

1. Introduction

Although *Adventures in the Wilderness; or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks* (1869) by William Henry Harrison Murray (1840-1904) is seldom approached by literary scholars today, its influence on American thought and leisure at the time of its publication raises a myriad of issues that reach beyond environmental considerations. *Adventures* was the first of its kind in that it broke with the romanticist wilderness aesthetic and presented the northern New York country as a product for consumerism. The object of this article is to deconstruct the type of discourse applied by Murray and its relation to marketing strategies in order to decipher the connections between textual claims and the social upheaval detonated by the book. Although critics have often focused on the impact the book had on the press and on the Adirondack landscape, the present article attempts to start off from an in-depth depiction of the text itself, so as to comprehend why the book created such a breach not only in the literary tradition, but in American culture as well. Exposing Murray's discourse of consumerist strategies will enable readers of *Adventures* to better comprehend why the impact it had on the public was not an unexpected phenomenon, but a natural reaction to the text.

1.1. Adirondack literature before 1869

Regional writers and historians have termed the epoch prior to the publication of *Adventures* as 'the golden years' of the Adirondacks. Considering the overwhelming amount of literature about the North Country, it is fair to say that it is through romanticist writing that the region gains its traditional aesthetic identity, even before its official delimitations as a State Park and Forest Preserve.¹ Widespread preoccupation for the proclamation of nationalistic features in the American territory was responsible for the quest for identity at a time when deism and transcendentalist creeds embraced proximity to God through the study and exaltation of his most visible work: nature. The initial scepticism and hostility with which artists had looked upon the American vastness eventually transformed into acts of eulogy through the mediums of literature and landscape painting. Indeed, America lacked European artistry, history and refinement; but instead the country accounted for one unique feature which could not be found in the old continent. In Nash's words, "in the early nineteenth century American nationalists began to understand that it was in the *wildness* of their nature that their country was unmatched" (2001: 69). Through an exhaustive use of Burke's categories of the sublime and the beautiful,² writers ventured into wilderness areas and delivered texts celebrating America's landscape grandeur.

¹ Located in upstate New York, the Adirondack Park is comprised of almost six million acres of private and public lands. In 1894, New Yorkers voted to approve the State Constitution, where Article VII, Section 7 (today Article XIV, Section 1) declared that "the lands of the State, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands".

² Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) was acclaimed by romanticists as the 'guidebook' for the classification of natural features.

The Adirondacks were certainly not an exception. Between 1836 and 1840, the geologist Ebenezer Emmons wrote detailed accounts of the Adirondack mountains and forests at the service of the Natural History Survey. Emmons's task finally placed the Adirondacks on the map, which, surprisingly enough, still retained its frontier character at a time when the rest of the northeast of the United States was already considerably populated. Emmons just as much placed the Adirondacks inside the ideals of industry and progress, searching for promising soils for farming and prospective mining. As he recorded the sceneries before him, the aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful germinated within his discourse. Describing the Adirondack Pass, for example, he applies the by then standard technique of comparisons with other regions to exalt the landscape beheld: "We look upon the falls of Niagara with awe, and a feeling of our insignificance; but much more are we impressed with the great and the sublime, in the view of the simple naked rock of the Adirondack Pass" (1842: 218). In terms of travel narratives, Charles Fenno Hoffman and Joel T. Headley continued to exploit the conventions of the sublime and the beautiful in their respective works, *Wild Scenes in the Forest and the Prairie* (1839) and *The Adirondack; or, Life in the Woods* (1849). In terms of popular fiction, Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), set in the Lake George region, launched Natty Bumppo as the heroic archetype of the Adirondack woodsman; a model that was to be sought by the growing number of sportsmen visiting the North Country during the 1840s and 1850s.

Most notably it is Hoffman's and Headley's works which stand as the most representative texts of romanticist appreciations of the Adirondacks. Aside from their flaunting of picturesque sceneries, they are credited for the first portrayals of Adirondack guides as morally immaculate men leading primitive lives. Their innocence, their skills in woodsmanship and expertise in hunting and fishing reminded the writers of Cooper's Leatherstocking, that mesmerizing character that had captivated their spirit of adventure during their youth. In a memorable passage, Hoffman casts out his imagination when describing the legendary guide John Cheney: "I could swear that Cooper took the character of Natty Bumppo, from my mountaineer friend, John Cheney. . . . The same shrewdness as a woodman, and gamesomeness of spirit as a hunter, are common to both" (2007: 35-36). On a similar note, Headley refers to him as "the mighty hunter, Cheney" (2006: 51), and alludes to the simplicity with which the guide turned to life in the woods as a young man, "became enamored of the forest life" and "with his rifle on his shoulder, plunged into this then unknown, untrodden wilderness" (2006: 75).

