

Abstract

The territorial expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century caused major political, social and cultural changes within the American nation. In 1893, American historian Frederick Jackson Turner put forward the idea that the American frontier gave rise to the establishment of the most salient features of American national identity — individualism, exceptionalism, self-reliance, and the emergence of American democratic order. But despite its enormous impact on the following generations of historians, Turner's thesis overlooked a number of historical facts and impacts of the Frontier that could potentially undermine his statement, namely the indigenous genocide and devastation of the natural environment. His essay thus formulated the myth of the West, as it largely represented the American's imagination of the frontier and its experiences.

This thesis examines the relation between the history of the United States' territorial expansion and its mythologic representation, focusing on the political and cultural dynamics of the nineteenth-century America. It presents a close analysis of the frontier mythology and the Manifest Destiny ideology, and their impact on the formation of American national identity.

The thesis is divided into three chapters composed of further subchapters. The first chapter examines Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, focusing on its connection to the myth of the West. It presents an account of the tragic influences of the frontier on Native Americans — a topic largely neglected by Turner in "The Significance of the Frontier in American History".

The second part of the thesis analyses origins and influences of the Manifest Destiny — the idea that Americans and their government were destined to establish political control over much of North America. The impact of this doctrine on the formation of American cultural heritage will be demonstrated on the works of art by Emanuel Leutze, John Gast, Asher Brown Durand and George Caleb Bingham.

The final chapter focuses on the Frontier literature and its place within the American literary history. It presents a close analysis of Mark Twain's travelogue *Roughing It* as an example of the

Frontier literature. Twain's travelogue is used to demonstrate the disentanglement of the myth of the West and the objectives promoted by the Manifest Destiny, namely civilisation and progress.

The main goal of this paper is to reveal the difference between the historical and mythological impacts of the Frontier on the formation of American nation. By contrasting the historical accounts with the artistic and literary representations, this paper demonstrates the coexistence of two Wests in the nineteenth-century: historic and mythic.