Vanishing Indian was particularly poignant because it also evoked a loss of individual freedom and liberty, especially that of the elites and aristocrats, which seemed to characterize modern, industrializing societies.⁶⁸

In interacting with Indians on the Plateau and along the Oregon Trail, Saint-Amant was struck by the great cultural and ethnic diversity he witnessed, writing that among the Indigenous societies there was as "much variety as among the diverse European nations."⁶⁹ Saint-Amant nevertheless made several sweeping generalizations about Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest.

The advantage remains with the savages of pure blood, those who have mostly lived free of all interaction with the whites. This confession, devoid of all artifice, is not flattering to us, but it is better than that. It is true. While these ones succeed each other generation after generation with their vices and their traditional virtues, the others, weakened and degenerated, have lost their natural instinct . . . without having tasted the bright side of civilization . . . This moral mixture is fatal to them, and under the weight of an imperfect civilization, the tribes will dissolve, scatter, languish, and fade away.⁷⁰

Saint-Amant recognized the complexity of Indigenous economies and subsistence rounds on the Plateau, noting the gendered division of labor in which men hunted and women gathered roots and berries. Tribes living along the Columbia River and its tributaries then moved to the rivers to exploit the spring salmon runs. Saint-Amant emphasized that they undertook salmon fishing on the rivers in the Pacific Northwest in a very organized manner, noting that each Tribe possessed use rights on particular stretches of the rivers, that these rights were "established and recognized from time immemorial," and that "each family of the tribe possessed a subdivision," a place clearly demarcated.⁷¹ While the men fished, the women and children cut,

processed, and dried the catch. This system was well understood as “salmon is the principal, indispensable foodstuff, as the buffalo is for other tribes.”⁷²

As Saint-Amant traveled along the Columbia River in the fall of 1851, he had occasion to fish for fall salmon with a group of Deschutes Natives above The Dalles, possibly at Celilo Falls. Perched on an enormous basalt rock, he used a long fishing pole with a dip net for about twenty minutes. Although completely exhausted, he eventually captured a salmon weighing some four to five kilos (nine to eleven pounds), which allowed him to enjoy a sumptuous dinner that night. Saint-Amant also noted the Indians’ brisk salmon sales to travelers and residents along the Columbia River. While Indigenous people preferred to air dry salmon for their own consumption, they would salt and prepare it for sale to non-Indians who provided them with the necessary salt.⁷³

Saint-Amant also observed women and children traveling to the foothills of the local mountain ranges in September and October to gather berries and other plants that had ripened over the summer and early fall. He described the “little fruits, red and blue, large like red currants, that grow on shrubs and which are extremely sweet” (likely huckleberries) and noted that fruits such as strawberries and raspberries were especially abundant in certain areas of the region.⁷⁴ Saint-Amant wrote that although the Plateau peoples did not cultivate agriculture per se, they were well equipped to gather the bountiful harvests available in the region. Impressed by their hunting and gathering and their subsistence rounds, he wondered if their prudent economic activities in such a prodigious environment were not more advantageous than the Europeans’ focus on seasonal agriculture and hard labor in the fields.⁷⁵

Although Saint-Amant saw the interlocking features of the Indigenous subsistence rounds on the Plateau, he only dimly understood their regional landscape management practices of setting fire to upland prairies and woodland areas. Fire in the forestlands cleared underbrush and helped with hunting wild game, while prairie fires aided the renewal of “new grasses that were green and savourous.”⁷⁶ Despite this observation of renewal, Saint-Amant derided in his writings the sad, denuded landscapes in the Plateau that resulted from these intentional fires. William Robbins’s review of traveler and settler accounts of the Plateau during this period confirms Saint-Amant’s observations about the Natives’ use of fire to manage the ecosystem. Robbins also found that these accounts “strongly suggest that the introduction of horses, especially as the herds assumed sizable proportions, considerably intensified Indian burning practices.”⁷⁷ Commercial horse trade on the Plateau had increased measurably since the overland fur-trade expansion in the early 1800s. In fact, Saint-Amant encountered a landscape altered by mercantile and settler economies relying on a much more intensive and sustained system of exploitation.⁷⁸

As the Frenchman made his way to Fort Boise and contemplated traveling farther along the Oregon Trail, he wrote a series of final observations and reflections about the trail and the Columbia Plateau. Seeing the trail in the fall of 1851, he remarked how it was battered and worn by years of usage by overland emigrants. Saint-Amant described his travel along the route as a once-in-a-lifetime experience that engendered awe and wonder, and he contemplated seeing and experiencing a vast landscape seemingly untouched by “civilization.” Indeed, once he returned to an ordered and regimented life after traveling the Pacific Slope, he contemplated the advantages of a nomadic existence over the mundane routines of modern life.⁷⁹ Later reflecting on his brief escape from an industrializing nation beset by political, economic, and social turmoil, Saint-Amant offered a modest questioning of the Enlightenment’s notions of progress.