The intertwining between nationalistic endeavor, the cult of the sublime and the beautiful, and the mystifying pretences of popular fiction imploded into a conventional form of literature that presented the wilderness experience, on the one hand, as a highly

While the beholding of beauty aroused in the human mind a sense of tranquillity and harmony, and provided a continuation of traditional taste, the sublime seemed to awaken irrational passions in an instant. As Phillips summarizes, the sublime was "a way of thinking about excess as the key to a new kind of subjectivity" while beauty "was something more reassuringly tempered" (1990: ix).

spiritual journey where transcendence through nature was achievable, and on the other, as the ideal space where true American Adams who tested their self-reliance could be encountered. The result was the 'golden years' of Adirondack writing, a body of literature that includes authors such as Samuel H. Hammond, Charles Lanman, William Redfield, Farrand Benedict, and even Emerson, who wrote a poem to commemorate his 1858 excursion to Follensby Pond in the company of other notable figures, such as the painter William James Stillman and the scientist Louis Agassiz. Indeed, it was the more privileged societal and intellectual groups who launched the Adirondacks as a vacation spot. In the company of his trusty guide, the upper-class sportsman delighted in the masculine tasks of hunting and fishing while nourishing his artistic sensibility. All in all, the Adirondacks were slowly developing as an attractive resort and camping-ground where New Yorkers with generous incomes could dedicate some time to leisure. This is not to say that middle-class people did not visit the region, for scattered working-class groups or individuals went to the mountains to practice sportsmanship or to seek their luck in farming, mining or local-town businesses. But the concept of vacation was bred in the upper classes, which began to organize themselves in small private clubs of elitist membership. On August 9, 1864, the *New York Times* editorial called the Adirondacks the "Central Park for the world" where "the jaded merchant or financier or litterateur or politician" could cater for "the old passion for nature" (1864: 72). With the publication of *Adventures*, the Adirondacks were finally conceived as a vacation destination that need not be confined to the custody of the wealthy, and the New York and New England middle class massively surged north into the wilderness, shattering the romanticist world that the Adirondacks had previously represented and offering the cult of consumerism as the titanic new method to experience nature.

2. Marketing the Adirondacks: Textual novelties in *Adventures*

Considering the literary fashions described above and the type of visitors such writing brought into the Adirondacks, the impact caused by *Adventures* appears all the more extraordinary. The book was arranged as an organic system where every element constituting the wilderness (and the entirety of the wilderness itself) was displayed so as to offer the reader, who played the potential visitor, a perfected product. It is important to emphasize that consumerist terminology is, of course, absent from the text (the term 'consumerism' only emerged as late as the 1950s); nonetheless, there is a strategic intent on the part of the author that prophesizes marketing discourse. Murray's piece marked the end of the 'golden years' of the Adirondacks, and reflected the national craze for the wilderness that developed as a reaction to urban landscapes and industrialism. In Bronski's words, the book was responsible for the "tourists that flocked en masse to the Adirondacks, spurring the development of stagecoach lines and hotels throughout the region" (2008: 26).

Murray had first started publishing short anecdotes of his experiences in the Adirondacks in 1867 in local newspapers. Two years later, the complete book, *Adventures in the Wilderness; or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks* was published, and Murray attained national fame. The controversy surrounding *Adventures* has been given

ample attention by local writers. William Chapman White (1954) and Paul Schneider (1997) described the reaction of the masses once they realized they had been deceived, and renowned historian Philip Terrie (1985, 2008) has analyzed the environmental impact of ‘Murray’s Rush’. Such historical records are crucial, and this article aims to contribute to the study of this chapter in American history through the deconstruction of the primary source, the text, so as to expose the dynamics between discourse, the ideology at the time of the book’s publication, and the consequences the text had over this ideology.

2.1. Finding a target audience

A native of Connecticut and a Yale graduate, Murray was a minister of the Park Street Congregational Church of Boston. His dissident behavior and methods, especially during the years following the publication of *Adventures*, led him to abandon his calling, towards which he appeared to have never manifested absolute commitment. Strauss (1987) establishes the term *muscular Christianity* to describe the kind of pragmatist creed initiated in the 1850s by Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Edward Everett Hale; a creed which Murray elaborated on in his writing. Muscular Christianity was based on the notion that the body, which houses the soul, is to be kept as healthy and strong as possible. This belief responded to the growing industrialism and urban atmosphere in which the middle class was developing, and which not only caused stress and nervous breakdowns, but more importantly, was turning the city into a nucleus of epidemics and slums. Strauss concludes that it is within this context where Murray’s advocacy of wilderness was innovative: “His predecessors had already proposed city parks, vacations and gymnastics as healthy alternatives to existing amusements. To this list, Murray would add the wilderness vacation, a complex fusion of several current practices” (1987: 272).³

