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Indian-hating in American Literature, 1682-1857

Osborne, Stephen Douglas, Ph.D.

University of Washington, 1989

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INDIAN-HATING IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1682-1857

by

Stephen D. Osborne

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved by Mark R. Patten
(Chairperson of Supervisory Committee)

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Stephen D. Osborne

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University of Washington

Abstract

INDIAN-HATING IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1682-1857

by Stephen D. Osborne

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee: Mark R. Patterson
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The New England Puritans set out to "irradiate an Indian wilderness," but rightly feared they were being "Indianized" as well. Their Indian captivity narratives, ostensibly celebrations of passive submission to the will of God, in fact represent the violent incorporation of the "wilderness" and its human components into the female body as well as the typological model of history based on the cosmic drama of God's war with Satan. The Puritan mode of understanding "the Indian" and legitimizing his destruction was to persist tenaciously despite vast changes in social and political structures within both white and Native American cultures. By the nineteenth century, the theology of Indian-hating had given way to the metaphysics of Indian-hating, as History replaced Providence as the ruling force in human activity. In both cases, "history" was used ahistorically, as a means of demonstrating static racial "natures" rather than critically penetrating a process of intercultural conflict and mutual acculturation. During the years of Indian Removal in the 1830's, male literary nationalists turned to the history of white-Indian war in order to wrest "American" literature from Europeans and women. The Indian achieved his full ideological force within the intersecting hierarchies of race, class, and

gender, as the historical romancers portrayed a peculiar lower-class chivalry of Indian-hating. Thoreau, seeking an original presence in the American landscape, continually encounters the trace of Indianness, forcing him to read the "runes" of Nature through the mediation of a local history of cultural conflict. Melville uses conventional emplotments of white-Indian relations to parody romantic historiography and satirize Jacksonian market society. Cotton Mather had lamented, "O how our people do Indianize"; Melville shows that the treacherous Indian has become the devilish white confidence man. By reading *The Confidence-Man* in light of John Marshall's 1831 opinion in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, one can see how Indian "testimony" has been stricken from the proceedings of law as well as history. Modern commentary on the novel reveals a Cold War allegory suggesting that red-white conflict has become political as well as racial.

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INTRODUCTION: THE ESSENTIAL "INDIAN"

This is a study of the ideological uses of history in a variety of American literary works dealing with white-Indian contact. The term "literary" I have interpreted broadly to include such diverse cultural productions as sermons, autobiographical narratives, popular novels, works of "natural history," and Supreme Court opinions. What unites all of these works is not only that each is concerned with explaining, justifying, adjudicating, or criticizing the history of Indian-hating in America. They also share a similar structure, one combining theoretical exposition of the "nature" of "the Indian" (and, by contrast, the intrepid Euro-American immigrant) with factually-based narratives meant to illustrate those racial theories. Each author constructs a closed system of signification within which "the Indian" has meaning, and then reads and writes history so that it conforms to that system. Whether consumed by the Puritan theology of Cotton Mather or the nationalistic ideology of William Gilmore Simms, history is used ahistorically, as a means of meditating on static racial essences rather than illuminating an ongoing process of struggle, contradiction, and mutual acculturation.

The ahistorical, transtribal figure of "the Indian" was a fictional construct in many different ways. Most obviously, it was composed of many untruths--both sincere misunderstandings and willful, malicious lies. More central to this study, however, is the fictional structure mentioned above. The two parameters constructing the Indian correspond to the novelistic elements of character and plot. The

Indian's extinction--a fate assumed inevitable during the period in question--can be foreseen in his history--that is, the miserable trajectory of his fortunes since becoming entangled in the plotline of Euro-American history. This plot, in turn, can be explained by the Indian's inferior "nature." Even John Marshall's 1831 opinion establishing Indians as "wards" of the federal government supplements legal reasoning with "historical" narrative. He recounts the familiar tragic story of "a people once numerous, powerful, and truly independent...gradually sinking beneath our superior policy," and invites the Cherokee litigants to think back to 1789 when "their appeal was to the tomahawk" rather than to a legal document like the Constitution. This reasoning is typical of the ways in which history is used to deny history--that is, by fast-freezing the "savage" essence, the white narrator can deny not only the possibility that Indians can change and adapt to the republic in ingenious ways (as the Cherokees in fact did) but also his own complicity in forcing the Indians' savage appeal to the tomahawk. I try to historicize this type of rhetoric in two related senses: by inserting the history it so often denies or distorts, and by showing it to be part of larger cultural configurations with implications in many ideological spheres.