Saint-Amant traveled a short distance past Fort Boise, but he ultimately decided that it was too late in the season to try to reach Fort Hall and the Rocky Mountains. As a result, the Frenchman and his guides retraced their steps to the Columbia River. Throughout his travels, Saint-Amant endured a variety of humorous, sometimes precarious adventures, which included encountering wild animals, wandering lost while attempting to hunt alone near the Malheur River, surviving a massive thunder storm, and near mishaps fording rivers along the Oregon Trail. At times he worried that his Chinookan companions would abandon him, but they proved dependable, always patiently waiting for him when he returned to camp.

Once returned to Fort Nez Percés, Saint-Amant gave the two Chinookan guides a well-earned respite and hired two Yakama guides to take him to a cave in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. He then traveled with his guides north up the Columbia River to Moses Coulee, an ancient riverbed northeast of present-day Wenatchee (Saint-Amant misidentified it as the Grand Coulee, which is farther north and east). When later describing this foray, the Frenchman wrote of two significant reflections that came to him during the trip. First was his strong conviction that in the coming years, Euro-Americans would exploit all the vast natural resources of the Pacific Northwest. He imagined that fifty years hence, the landscape would be almost unrecognizable to migrants of the 1850s, to the point that unclaimed land and unharvested stands of trees would be an unusual sight.⁸⁰

The second reflection was Saint-Amant’s belief that he was seeing and experiencing a great virgin land untouched by the hammer and the sickle of the civilized world. This view necessarily erased the large-scale landscape management and resource use activities of the Indians, which he had previously noted in his writings. The characterization of the Pacific

IN 1850, Milwaukie entrepreneur Lot Whitcomb built and launched the *Lot Whitcomb* with his partners Joseph Kellog and William Torrance to meet shipping needs along the lower Willamette River. Whitcomb eventually sold his shipping business to Jacob Kamm and John C. Ainsworth, who later founded the well-known Oregon Steamship Navigation Company in 1859. Saint-Amant used a steamship such as this one on his trip to the Willamette Valley.

Northwest as “virgin land” also absolved the incoming Anglo-American settlers of seizing and dispossessing territories and resources from Indigenous populations. Saint-Amant’s words are a type of “anti-conquest,” or as Pratt suggests, “strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment that they assert European hegemony.”⁸¹ And yet, Saint-Amant’s reflections on his travels led him to question his role in the Revolution of 1848. He contemplated the political crises that had plagued France and concluded that he felt much more moved by his travels in the Oregon Territory than by serving in the revolution to uphold public order and contribute to planting “trees of liberty that had so few days to grow in a tainted soil.”⁸² Although Saint-Amant supported both the Pacific Northwest’s American settler regime and France’s development as a modern imperial nation, he expressed doubts about both projects.

From Moses Coulee, Saint-Amant decided to return expeditiously to the Willamette Valley for a second visit. He released his Native guides from their contracts and joined a group of French Canadians making their way by canoe down the Columbia River. He left the canoe party at The Dalles, where he recuperated at a Catholic mission run by two priests, French Canadian Louis-Pierre Godefroi Rousseau and Frenchman Toussaint Mespl. ⁸³ Saint-Amant then boarded a small steamship to the Cascades and from there took a small boat to Fort Vancouver. ⁸⁴ On his way to the Willamette Valley, Saint-Amant stopped in Portland to meet Travillot, who had earlier offered to accompany him on a tour of the Tualatin Plains, the original territory of the Tualatin Kalapuyans. In his tour of Washington County, Saint-Amant noted that the area was fertile, well-watered, and interspersed with forestlands. American, Irish, and Scottish settlers had established modest farms that appeared well-maintained. Overlooking the presence of the Tualatin Kalapuyans who lived in the Willamette Valley in the early 1850s, Saint-Amant predicted that a new influx of hardworking settlers would in time lead to a greater exploitation of the region's natural resources and that it would eventually become a major area of population growth and economic development. ⁸⁵

Saint-Amant next departed for the final leg of his travels in the Oregon Territory, setting out for the mouth of the Columbia River. In his description of the Clatsop Plains in and around Astoria, he portrayed the local Indigenous people, the Clatsop, as socially and economically non-progressive. An alternative reading of his observations, however, offers a different perspective. He noted that the community was then struggling, that the population was significantly decreased, and that the people had lost a significant portion of their territory and resources due to land cessions in the treaty process. These factors directly contributed to the Clatsops' economic marginalization in the 1850s, but Saint-Amant also documented their determination to stay in the Clatsop Plains. ⁸⁶ The Tansey Point treaties encompassing the Lower Columbia River peoples, including the Clatsop, were negotiated in August 1851. The U.S. Senate, however, did not ratify the agreements owing to pressure from Joseph Lane, the Oregon territorial delegate in Congress, and the American settlers who were dissatisfied that the Natives had insisted on retaining reserved lands in their aboriginal territories rather than be forced to resettle east of the Cascade Mountains. ⁸⁷