Romanticism and Transcendentalism had shifted the importance of the material world, which included nature and the body, to a more notable sphere than the one it had been confined to through strict biblical exegesis where the salvation of the soul held the prevalent position. For Hoffman and Headley, exercise of the body had been of chief importance as well (in fact, Headley’s first trip to the Adirondacks was on account of his doctor’s orders). So what was it exactly that made Murray’s book so different from *Wild Scenes* or *The Adirondac*? Undoubtedly Hoffman and Headley had disseminated the topography and the peoples of the northern wilderness to a great extent, and made it *known* that such a region existed.⁴ But in the post Civil War era,

³ Although Murray was a pioneer in promoting the wilderness for the middle class, early stages of consumerism had already presented themselves in the United States in the 1850s. By the 1870s, multiple advertising agencies were promoting their products with eye-catching techniques through the use of “colorful posters” and “alluring fashion poses” (Stearns 2001: 46); in other words, “the idea of consumption passed from the realm of political economy into popular culture” (Klinge 2003:96).

⁴ Some scholars have argued that the American romanticists of nationalist sentiments exercised a form of wilderness consumerism as well. Morton, for example, states that “to be a

what Murray's book provided was a mode of publicizing that was intended to open up the Adirondacks for the public *to visit*. According to Kotler *et al.* (2008: 701) there are six buyer-readiness-stages: awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase. If we are to interpret this evolution at a trans-epochal level, one could conclude that Hoffman and Headley were successful in bringing potential consumers through the first three stages. Murray finished the task by explaining why the consumption of the product (the wilderness) was preferential (health restoration), and by convincingly ensuring comfort and illusion, leading consumers to the final stage of purchase. Instead of ambitious, repetitive accounts on the sublime and the beautiful, Murray opted for a clear, direct discourse. People were asked to take action, to follow the writer's instructions and actually live the experience. In spite of the occasional allusion to picturesque scenery, the content of *Adventures* revolved around the theme of mental and physical restoration, not aesthetics or nationalist endeavors. Thus, while Hoffman and Headley appealed to a more refined group of readers, Murray's target audience were the middle-class groups who suffered the hazards of industrialism. It was the beginning of a significant transformation in the understanding of what nature was good *for*. Until the late 1800s, nature had mostly been a space for the harvesting of goods, but the germination of consumerism within popular culture marked a shift from one form of utilitarianism to another, for now "one went to the wilderness not as a producer but as a consumer" (Cronon 1996: 78).

Before the publication of *Adventures*, the sportsmen who visited the region were for the most part acknowledged members of society. In 1857, for example, the recreational club Brown's Tract Association was founded with the purpose of organizing yearly camping trips for male-bonding activities. The club also established the contemplation of beautiful landscapes as one of its purposes, emphasizing the importance of beholding God's natural creations. Clearly, it was publicized under the same terms that transcendentalists and nationalist romanticists had applied to depict the Adirondacks. Moreover, the club captivated people from the same upper class to which the members belonged to. In Grady's words, "it attracted immediate attention among men who were then identified with important political, business, and professional affairs in and out of the state. . . . During the club's sojourns in the woods, practically all the state's important business, legislative excepted, could have been transacted on the shores of the Fulton Chain" (2002: 127). The target audience which Murray addressed was quite different from this description, and although, just like the objectives of the Association, recreation and rest were part of his proposal as well, religious relevance was based on muscular Christianity, not on focusing on the work of God. With this prime objective

consumerist, you don't have to consume anything, just contemplate the *idea* of consuming. Consumerism raised to the highest power is free-floating identity, or identity-in process. This is a specifically *Romantic consumerism*" (2007: 111; emphasis in original). Undoubtedly, aesthetic exploitation of the wilderness involves a form of consumerism; but for the sake of simplification the present article applies the notion of consumerism as a collective activity aiming for the production of material benefits in exchange for commodiousness and pleasure.

in mind, the wilderness is marketed in accordance with both the target audience and the assimilation of physicality in Christian doctrines.

2.2. Textual analysis

Each of the chapters in *Adventures* consists of a series of recommendations regarding a specific topic about vacationing in the Adirondacks. These suggestions provide, on the one hand, an image of the Adirondacks where even the frailest of individuals can relax and enjoy a pleasurable journey, and on the other, a series of do-it-yourself steps to become a fit and adequate sportsman. These instructions induced the reader to believe that, because the wilderness was not as hostile nor camping as strenuous as they had thought, and because successful hunting and fishing seemed to mainly depend on using the best and the right kind of equipment, the visitor could passively enjoy his or her vacation.