This work owes much to Roy Harvey Pearce's pioneering *Savagism and Civilization* as well as to more recent historical studies of "the Indian" by Robert Berkhofer and Wilcomb Washburn among others. These authors highlight consistent patterns of representation (or misrepresentation) that combine

to produce what Berkhofer calls "the white man's Indian" and the ideology Pearce calls "savagism." It is crucial to delineate this stereotyping and differentiate it from accurate description. Just as important for an understanding of racial typing in America, however, is to examine what "the Indian" allows his white authors to accomplish--that is, what specific norms, values, and goals he helps to endorse or challenge. The now-familiar distinction between savagery and civilization is much too broad and abstract to take us very far in this regard. Savagism always justifies the expropriation and destruction of the savage, but it also responds to a variety of other issues with highly specific local-historical contexts.

The "images" school of literary ethnology often assumes, for instance, that the historical context of the nineteenth century can be summarized in two words: Manifest Destiny. But a novel like Simms's *The Yemassee*, written in South Carolina in 1834-35, does more than provide a comforting portrait of the nation's inevitable progress. This historical romance of Indian warfare responds to Northern criticism of slavery as well as Indian Removal. It also attempts, in the wake of the nullification controversy of 1832, to reintegrate South Carolina into the union by asserting the continuity of its colonial past with the Revolution of 1776. Simms's Indian-fighting hero is one of the "mighty fathers," the proto-Revolutionists who liberated the colonial wilderness from an oppressive Indian stagnancy. Finally, the book is nationalistic in another sense, as it is meant to enact its

author's ideas of what a distinctively national (and masculine) literature should do and be. In order to fully understand the "savagism" of this highly popular work, it must be read as part of a complex configuration of political, social, and aesthetic goals.

This study, then, sacrifices the breadth of Pearce for a detailed literary and cultural analysis of two particularly critical periods in the history of white-Indian conflict. The first of these is New England during the years 1682-1697, a time of unremitting warfare on the frontiers and perceived spiritual crisis within the settlements which saw the birth of the theological-biographical genre of the "Indian captivity." Naturally these narratives tried to legitimate the expropriation and destruction of the heathenish (or worse, "popish") Indian, but they did much more. They were able to respond to third-generation Puritan crises as diverse as overexpansion on the frontier and declining piety "within the hedge" of the Puritan communities, curbing an emergent self-assertive pioneer ethos and cautioning fashion-conscious women temptresses. Indeed, the entire project of the New Zion could be conceived in terms of the opportunities and perils presented by the Indian, as Cotton Mather does in the first sentence to his *Magnalia Christi Americana*. While Mather writes of the successful "irradiation of an Indian wilderness" by the grace of God through the hands of His new chosen people, he also expresses grave anxieties that these people have been "irradiated" in turn by the wilderness and its human representatives. "O how much do our people Indianize," he had

lamented in 1690. The oft-noted Puritan repudiation of all things Indian derives less from Calvinist theology or the cynical "cant of conquest" than from a fierce resistance to the historical process of acculturation and a consequent sadomasochistic repression of "Indianness" in both races.

Early republican ideology promised a better fate for Indians, but this promise was broken as the prevailing political ideology shifted from Jeffersonian republicanism to a romantic nationalism based on "scientific" and "historical" conclusions about the "natural" hierarchy of races. While I examine the roots of this shift in Jefferson's own writings in Chapter Two, my focus is on two Southern "historical romances" of Indian warfare written during the period of Removal in the 1830's. Just as it is too simple to ascribe Puritan Indian-hating to a Manichean theological distinction between the saved and the damned, the progressivist ideology of Manifest Destiny does not explain the Indian-hating of the Jacksonian era. Instead, as I have suggested, it was the product of the Indian's place within a much more specific and localized ideological configuration of race, class, and gender which I call "the chivalry of Indian-hating." As in the case of *The Yemassee*, or Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* (1837), Indian-hating could be used to unite potentially antagonistic groups within white America. The Removal Act, I argue, represents the reassertion of a "manly" realism in Indian policy: America had awakened from the sentimental dream of peaceful assimilation, and the historical romance of Indian warfare was meant to initiate a national, and nationalistic,

literature distinct from the genteel domestic novels written by English and American women.