Saint-Amant then traveled to the Chinook village at Chinook Point, Washington (present-day Fort Columbia State Park), and stayed with Father Louis Joseph Lionnet, a French diocesan priest who headed the small Stella Maris ("Star of the Sea") mission there from 1848 to 1853. ⁸⁸ His description of the Chinook in 1851 attests to Native peoples' determination to pursue their tra-

THIS LITHOGRAPH PRINT of Oregon City, titled “American Village,” is based on a watercolor and pencil sketch by Lt. Henry J. Warre. It was one of several prints in Warre’s *Sketches in North America and the Oregon Country* (1848). Warre and Lt. Merwin Vavasour, officers in the British army, traveled as civilians to the Oregon Country in 1845 to make a covert survey of the region for the British government.

ditional economic and cultural activities while also taking advantage of new opportunities. Chinook activities, according to Saint-Amant, included salmon fishing at the mouth of the river and sturgeon fishing and oyster gathering in small canoes all along the coast for both domestic consumption and commercial trade and sale. He noted that the Chinook had begun to supply oysters for the San Francisco market, much like harvesters in the well-known fishing port of Cancale, the great oyster capital of Brittany, supplied oysters to urban centers in France.⁸⁹

For Saint-Amant, his stay with Lionnet was poignant because the French priest was a native of Castelmoron in southwestern France, “three leagues from Monflanquin,” where Saint-Amant had been born in 1800. He described Lionnet as a saintly missionary laboring tirelessly among the Chinook with only the help of two young métis orphan brothers from the French-Indian settlement in French Prairie. Saint-Amant was struck by the charitable work

of the “poor missionary” in the midst of the Chinook village, which was set in a bountiful natural environment. He doubted that Lionnet would be successful in his efforts to convert the Chinook to Roman Catholicism, but the missionary persisted in his efforts. Saint-Amant departed from the village with Lionnet’s blessing and set out by canoe with a group of Chinook for the large steamship anchored near the southern bank of the Columbia River estuary. Boarding the steamer for his return trip to California, Saint-Amant was stunned by the immense size of the vessel as compared to the small canoe used by the Chinook to ferry their passenger across the mouth of the river.⁹⁰

Describing his departure from Oregon, in late fall of 1851, Saint-Amant relayed the impact his travels in the Pacific Northwest had had on him: “It was not without emotion that I said ‘adieu’ . . . to the largest river on which I had traveled since my departure from the mouth of the Amazon in 1820.”⁹¹ He also noted the presence of prospectors in southern Oregon who were creating a mining zone stretching from northern California, which was a source of conflict with Native peoples in the region.⁹² Indeed, from 1849 through the mid 1850s, vigilantes, militias, miners, and regular army detachments in southern Oregon caused escalating violence against Indians seeking to defend themselves against Euro-Americans’ land seizure and destruction of local ecosystems.⁹³ In a reference to the genocidal Rogue River Wars of the 1850s, Saint-Amant warned that there would be worse to come for the “unconquered tribes” who would bear the brunt of the push to exploit southern Oregon’s so-called virgin land. Following this warning, the Frenchman concluded his chapters on Oregon with some advice for his readers. In his view, rather than race after a quick fortune sown from all manner of perils, it is much wiser to follow the example of those whose ambition it is to seek an honest living from a generous soil in the company of their family.⁹⁴

IN VOYAGE EN CALIFORNIE ET DANS L’ORÉGON readers encounter a travel writer who was inquisitive, opinionated, and genuinely interested in the people he met and places he encountered in the Pacific Northwest. Saint-Amant’s ambivalent tone and multi-layered descriptions also point to an alternative storyline in Pacific Northwest history — ultimately a portrait of a somewhat unsteady settler colonial regime during the territorial period.⁹⁵ In a first reading of *Voyage en Californie et dans l’Orégon*, Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest appear as secondary, premodern characters who represent an earlier stage of human civilization — that of the hunter-gatherers fated to slowly decline and disappear in the face of the steadily advancing Western civilization. Additional readings, however, suggest a different reality on the ground. While it is clear that the Native people confronted an influx of tens of thousands of Euro-American migrants along with shifting American

capital and technology during the 1840s and 1850s, they also demonstrated resilience and adaptability within these circumstances.⁹⁶ The Indians of the Willamette Valley, the Columbia River Valley, and the Plateau regularly interacted and traded with settlers and engaged in contract labor, including in the transportation and freighting sectors, as they had since the start of the overland fur trade era in the early 1800s. These activities demonstrated continuity with earlier patterns of exchange, intermarriage, communication, and travel in the region prior to Euro-American colonization.