'Why I go to the Wilderness' marks the tone of muscular Christianity most vividly. Murray presents wilderness as a healer and as a space that city men and women ought to visit temporarily and consistently. It is not a permanent space in which to settle, but a transitional sanatorium guaranteeing absolute improvements which will maintain the individual strong and healthy once he returns to urban life. It was Murray's assertion that in the Adirondacks patients and victims of illnesses that were spreading in the cities could recuperate: "To such as are afflicted with that dire parent of ills, dyspepsia, or have lurking in their system consumptive tendencies, I most earnestly recommend a month's experience among the pines" (2009a: 11). Murray added that he had actually witnessed a young man whose doctors had given him only a short time to live improve "with wonderful rapidity" (2009a: 13). According to the writer, "the wilderness received him almost a corpse", but returned him to the city a "happy and healthy" (2009a: 14) man. It is important to notice that Murray often times stresses his position as an eye-witness so as to communicate to his readers that he is a reliable source.

Muscular Christianity requires that the space offered be represented as one diametrically opposed to the hectic, corrupting and contaminated city. Murray contends that the forests make up a pristine wilderness where "no axe has sounded", hence providing the perfect environment "away from all the businesses and cares of civilized life" (2009a: 17). He continues through inductive pretenses by claiming that the trip does not have to be strenuous if one does not desire it to be. In his case, he confesses to having "no special love for labor" and to abhor "tramping" (2009a: 18). But of course this does not cause him any troubles because no actual physical exercise is required if it is against the sportsman's desires: "If you wish to go one or ten miles for a fish, your guide paddles you to the spot, and serves you while you handle the rod. This takes from recreation every trace of toil. You have all the excitement of sporting, without any attending physical weariness" (2009a: 18). First of all, the idea of commodiousness is used to tempt a potential consumer. The guide 'serves' the client so as to avoid any situation or activity that is either strenuous or boring. Secondly, Murray touches upon one of the most powerful baiting techniques for consumerism: the illusion of an experience becomes better than the actual version of it. Sporting is stripped from the more tiring, boring nuisances but retains all the excitement because it

is molded so as to satisfy the client, who enjoys it just as much (or even more) than performing all the activities that such a sport entails. This symbiotic relationship between comfort and illusion sets the precedent to today's general preference for the impression of nature rather than actually experiencing, or even contacting it (McKibben 1993).

Another case argument used by Murray is the conception of the guide as a servant, that is, as a chief figure in ensuring comfort and complacency for the client. If Hoffman and Headley had attended to the mythical qualities of the Adirondack guide through Cheney, now Murray characterizes them not just as the safeguards for the client's leisure but as an actual product in themselves. Murray enumerates the types of guides the consumer is likely to encounter: the 'witty guide', the 'talkative guide', or the 'lazy guide', depending on their personality traits, or the 'independent guide' and the 'hotel guide' depending on whether they work for themselves or for a business. As if exhibiting branded products, Murray concludes that the first three types are all faulty and are "hindrances to a party's happiness" (2009a: 35). The witty guide is "forever talking" and "thrusting himself impertinently forward", and therefore the client should "avoid him as [he] would the plague" (2009a: 33). The client should as well "beware" of the talkative guide because of his vice for "bragging" (2009a: 34). And finally, the lazy guide is "the most vexatious creature" because he is a malfunctioning product in the sense that he does not live up to the expectancies of the client, who bargained for a "quick, inventive, and energetic" (2009a: 34) man, just as Natty Bumppo was.

Murray opts for the independent guides, who will remain true to what the client expects, for they are "models of skill, energy, and faithfulness" (2009a: 35). The Leatherstocking represented the mythical paradigm, the fixed image of national identity that remained a referent of conduct for Murray just as much as it had for Hoffman and Headley. The moral immaculateness of Cooper's character was central to Murray's muscular Christianity: there permeates an intrinsic belief that natural matter (the body) is ontologically bound to the spirit (the mind). A true primitive lifestyle, best exemplified by Natty Bumppo, guaranteed physical excellence and moral innocence. What is innovative about Murray's approach is that, contrary to Hoffman's and Headley's aesthetically-grounded depictions of Cheney, *Adventures* endorsed independent guides as assistants at the disposal of the paying customer. This understanding has profound implications on the mythical status of the frontiersman: through an analysis of the trial in which Natty Bumppo is judged for his refusal to comply to game laws in *The Pioneers*, Slotkin argues that the scene "demonstrates that the two worlds are irreconcilable" (2000: 491). By the 'two worlds' he refers to the Eurocentric, eastern formalisms and the western, frontiersman code. The former prioritizes the interests of the mass over that of the individual, while the latter defends the individual's needs. The trial ritually transforms itself into an act where Bumppo is "publicly humiliated for his pride in setting self above society" (Slotkin 2000: 491). This division evidences Murray's inherent paradox in his exaltation of independent guides: independent guides should authenticate the principles of the frontiersman while simultaneously submitting to the interests of the paying public. The monetary transaction in which the guide seals a form of conduct as the core of his services does not, in his view, violate the frontiersman ethic. As Murray polarizes the types of guides