Thoreau's Massachusetts presents a different tableau from Cotton Mather's, or from the South of Simms: although some few traces of his history remain, the Indian himself has vanished. For the early Thoreau, as my third chapter argues, this absence inspires a nostalgic and fatalistic acceptance of white superiority, but also an attempt to recuperate "the Indian's" mode of communion with and communication of the secrets of nature. Though he covets an original, ahistorical presence in the American landscape, the trace of Indianness continually transports Thoreau back in time and forces the realization that the "runes" of Nature must be read through the mediation of a specific local history of cultural conflict. In his later trips to Maine, Thoreau encounters Native Americans who are neither whitewashed citizens of a homogeneous America nor the noble children of nature his earlier savagism had postulated. Thoreau's Indian guide Joe Polis provides a model of successful acculturation that forces Thoreau to rethink and rewrite his theories of history and language as well as race and expands his sense of human possibilities.

In the brief span of two chapters in his novel *The Confidence-Man* (1857), Herman Melville is able to bring together all of the ideological threads constructing "the Indian" and legitimating Indian-hating in American history. His much-discussed "Metaphysics of Indian-Hating" parodies the kind of romantic historiography which Simms advocated and

adapted to his fiction. Instead of the "epic" monolanguage essayed by Simms, Melville exploits a more subversive possibility for fiction: to highlight the essential heteroglossia of his society's racialist discourse, undermining the authority of normative verbal-ideological modes like history and law. In doing so, he also critiques institutions or state apparatuses like the Supreme Court charged with ratifying and enforcing the power relations dictated by the ideology of Indian-hating. By reading *The Confidence-Man* in light of John Marshall's opinion in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), it becomes possible to see the ways in which Indian "testimony" has been stricken from the proceedings of both law and historiography. A survey of recent commentary on the Indian-hating section of Melville's novel compels the discouraging conclusion that many critics remain within the ahistorical, legalistic paradigm that, as Melville demonstrates, has led to such disastrous consequences for Native Americans.

Although I will often cite the findings of contemporary historians and ethnographers in order to point out crucial disjunctions between fact and fiction, there is little to learn about Native American ethnohistory from this study. Nor do I claim to shed light on some transhistorical "American Mind" or "American Literature." What I do attempt is to ground specific discursive formations within the more general American history of white-Indian contact, a history so often denied or distorted by the "Indian-haters" of my title but highlighted and criticized by Thoreau and especially Melville.

It is their sense of history as a man-made cultural product rather than a reified mechanism of Divine Providence or Manifest Destiny that allows these latter writers to "read through" the confidence men who stole Indian lands and called it the inevitable march of progress.

THE PURITAN "WILDERNESS-CONDITION"

I. *Irradiating an Indian Wilderness*

King Charles I issued the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1628 with the understanding that it would be "the principall ende of this plantation...[to] wynn and incite the natives of [the] country to the knowledg and obedience of the onlie true God and Savior of mankinde, and the Christian fayth."¹ Of course Charles expected more tangible profit as well, and the conquest of souls always seems to entail and facilitate the conquest of land. But it is worth noting, in light of the generally bad publicity the Puritans have enjoyed over the last 25 years, that their mission in regard to the New World natives was in theory at least a benevolent one. King Charles was no Puritan, but his stated purpose was shared by his first delegates in New England. Logical as well as theological considerations dictated an early policy of conciliation and friendly exchange. The English had much to learn about New World agriculture; and for the first few years they seem to have traded for more corn than they grew themselves, and supplies from England were relatively few and far between. Military as well as economic alliances were essential. The Puritans of the Bay Colony seem to have recognized early on that the political key to their survival was to play off the local tribes against one another, taking advantage of their deep-rooted historical competition and enmity. (Had the Narragansetts allied with the Pequots instead of the Puritans, for instance, it may well have been

Boston rather than Fort Mystic which burned in 1637.) And with the French spreading out over the north and the Dutch ensconced in the south, the English cultivated Indian allies all the more earnestly. The best way to ensure long-lasting allies, of course, would be to convert them to the true faith. The Puritans were quite conscious of their role in an ideological struggle between Protestantism and Catholicism for part of the seventeenth-century "Third World," as Gary Nash puts it.²