The Native peoples were mobile, moving throughout the region during a time when the Euro-American settlers sought to curtail and circumscribe their movement with the intent of permanently remaking Indigenous space into settler space.⁹⁷ Saint-Amant's constant refrain that the Native Tribes were fast disappearing rings false. It evokes the imperialist nostalgia of many Western writers — those who wistfully recounted the apparent decline of the Indigenous societies devastated by the violence of Western imperialism — which the authors veritably supported but for which they rejected responsibility.⁹⁸ By contrast, American settlers appeared bent on creating and sustaining a modern capitalist economy and civilizing and exploiting an untouched wilderness. To Saint-Amant, they also appeared too obsessed with money and economic competition, being less refined and cultured than the French, whose society was still anchored by hierarchies of birth, class, and education. Saint-Amant echoed the sentiments of other nineteenth-century French travelers to the United States, who were troubled by the egalitarian impulses in the American society and by the Americans' apparent indifference to rank.⁹⁹

When Saint-Amant looked at the French-Indian families of French Prairie in the Willamette Valley, he saw the sad remnants of a lost French empire in North America. Here Saint-Amant overlooked the larger, continental story of the French Canadians' decades of labor in British, Canadian, and American fur trade enterprises, which laid the foundations for British and American territorial expansion across the continent. Instead Saint-Amant chose to emphasize that it was the Anglo-American settlers who were on the move geographically, economically, and technologically. In this respect, Saint-Amant documented the ways Americans laid the ground for a much more solid settler state on the Pacific Slope. During the early 1850s they were in the process of installing key structural elements in a modern capitalist economy: transportation and communication systems (a postal system, a national customs service, and steamship lines); a land survey system and grid pattern; freehold tenure; expanding agricultural, forestry, and mining sectors; and modern cities linked by clipper ships and steamships to metropolitan centers such as San Francisco.¹⁰⁰

Although Saint-Amant generally praised the emerging changes in the Pacific Northwest, he remarked on several occasions about instabilities in the

THE CASCADES RAPIDS along the Columbia River were a major obstacle to river navigation throughout the nineteenth century, including during Saint-Amant's travels. Until the construction of the Cascade Locks and Canal in 1896, travelers had to portage or pull their craft and cargo using ropes. The construction of Bonneville Dam in the 1930s submerged the Cascades Rapids. This image taken by Carleton Watkins depicts the upper Cascades Rapids in 1883.

region, including tensions between settlers and the Native people. Americans during the nineteenth century described this tension as the “Indian problem” or Indians’ determination to remain in their lands and retain some control of their resources while American settlers sought to occupy these same spaces.¹⁰¹ Armed conflicts during the 1850s accelerated treaty processes to extinguish Indian titles and create the Indian reservation system that resulted in the forced removals of many Indigenous groups in the Pacific Northwest prior to the Civil War.¹⁰²

Saint-Amant made a point of visiting French-speaking Catholic missionaries who were laboring in the Oregon Territory. His travel narrative leaves readers with the impression that the French Canadian, French, and Belgian priests, brothers, and nuns constituted a major presence in the region. There is truth to such conclusions in the sense that the number of Catholic missionaries had grown steadily since Blanchet and his colleague Modeste Demers arrived from Canada to the Oregon Country in 1838. Since then the Vatican had erected an archiepiscopal at Oregon City and a diocese at Walla Walla (later renamed and moved to Nesqually), and had approved missionary projects of the Jesuits, the

Oblates, and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.¹⁰³ The Catholic missionaries whom Saint-Amant encountered in his travels were often marginalized and even vilified in Protestant settlers' documentation during this period, and the virulent anti-Catholic bigotry present in the Pacific Northwest came to the fore in the aftermath of the Whitman Incident.¹⁰⁴ Saint-Amant missed these serious tensions in the region, however, including the Catholic religious experience and their role in the Plateau region during the Cayuse War.¹⁰⁵ Either he did not comprehend the situation or chose not to report on it, and instead put a positive spin on the activities and efforts of the Catholic missionaries.

Focusing primarily on male missionaries' work, he touted their saintly efforts and championed the international evangelical mission of French Catholicism for French readers. In his effort to describe the Catholics' missionary work, however, he noted an ambivalence on the part of the Indigenous people. They appeared generally friendly to the missionaries but not convinced of the need for a wholesale change in their religious beliefs and practices. This point illustrates the Natives' agency and perspectives, and their own transcultural impact on the Frenchman's narrative. Although Saint-Amant did not understand their stance regarding Francophone missionaries, their attitudes and actions had an impact and broke through his own cultural blinders.