through categories of behavior and the mediums of transaction, he suggests that not only does the relationship between customer and service reconcile those two worlds, but, moreover, it guarantees the satisfaction of the client. In the end, public interest prevails over the self without Murray perceiving any form of corruption in between.

For Murray, the possibility of moral corruption is not one stemming from the monetary transaction itself but from the medium through which such a transaction is carried out. Contrary to the independent guide, the hotel guide is bound to displease the client because of the very circumstances of his job: as an employee, he loses a great part of the responsibility to satisfy the customer because he knows that he is only part of the product, not the complete package.⁵ Murray implies that this agreement between a business and an employee results in a downfall of the guide's character: "The 'hotel guide' is often unemployed for weeks if the season is dull; and, hanging around a frontier hotel in daily proximity to the bar, is very liable to beget that greatest of all vices in a guide – *drunkenness*" (2009a: 36). Murray is sceptical of the corporative system; corrupted by interests and greed, the hotel broke the honest relationship between guide and sportsman. What is troubling for Murray is not exactly the downfall of the guide himself, but the fact that because of such vices, propounded by mediating hotel businesses, clients are irreparably deceived and miss their chance to hire and be assisted by an authentic backwoodsman. In this sense, Murray anticipated Service Marketing Theory, which assumes that "the outcome of the service, namely that the service delivers what is promised, is ultimately more important than the process" (Hart and Hogg 1998: 61). The independent guide is established as the preferential choice because, by the very nature of his character, he stays true to what is expected of him as a product.

To ensure that the interests of the middle-class public are protected, Murray furthermore stresses that the client should conceive himself as a small but significant part inside a wider body of consumerists. Under the characteristic reasoning of commercialism, he claims that a faulty product should be avoided. In regards to the irremediably witty, talkative and lazy guides, he had previously advised the reader to "post [the guide] *by name* on your way out, at every camp and hotel, as an imposition and a pest" (2009a: 35). This would "make an example of one or two, and the rest would take the hint", and would allow the client's conscience to "have peace" (2009a: 35). Such action attests to Murray's belief that a consumer has rights, and that these rights are measured by moral parameters. Consumers, as a homogeneous group, have the common objective and moral responsibility of improving a product, so that the next consumer in line will benefit from a better version of it. In this sense, Murray's stance was somewhat inclined towards Relationship Marketing Theory, where "the process of managing the relationship [between business and client] is as important, or indeed more important, than the outcome" (Hart and Hogg 1998: 61).

⁵ As current histories show, Murray was not wrong in his distinction between independent and hotel guides in terms of their expertise and dedication to the party. In his history of Adirondack guides, Brumley states that hotel businesses often hired "young inexperienced guides" under the assumption that "a dissatisfied customer would be replaced the next day or week with a new unsuspecting one" (2004: 18).

Murray refused to limit the Adirondacks to the needs and desires of the rich and notable figures of society. The nature of his target audience constituted in itself an advocacy for a more democratic appreciation of the wilderness. His adversity towards upper-class privileges is made clear in his allusions to the ethics of sportsmanship. Murray claims that a true sportsman's duty must answer to ethical judgment: no matter how much the sportsman may enjoy hunting or fishing, and no matter his socioeconomic background, he is "not to kill more than the camp can eat" (2009a: 20). However, he is of the opinion that the solution of game laws does not in any way benefit the middle class. Rather than a regulation favoring the upper class, he proposes fines that would be equally applied to all citizens: "I am not in favor of 'game laws', passed for the most part in the interest of the few and the rich, to the deprivation of the poor and the many, but I would that fine and imprisonment both might be the punishment of him who . . . directs a ball or hooks a fish when no necessity demands it" (2009a: 20-21).