The Puritans were destined to lose this ideological "war" in embarrassing and decisive fashion. A detailed explanation of their failure--which had to do as much with demographics and patterns of settlement as religious difference--is beyond the scope of this study.³ But the fundamental cause can be described simply: missionary work aspiring to "purity" in the converts is doomed to fail. The French Jesuits adapted their doctrines and rituals to the religious practices of particular tribes (most notably those of the Iriquois Nation), aiming for a Catholic accretion to traditional cultures. By contrast, the Puritans demanded complete renunciation of native folkways, wholesale Anglicization, and absolute submission to white civil authority. The pathetic example of the villages of "Praying Indians," inhabited by the last survivors of tribes decimated by disease and war, indicates that only when traditional cultures were practically extinct did Native Americans submit to a culture which they generally held in as much contempt as the English did theirs. The failure of this early version of the reservation system, and the notorious

proclivity of its inmates to forsake Church and Bible for forest and tomahawk during organized Indian raids, seemed to prove to all but the most visionary souls that the Indian was incapable of true conversion. One is left with the impression that the real hope, and expectation, of Puritan society was that the neighboring tribes would simply leave. After all, according to Puritan anthropology the Indian was a nomad who neither "subdued" nor "improved" the land and thus should be indifferent to geography--wherever they pitched their tepees was home.

Barring the fulfillment of this hope, which quickly proved unfounded, assimilation still commended itself as a superior alternative to extermination--cheaper, better for business, and more amenable to Christian doctrine in general and the Puritan vision of world Protestantism in particular. That both peoples could live together, respecting and learning from each other's differences, was literally unthinkable for the seventeenth-century European mind, especially (but by no means exclusively) for the Puritan mind. Intolerance and separatism, which drove the Massachusetts colonists from England, quickly became a divisive (and permanent) feature of their own society. Cultural relativism is hardly a pervasive ideology in our own time; 350 years ago, to a people on a mission from God, it was positive heresy. To Cotton Mather, looking back at the end of his life on the first 100 years of the New England experiment, the remarkable thing was not that his people had triumphed over the savages, but that the savages had never yet acknowledged that triumph or the

superiority it proclaimed.

Tho' they saw a People Arrive among them, who were Clothed in *Habits* of much more Comfort and Splendour, than what there was to be seen in the *Rough Skins* with which they hardly covered themselves; and who had *Houses full of Good Things*, vastly out-shining their squalid and dark *Higwams*; And they saw this People Replenishing their *Fields*, with *Trees* and with *Grains*, and useful *Animals*, which until now they had been wholly Strangers to; yet they did not seem touch'd in the least, with any *Ambition* to come at such Desirable Circumstances, or with any *Curiosity* to enquire after the *Religion* that was attended with them.⁴

Sadly, the natives had missed their prime chance, forsaking the plenitude of agriculture and animal husbandry, the comforts and "Good Things" of village life, and the ultimate rewards of the true Religion.

Assimilation can be seen as a form of annihilation, the "swallowing up" of a weaker culture by the stronger, except that intercultural conflict is rarely so decisively resolved. Ethnographers have come to prefer the term "acculturation" to "assimilation" because it stresses the reciprocal effects of contact between any cultures of reasonably equivalent strength.⁵ (Certainly this condition applied to Anglo-Indian relations until late in the eighteenth century.) Learning, adaptation, compromise on the part of both sides is the rule in such cases; if one culture is eventually "swallowed up," then the adage "You are what you eat" pertains. This point must be stressed because it does not conflict with, but rather explains, the oft-noted Puritan repudiation of all things Indian and their tendency to equate "Indian" with "Satanic." Despite their confidence in themselves as the new chosen people, and in their mission as the latest episode in the

historical *translatio imperii*, the New English never felt secure. They had good reasons--military, social, and theological--not to, and so they tended to swing wildly between (what we would consider) messianic self-aggrandizement and embarrassing self-abasement.

Perhaps no Puritan writer-authority illustrated this polarity more dramatically than Cotton Mather, the third-generation New England minister whose career happened to coincide with a period of almost ceaseless Indian war, declining piety,⁶ and increased doubt as to the easy convertibility of the New World wilderness into the new Zion. When he came to write the history of seventeenth-century New England, however, Mather conceived of it as a success story. Not coincidentally, the way he explains his task in the epic *Magnalia Christi Americana* establishes definitively his sense of the Indian's role in American history.