Saint-Amant's narrative also alludes to instabilities, tensions, and uneasiness among both the Indigenous groups and the settlers, each camp viewing the other with wariness but also engaged in interactions for labor, trade, negotiation, and religious services. Saint-Amant's narrative presents the imperialist vision of many European and American travel writers, a vision that elided the structures and violence of imperialism, while referencing untidy aspects of settler colonialism in the Pacific Northwest that were not as triumphant as the writers (and settlers) might otherwise believe. This ambivalence hints at the "historical distortion and denial" that structure settler colonialism and settler narratives, and which "[displace] the indigenous past."¹⁰⁶

Could it be that the social, economic, and political problems plaguing France during the 1800s had the Frenchman looking for social order, economic growth, and stability within a context of modern republicanism? Saint-Amant may have looked favorably on the Anglo settlers and merchants because their society and culture appeared more progressive and more stable in his eyes. As the citizen of a European nation also seeking an imperialist mission, perhaps British imperialism and its younger cousin, American imperialism, offered models better suited to a modern, industrializing world than the legacies of the French Revolution and its aftermath, which had resulted in decades of social upheaval and economic instability. (and whose impacts would still be felt decades later in the Second Republic and the Second Empire). Saint-Amant's reflections about his travels in Oregon

THIS DRAWING by Joseph Drayton depicts Chief Trader Archibald McKinley trading with Native women at the Hudson's Bay Company Fort Nez Percés in 1841. Drayton sketched the scene as a member of the Wilkes Expedition party that visited the Columbia Plateau in 1841. Saint-Amant traveled to Fort Nez Percés during his travels in Oregon and mentioned it in his writings.

ultimately raise questions about the steadiness of settler colonialism in the nineteenth century and the ways in which Anglo-American interpretations have long shaped Pacific Northwest historiography.

NOTES

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anonymous peer reviewers for their insightful and constructive comments.

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4. Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing*, The New Critical Idiom series, series editor John Drakakis (New York: Routledge, 2011), 44–53; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008); Harry Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World: Europe to the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).
5. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 3–11; Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World*, 7–13, 50–57; Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 44–53; C.W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writing: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8–12, 75–89.
6. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 3–11; Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World*, 7–13, 50–57; Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 44–53.
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8. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*; Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (December 2006): 387–409. For the seminal work on early American imperialism in the Pacific Northwest, see Gray H. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee: U.S. Empire and the Transformation of an Indigenous World, 1792–1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
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10. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.
11. Ibid., 7–8. For examples of recent studies on Native agency and adaptations in the face of American imperialism and settler colonialism, see Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*; Robert T. Boyd, Kenneth M. Ames, and Tony A. Johnson, eds., *Chinookan Peoples of the Lower Columbia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013); Andrew H. Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010); and Charles Wilkinson, *The People are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).
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14. Magraw, *France 1815–1914*, 55–62, 91–110; Harsin, *Barricades*, 6–13.
15. Abraham P. Nasatir, "Introductory Sketch," *French Activities in California: An Archival Calendar-Guide* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1945), 1–37; Annick Fouquier, "The French Presence in the Pacific Oregon and California, 1700–1850," in *Studies in the Economic History of the Pacific Rim*, ed. Sally M. Miller, A.J.H. Latham, and Dennis O. Flynn (New York: Routledge, 1998), 107–118.
16. P. Ch. de Saint-Amant, *Des Colonies; particulièrement de la Guyane française, en 1821* (Paris: Barrois & Delaunay, 1822).
17. The reconstituted vital statistic of Paris before 1859 (the original records were destroyed in the fires of The Commune of May 1871) document the marriage between Saint-Amant and Thérèse Rose Cheron on October 22, 1827. See L'État civil parisien, Archives de Paris, France. The reconstituted acte de mariage lists Saint-Amant as a wholesale wine merchant ("necogiciant"). Saint-Amant is listed as a wholesale wine merchant (vins en gros) in the *Annuaire générale du commerce, de l'industrie et de la magistrature de l'administration* (Paris: Chez

Firmin Diderot Frères, 1839–1850). A digitized, searchable version of this publication is accessible on Gallica, an online resource of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. See <https://gallica.bnf.fr> (accessed May 15, 2020).

18. Harry Golombek, *Golubeck's Encyclopedia of Chess* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1977), 283–84; David Hooper and Kenneth Whyld, *The Oxford Companion to Chess* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 350–51; Nicolas Giffard, *La fabuleuse histoire des Champions d'échecs* (Paris: Édition O.D.I.L., 1978), 66–68.