Friction between social classes was increasingly becoming a problem towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the North Country, that 'Central Park for the world', was effectively reflecting the threat that the middle class represented for the upper castes. Murray managed to market the Adirondacks not only by guaranteeing comfort, but also by stating that the vacationer could spend very little money on the trip. For example, he recommends stores in New York City and in Boston where the customer may buy good-quality gear as cheaply as possible; he informs the reader of estimative, reasonable prices for each of the expenses; he lists the names of several trustworthy independent guides that will ensure that the client receives his money's worth; and he describes the advantages and disadvantages of certain routes. The following is an excerpt on a possible itinerary from the city to the Adirondacks by train and steamboat: "So perfect are the connections on this route, that, having engaged 'John' to meet me a year from a certain day, at 5 P.M., on the Lower Saranac, I have rolled up to 'Martin's' and jumped from the coach as the faithful fellow, equally 'on time', was in the act of pulling his narrow boat up the beach. It is not only easy and quick, but the cheapest route also" (2009a: 42-43). In other words, what the route supplies is the best quality for the lowest price. Part of the nature of marketing also includes making sure that the consumer feels that he has control over the product. If Murray cites several options regarding stores or routes it is not only to afford the consumer the most convenient possibilities for him, but to imply that he is to *choose* from these lists of possibilities and that therefore he has control, and hence power, over the product. It is significant that he writes '*John*' and '*Martin's*' between quotes. He is trying to give the impression that these names are actually blank spaces which the consumer has the right and the power to fill in. The idea of 'this could be you' is flexible to the extent that the consumer is the one who in the end determines the variables of the trip so that the vacation may be as fitting and as becoming to each separate individual. Thus, all suggestions and recommendations are based not only on 'how to' tips and instructions, but on 'do-it-yourself' guarantees as well.

Adventures also opened up to another social sector: middle-class women. Until the success of Murray's book, women for the most part did not benefit from wilderness excursions; much less from the activities of sportsmanship, deemed as masculine. No

women had been included in Emerson's and Stillman's Adirondack Club, nor in Brown's Tract Association. One of the members of the Northwoods Club, Alfred B. Street, stated in a celebrative note the following: "The Ladies: Barred out of the forest by vindictive crinoline. We miss their presence there, but we see their bright glances in the glowing sky of morning. We hear their voices in the music of the woodland bird, and inhale their sweet breath in the fragrant zephyrs of the silent woods" (Quoted in Grady 2002: 135). It is not surprising to find that in the age of Romanticism women were associated with the beautiful features of nature. As an aesthetic that aroused calmness, delicacy and harmony, beauty was deemed as effeminate as opposed to the powerful sense of astonishment and awe that the sublime entailed. Women, therefore, were barred out of sporting clubs which attended to the importance of male bonding, and the void of their absence was filled in by club members through the beauty of nature. Murray, however, proclaimed the Adirondacks as a vacation spot from which women had the right to benefit as well, and several references to the 'ladies' are meant to encourage them to participate. There is a limit to Murray's 'openness', however, and although muscular Christianity was also to be exercised by the weaker sex, this had to be done at a much more docile level. The image of women as frail, delicate objects unable to overcome the arduous and demanding work that camp life required is still very much present in *Adventures*. In spite of his incentive to bring ladies to the Adirondacks, Murray maintains the association between beauty and women intact on the basis of their common delicateness: "In beauty of scenery, in health-giving qualities, in the easy and romantic manner of its sporting, it is a paradise. . . . It is this peculiarity also which makes an excursion to this section so easy and delightful to ladies. There is nothing in the trip which the most delicate and fragile need fear" (2009a: 19).

3. 'Murray's Fools' and the quest for Americanness

Adventures became an instant bestseller in the spring of 1869; it was on the shelves of sport stores and station shops everywhere and was continually reprinted throughout subsequent months. In some places it was distributed as a pamphlet, offering "a free copy of the book with the purchase of a round-trip ticket" (Horrell 1999: 129). Hundreds of tourists swarmed to the northern woods, book in hand, equipped as Murray had instructed and ready to follow his advice religiously. The sociological phenomenon was to be known as 'Murray's Rush', and soon enough, when the gullible tourists found out that things were not as easy, nor as comfortable, nor as becoming as Murray had promised, journalists quickly dubbed them 'Murray's Fools'. The infamous writer was from then on to be known as 'Adirondack Murray', and the book backfired with tremendous hostility. Tuberculosis patients discovered that no miraculous recovery was to happen for them; black flies, which Murray had described as "the most harmless and the least vexatious of the insect family" (2009a: 56) were a continual pest; men looking for relaxation and minimum effort found themselves having to work harder and more strenuously than they had anticipated; the gear they had bought did not make them better sportsmen; and many were being cheated by some of the honest, independent guides that Murray had recommended. Needless to say, the paradisiacal sanatorium designed for the ladies generally did not please middle-class women. The

summer following the book's publication, Wachusett, a correspondent for the Boston *Daily Advertiser* wrote: "I think I have known ladies who would not enjoy, even in the same array, crossing a carry in a rain storm, face and hands dripping with tar and oil, mosquito bites smarting on wrists and temples, the boots soaked through and through, the reserve stockings in the carpet bag equally wet, guide and escort so loaded with boat and baggage as to be incapable of rendering assistance" (2009: 170).