19. As described by William E. Duvall, Bonapartism was “a species of political theory and practice best understood in the context of the divisions and conflicts of post-Revolutionary France. Above all Bonapartism espoused an authoritarian democracy to bridge the gap between the tradition of absolutist monarchy and the democratic tradition of the Revolution . . . Bonapartism recognized the democratic right of the people to determine the form of their government (a right denied by the monarchist) and favored the retention of power in a hereditary dynasty as a guarantor of stability (an idea that the republican rejected).” Duvall, “Bonapartism,” in *Historical Dictionary of the French Second Empire, 1852–1870*, ed. William E. Echard (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 60.

20. See Mme de Saint-Amant, *Voyage en Californie en 1850 and 1851* (Paris: Garnier, 1851).

21. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 74–107.

22. Mme de Saint-Amant, *Voyage en Californie en 1850 and 1851*. For the ways foreign travel allowed elite French travelers to assert and advance their social status, see Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters*, 64–65.

23. For an overview of the French in the California Gold Rush, see Malcom J. Rohrbough, *Rush to Gold: France, the French, and the California Gold Rush, 1848–1854* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

24. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, xlii–xlv. In 1962, René Rémond interpreted Saint-Amant's actions and exploits as that of

a political opportunist. Rémond doubted that Saint-Amant had received a written commission for a post in California, but rather acted on some “vague declarations.” Saint-Amant complained about the attitude of officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeking to rid themselves of a troublesome outsider. This insular attitude on the part of the diplomatic corps is plausible given Saint-Amant's eclectic professional career and his lack of formal training and experience in the ministry. See René Rémond, *Les États-Unis devant l'opinion française, 1815–1852*, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1962), 108. The six reports Saint-Amant wrote to Consul Dillon are housed in Le Centre des Archives diplomatiques, La Courneuve, a suburb of Paris. See Correspondence consulaire et commerciale, San Francisco, volume 1, 1848–1851 2888CCC/1 (microfilm P/11688). The dates of Saint-Amant's six reports are: August 14, 1851; August 31, 1851; September 20, 1851; October 14, 1851; October 20, 1851; and November 12, 1851. Only those documents sent directly from the San Francisco Consulate to the Foreign Ministry in Paris survive because all materials dated prior to 1906 were destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906.

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26. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 146–47.

27. William G. Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 91–92; Charles H. Carey, *General History of Oregon* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1971), 478–81.

28. For the political battles in Oregon during the 1850s, see Barbara S. Mahoney,

The Salem Clique: Oregon's Founding Brothers (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017).

29. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 153.

30. Ibid., 154–55; Carl Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries: The Place and the People* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 19–33; E. Kimbark MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power: The Portland Establishment* (The Georgian Press, 1988), 1–41.

31. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 158.

32. See for example, Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries*; Jewel Lansing, *Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851–2001* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2003); Malcolm Clark, Jr., *Eden Seekers: The Settlement of Oregon, 1818–1862* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981); MacColl, *Merchants, Money, and Power*; Robbins, *Landscapes of Promise*.

33. Recent studies on French missionary projects, transnational Catholicism, and French imperialism in the nineteenth century include Sarah Curtis, *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of French Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Timothy Foran, *Defining Métis: Catholics Missionaries and the Idea of Civilization in Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1997); and Michael Pasquier, *Fathers on the Frontier: French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789–1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

34. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 157–58. In the 1850s the original Société de l'Océanie was reorganized under the name la Compagnie d'Union maritime. Saint-Amant identified Ménès as the Oregon representative for this company. In an 1851 advertisement in the *Oregon Statesman*, however, Ménès used the name "Oceanic Society." See "French Oregon Flour," *Oregon Statesman*, June 13, 1851, advertisements, column 2. For a brief biography of Francis Ménès, see Harriet Duncan Munnick, *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: St. Paul, Oregon 1839–1898* (Portland: Bindford & Mort, 1979), A-67. See also Schoenberg, *A History of the*

Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest, 99; Stringham Brown, *Selected Letters of A.M.A. Blanchet*, 67; August Marceau, *Les Missions catholiques dans l'Océanie: Mémoire de M. Marceau* (Paris: Plons Frères, 1846); and *L'Arche d'alliance: Bulletin de la Société de l'Océanie*. No.'s 13–15, 1849–1851 (Paris: La Société de l'Océanie, 1850).

35. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 166–68.

36. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*, 183.

37. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 169.

38. Ibid., 215–16.

39. Ibid., 216.

40. Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Disease and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774–1874* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 84–153.

41. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*, 13–15, 19–70; Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793–1843* (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 1997), 299–89, 292–308.

42. C.F. Coan, "The First Stage of the Federal Indian Policy in the Pacific Northwest, 1849–1852," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 22:1 (March 1921): 53–65; Stephen Dow Beckham, "History of Western Oregon Since 1846," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 180–85.

43. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 169.

44. Ibid., 169.

45. Melinda Marie Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015), 112–122, 149–67. For the term "religious colonialism," see Nancy Shoemaker, "A Typology of Colonialism," in *Perspective on History*, 53:7 (October 2015): 30.

46. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 174.

47. Ibid., 174.

48. Jeremy Jennings, "French Vision of

America: From Tocqueville to the Civil War," in *America Through European Eyes: British and French Reflections on the New World from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Aurelian Craiutu and Jeffery C. Isaac (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2009), 164–68.

49. Robert Boyd, "Strategies of Indian Burning in the Willamette Valley," in *Indians, Fire, and the Land in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Robert Boyd (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999), 94–138.

50. Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 57–61.

51. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 176.

52. Ibid., 176; Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters*, 68–69.

53. For an overview of Native women's roles in the Pacific Northwest, see Susan Armitage, *Shaping the Public Good: Women Making History in the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015), 19–55. For Native and métis women in French Prairie, see Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 42–61, 113–116, 145–48.

54. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 211; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 103–213.

55. For a brief biographical sketch of Antoine Masta, see Munnick, *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: St. Paul, Oregon, 1839–1898*, A-66.

56. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 207–209.

57. Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793–1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); James R. Gibson, *The Lifeline of the Oregon Country: The Fraser-Columbia Brigade System, 1811–47* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); Lloyd Keith and John C. Jackson, *The Fur Trade Gamble: North West Company on the Pacific Slope, 1800–1820* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2016); John Philip Reid, *Forging a Fur Trade Empire: Expeditions on the Snake River Country* (Norman: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2011); Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World:*

Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006);

58. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 222–24, 327. Saint-Amant states that the Native guides were from Oregon City. The Frenchmen did use the correct term Chinookan term *Taié*, chief (*chef* in French) to refer to the guides' father Slacum (the current spelling is *tayi*). Michael Silverstein, "Chinookans of the Lower Columbia," in *Handbook of North American*, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast*, volume ed. Wayne Suttles, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 533–35; Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, *Chinuk Wawa, kakwa nsayka ulman-tilixam laska munk-kemteks nsayka, As our elders teach us to speak: The Chinuk Wawa Dictionary Project* (Grand Ronde, Ore.: Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, 2012), 314. I would like to thank David Lewis for his assistance identifying the guides as Clowewalla Chinookans. See David Lewis, "Lt. William A. Slacum, United States Spy in the Oregon Territory & Chief Slacum of the Clowewalla," NDN History Research, <https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/2018/06/19/lt-william-a-slacum-united-states-spy-in-the-oregon-territory-chief-slacum-of-the-clowewalla> (accessed May 15, 2020).

59. Yvonne Hajda and Elizabeth A. Sobel, "Lower Columbia Trade and Exchange Systems," in *Chinookan Peoples of the Lower Columbia*, 106–124; Yvonne Hajda, "Social and Political Organization," in *Chinookan Peoples of the Lower Columbia*, 146–162; Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*, 3–11, 19–25.

60. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4–9.

61. William L. Lang, "The Chinookan Encounter with Euro-Americans in the Lower Columbia River Valley," in *Chinookan Peoples of the Lower Columbia*, 250–72.

62. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 225.

63. Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit Pestilence*, 145–60; Clark, "The Bigot Disclosed," 114–119; Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races*, 181–82. For Cayuse perspectives on the measles epidemic and the Whitman Mission Incident, see Anthone Minthorn, "Wars,

Treaties, and the Beginnings of Reservation Life, in *wuyáxayxt wiyáakaa?awn: As Days Go By: Our History, Our Land, and Our People, the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla*, ed. Jennifer Karson (Pendleton and Portland: Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute and Oregon Historical Society Press, 2006), 61–65.

64. John J. Killoren, S.J., *“Come Black Robe: De Smet and the Indian Tragedy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); George M. Waggett, *The Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the Pacific Northwest, 1847–1878* (Philadelphia: The Walther Printing House, 1954). For Native-missionary relations, see Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700–1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); Chad S. Hamill, *Songs of Power and Prayer in the Columbia Plateau: The Jesuit, the Medicine Man, and the Indian Hymn Singer* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012); and Christopher L. Miller, *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

65. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 228–30.

66. *Ibid.*, 235–41.

67. *Ibid.*, 241–42;

68. C.W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writing*, 26–27; Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters*, 39–59; Elizabeth A. Bohls, “Picturesque Travel: The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape, in *The Routledge Guide to Travel Writing*, 246–56. See also Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing Indian: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1982).

69. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 244.

70. *Ibid.*, 246.

71. *Ibid.*, 260.

72. *Ibid.*, 260.