Murray was not without a few defenders, however. The same summer in which Wachusett parodied the back-to-nature craze that *Adventures* had caused, journalist Kate Field published an article in the *Daily Tribune* in which she criticized the exaggerated and extremist reaction that seekers of health were having against the bestselling author: "If consumptives with both legs in the grave visit the Adirondacks, and after a few days or weeks leave the woods somewhat less alive than when they entered, surely their friends display the most extraordinary absence of reason in attributing their decease to Murray's book" (2009: 81).

In spite of the disappointment that the readers felt once they reached the northern wilderness, floods of tourists did not cease to arrive in the Adirondacks, fomenting the construction of multiple hotels and a railroad from Saratoga Springs to North Creek. Nor did Murray ever back down or express any regrets even at the height of his ill-reputation as a liar. In 1890, he recalled how "the great, ignorant, stay-at-home, egotistic world laughed and jeered and tried to roar the book down", and how these critics "called it a fraud and a hoax". But with prideful determination he credited his book for "[carrying] the fame of the [Adirondack] woods over the continent" (2009b: 118).

The author was also to be reprimanded for the democratic creed underlying Murray's *Rush*. Along with the lumbering industry, the overwhelming number of visitors became a serious threat to the wilderness which Murray had so ardently defended, and "within a few years, critics were complaining of the denuded forests and the decline of fish and wildlife" (Strauss 1987: 282). Indeed, conservationist apprehensions ignited very heated attacks on Murray, especially by Thomas Bangs Thorpe and Charles Dudley Warner. The latter wrote several pieces for *Harper's Weekly* and *Atlantic Monthly*, and was recurrently vocal about the hazards of Murray's *Fools* even a decade after the publication. Warner overtly revealed the elitism implicit in many of the experienced sportsmen's views:

The instinct of barbarism that leads people periodically to throw aside the habits of civilization, and seek the freedom and discomfort of the woods, is explicable enough; but it is not so easy to understand why this passion should be strongest in those who are most refined, and most trained in intellectual and social fastidiousness. Philistinism and shoddy do not like the woods, unless it becomes fashionable to do so; and then, as speedily as possible, they introduce their artificial luxuries, and reduce the life in the wilderness to the vulgarity of a well-fed picnic. (2008: 66-67)

Warner was nostalgically holding on to the romanticist convictions that had brought the most 'refined' and the most 'civilized' back to nature in the first place. Beneath polarizations of class taste lay a more unstoppable threat: Murray's *Fools* prophesized the new devouring rhythms and labor-saving possibilities of technology. Early nineteenth-century devotion to the machine for production now found a new form of

expression in the machine for recreation. Despite the fact that muscular Christianity offered the wilderness as a sanctuary from urban progress and alienation, vacationers were reluctant to leave behind their 'artificial luxuries' and became agents of the contagion of industry. The construction of multiple hotels and the railroad in the Adirondacks responded solely to tourists' demands, turning Warner's celebration of "the freedom and discomfort of the woods" to an adulation for abundance, minimum effort and immediacy. As Leo Marx argues, nineteenth-century middle-class infatuation with comfort bred a new ideological obsession, one that replaced the wilderness aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful with "a rhetoric of the technological sublime" (1967: 195). Needless to say, Warner's elitist proclamation in which the privileges of the few and the rich were being reinstated clashed deeply with Murray's unyielding, democratic stance. Where Warner was convinced that middle-class tourists were exploitatively using and destroying nature, Murray and his advocates believed such an attitude was an outrageous assault on the founding principles of the nation. In Terrie's words, "because of their patronizing tone, those horrified by Murray's Fools were seen to be espousing an essentially un-American position" (1985: 76).

However, the vehemence of Murray's critics may also be conceived as a campaign to nurture yet another nationalistic axiom. Romanticism had launched the notion of wilderness as the distinctive nationalistic feature through an exaltation of Burke's categories and the mystification of the frontiersman as America's fixed, androcentric referent. Developing as a social construct, wilderness had become the untouchable aesthetic essence of the United States. Vance claims that wilderness is "the part of our environment that is idealized as 'perfect nature', as, indeed, the highest or purest form of nature we have", and that "nature is at its best when utterly separated from the human world" (1997: 62). The novelty of Murray's approach was that it offered this romanticist image of the wilderness and its fundamental myths as a commodity, in the sense that wilderness went beyond being a mere ideological category and entered the capitalist market. Romantics had succeeded in making the wilderness a fetish with the inherent powers of sublimity, beauty and moral innocence. Muscular Christianity and mass vacationing now opened that fetish to commerce through hotel, transportation and sporting services. The wilderness became a commodity fetish in its full Marxist sense, where vacationers exchanged their money for the physical and mental invigoration promised by muscular Christianity. As Davidson argues, the commodity fetish appeals not so much to the "logical and the cognitive" as to the "emotional and affective" (1992: 169). Indeed, the alleged restorative powers of nature had more to do with romanticist mystification and Murray's subsequent marketing than with actual evidence. Viewed in this light, Field's defense of Murray can be interpreted as a recuperation of the logical and the cognitive to abate the hyperbolism to which fetishism leads.

While Murray may have believed that romanticist values could be sustained within what would evolve into consumer culture, Warner and upper-class New Yorkers deemed this co-existence impossible. In their fetishist adulation of the wilderness, romanticists marked a distance between man and nature that could only be mediated aesthetically. But by conceiving the wilderness as a matrix of commodities that could be modified and improved in accordance to the needs and expectancies of the consuming

public, connotative appreciations of nature being untouchable and untainted slowly faded. Klinge notes that “consumption is inherently spatial” and that “it shrinks the distance that separates us from nature and one another even as it effaces the same connections” (2003: 95). For many, the romanticist distance between the human and the wild, balanced aesthetically, was condemned to perish in the interest of the mainstream and technology. Hence, resistance to consumerism raised not merely the issue of which stance was more democratic, but also, which mode of action was essentially more American: was it to protect the integrity of the beauties, sublimities and myths that were the pillars of the nation’s identity; or was it to promote the interests of the middle class, the heart of democracy, even at the expense of damaging America’s pristine wilderness?

4. Conclusions

Adventures represents a turning point towards a more modern conception of the wilderness in American culture, one that involves the institutionalized practice of vacationing. It anticipated consumer culture in terms of style, structure and content just as much as it did in terms of how it was received and reviewed. Also, because of the crisis it represented, *Adventures* positions itself not only as a text creating new formulaic conventions that would become a reference for twentieth-century wilderness propaganda and ecotourism, but as one that exposed the friction between social strata and their understanding of their rights over nature.

The controversy surrounding the book is not without its ironies. First of all, the widespread hostility expressed by Murray’s *Fools* in the end did nothing to aggravate the image of the Adirondacks as the preferential vacationing spot for the northeastern middle class. Secondly, despite Murray’s proclamations of the wilderness as a space to exercise democratic rights, the period following the publication of the book would be known as the Gilded Age of the Adirondacks. By the end of the nineteenth century, cheap railroad fares and affordable hotels with a rustic appeal continued to attract the middle class, but these were very rudimentary and modest compared to what came to be known as the Adirondack great camps. Owned by plutocrats as a second or third home, these great camps were an exhibition of luxury, opulence and exquisite taste that promoted the wilderness experience that upper-class New Yorkers demanded. Only the most exclusive guests and their families were welcome – from Wall Street magnates to politicians, intellectuals and distinguished artists – while anti-Semitic and racist restrictions tainted the guest policies. The great camps were not the only way through which the more privileged of New York society could comfortably retreat to the wilderness. In the late 1800s, private clubs bought extensive tracts of lands for their members to exploit and manage collectively. Private land allowed members to maintain their social distance from the middle and working-class tourists seeking the Adirondacks as well.

Thus, the tensions that had finally erupted into the public sphere due to Murray’s *Rush* would be far from resolved. As much as Murray had envisioned the wilderness as a space to erode economic differences through a homogeneous form of vacationing, the emergence of great camps and private clubs evidenced the unwillingness of the upper

class to mingle with the middle class. The cycle would not long after repeat itself: during the first decades of the twentieth century the locals and the middle-class would clash with the game laws and stipulations maintained by private clubs. In only a few years and in a similar twist of irony, the automobile, which became the ultimate symbol of democracy, allowed the middle class to surge massively back to the Adirondacks, but in the process, destroyed and polluted the same wilderness which vacationers sought, thus desecrating the 'integrity' of nature that the conservationist movement, led by the more privileged groups, ardently fought to protect.

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Claudia Alonso Recarte is at the Faculty of Education of the University of Castilla-La Mancha. Her fields of research include ecocriticism and nature writing, and new jazz studies from the perspective of feminism and myth criticism.

Address: Departamento de Filología Moderna, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Facultad de Educación de Cuenca, Edificio Fray Luis de León, Avenida de los Alfares 42, 16071 Cuenca, Spain. Tel.: +34 96 9179100 // Extensión: 4700. Fax: +34 96 9179170.