73. *Ibid.*, 263.

74. *Ibid.*, 264.

75. *Ibid.*, 264.

76. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 264. For detailed studies of Indigenous burning techniques and resources management, see

Robert Boyd, *Indian Fire and the Land in the Pacific Northwest*, which includes the short talk given by David French in 1957, entitled “Aboriginal Control of Huckleberry Yield in the Northwest,” 31–35; and William G. Robbins, “Landscape and Environment: Ecological Change in the Intermontane Northwest,” 219–37.

77. Robbins, “Landscape and Environment,” 226.

78. *Ibid.*, 232–33.

79. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 293.

80. *Ibid.*, 365.

81. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8–9.

82. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 366–67.

83. Louis-Pierre Godefroi Rousseau was a native of St.-Henri-de-Lauzon, Lower Canada. He came to the Pacific Northwest in 1847 with A.M.A. Blanchet via the Oregon Trail in the fall of 1847. He had studied at the Seminary of Montreal and was an ordained deacon prior to his departure. He was ordained a priest in 1848 at the Jesuit Seminary in St. Paul and later established the Roman Catholic mission at The Dalles in 1848. He remained at the Wasco mission for three years and departed for Quebec soon after Saint-Amant due to years of ill health. He died of cholera before his steamship reached New York City in the summer of 1852 and was buried at sea. Roberta Stingham Brown and Patricia O’Connell Killen, *Selected Letters of A.M.A. Blanchet, Bishop of Walla Walla & Nesqually, 1846–1879*, trans. Roberta Stingham Brown (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 57 n12 and 59 n23. Toussaint Mesplé arrived in Oregon in February 1847 with F.N. Blanchet, who was then returning to Oregon with a group of European Catholic missionaries. Mesplé was ordained a secular priest in 1850 and F.N. Blanchet assigned him to join Rousseau at the Catholic Mission at The Dalles. He remained there for several years and was then reassigned to Oregon City. He later served in southern Idaho and then as the inaugural Regular Army Chaplain in the Pacific Northwest. In 1895 he passed away in California. Schoenberg, *A History of*

- the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest*, 99, 119, 143–44, 149; Harriet D. Munnick and Adrian R. Munnick, eds., *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: Missions of St. Ann and St. Rose of the Cayuse, 1847–1888, Walla Walla and Frenchtown, 1859–1872, Frenchtown 1872–1888* (Portland, Ore.: Binford & Mort, 1989), Annotations, 1.
84. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 367–68.
 85. *Ibid.*, 368–72.
 86. *Ibid.*, 380.
 87. C.F. Coan, “The First Stage of the Federal Indian Policy in the Pacific Northwest,” 53–65. Stephen Dow Beckham, “History of Western Oregon Since 1846,” 180–85.
 88. Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest*, 123; Harriet Duncan Munnick, ed., *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest: Vancouver Volumes I and II an Stella Maris Mission*, trans. Mikell De Lores Wormell Warner (St. Paul, Ore.: French Prairie Press, 1972), A-49.
 89. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 382–83.
 90. Saint-Amant noted that Lionnet later drowned as a result of a high tide. (Harriet Munnick cited 1853 as the year of Lionnet’s death); Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 386–88.
 91. *Ibid.*, 390.
 92. *Ibid.*, 390–91.
 93. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*, 193–205. See also Wilkinson, *The Peoples are Dancing Again*; E.A. Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850–1980* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).
 94. Saint-Amant, *Voyages en Californie*, 391.
 95. For the concept of an unsteady settler colonialism during the territorial period in U.S. history, see Bethel Saler, *The Settlers’ Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in the Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).
 96. John Unruh estimated that 53,062 emigrants made the trek to Oregon on the Oregon Trail between 1840 and 1860. See John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 119–120.
 97. Paige Raibmon, “Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession,” in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 56–87; Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographic Change* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
 98. Renato Rosalzo, “Imperialist Nostalgia,” *Representations* 26 Special Issue: Memory and Country-Memory (Spring 1989): 107–122. See also, Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, 11–13; and Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8–9.
 99. Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters*, 69–72.
 100. Kenneth Owens, eds., *Riches for All: The California Gold Rush and the World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Ben Wilson, *Heyday: The 1850s and the Dawn of the Global Age* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).
 101. Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 387–409.
 102. See for example, Schwartz, *The Rogue River Indian War and Its Aftermath, 1850–1980*.
 103. See Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest*, chapters 1–6; and Brown and Killen, eds., *Selected Letters of A.M.A. Blanchet*, 16–60.
 104. Malcolm Clark, “The Bigot Disclosed: 90 Years of Nativism,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 75:2 (June 1974): 109–121; Katie Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America: Religious Conflict in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
 105. Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest*, 104–129.
 106. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism*, 11.