I write the *Wonders* of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, flying from the Depravations of *Europe*, to the *American Strand*: And, assisted by the Holy Author of that *Religion*, I do, with all conscience of *Truth*, required therein by Him, who is the Truth itself, Report the *Wonderful Displays* of his Infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness, wherewith His Divine Providence hath *Irradiated* an *Indian Wilderness*.⁷

Mather can profess to merely "Report" on concrete historical events--behind which any true Christian can discern the overruling hand of Providence--because of his confidence that his audience shares his own schema for interpreting these events. This "master key" to the understanding of history is, of course, Biblical typology; and the typological "master plot" is God's continual struggle with the Devil for the souls

of men and women. In Mather's version of history, Anglo-Indian conflict is thus a visible type of the fundamental cosmic drama, with Indians typecast, we could say, in the role of antagonist, which is to say Antichrist. Obviously this view of history is comforting to those who perceive themselves on the side of "Infinite Power." It also proves even more authoritative than a King's charter as a means of justifying the expropriation of native lands. To William Bradford the New World was a Providential gift, "it being the Lords wast, and for ye presente altogeather voyd of inhabitants."⁶ The poet Michael Wigglesworth goes so far as to quote God on the subject. "Are these the men," wonders the Almighty,

I brought and planted on the western shore,
 Where nought but bruits and salvage wights did swarm
 (Untaught, untrain'd, untam'd by vertue's lore
 That sought their blood, yet could not do them harm?
 My fury's flaile them thresht, my fatall broom
 Did sweep them hence, to make my people elbow-room.⁷

Mather takes care to differentiate himself and his people not only from Indians but also "depraved" Europeans. Unlike later versions of American self-identification, which posit a lucky amalgamation of Indian and European characteristics, Mather's invocation stresses the distance of the saints from both cultures, each corrupt in opposite but complementary ways. While hardly unique to Puritan society, the practice of establishing one's own cultural identity negatively--by way of opposition to the sins, errors, ignorance etc. of certain "others"--is especially crucial to Puritan self-definition. There are related but distinguishable theological and ideological reasons for the ubiquity and peculiar virulence of

this strategy in the hands of writers like Mather. The theological basis has already been suggested: since all human conflict can be reduced (or elevated) to the level of God vs. Satan, Truth vs. Error, there is no interpretive "space" for the ambiguous or ambivalent. While human beings themselves are neither entirely Godlike nor Satanic, all specific events or actions must be read as either God or Satan acting in and through humans. History, and whole races of people, can then be polarized, abstracted, and reified into cosmic absolutes.

At the ideological level--where theology translates into specific rhetorical means of promoting social cohesion--this polarization and its corollary, cultural definition through negation of another, "opposite," culture was a pragmatic as well as a theoretical necessity. The typing of the Indian as Satan's servant, and the often sadistic behavior it seemed to justify, was not only a product of religious fanaticism based on a theology of absolutes. It was also a reaction to the very real threat that the "Indian Wilderness" might swallow up the New Zion before the process of providential "irradiation" had fairly begun. Unlike the Indian-haters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the New England Puritans had good reason to fear the Indian as a threat to their very existence. This obvious point needs to be stressed because one line of modern commentary wants to expose the Puritan rhetoric of Indian-hating as the mere "cant of conquest" covering up the simple desire to take away Indian land.²⁰ This argument is necessary and useful in pointing out the expansionism implicit in the Puritan project to shine a light to the world from the

City on the Hill. But in lumping the Puritans with the Spanish conquistadors, it misrepresents Puritan motives for coming to the New World and their relation to the landscape once here. For obvious geographical reasons, the Puritans never looked at New England as a bountiful landscape to exploit and leave behind. The goal was always to establish a lasting community; if it proved profitable to do so, it would be a material sign of God's approval and sponsorship of the undertaking. Certainly the potential profit of the frontier began to disrupt communities, and threaten the overriding religious mission, very early, as Mather was by no means the first to point out. Bradford himself looked at the relatively high rate of immigration during the 1630's as a mixed blessing, possibly attracting more entrepreneurs than saints, or converting saints into entrepreneurs as opportunities multiplied for profit from the food commodity market:

there was no longer any holding them together but now they must of necessitie go to their great lots...By which means they were scattered all over ye bay, quickly, and ye towne, in which they compactly till now, was left very thine, and if this had been all, it had been less, though to much; but ye church must also be divided, and those yt lived so long together in Christian and comfortable fellowship must now part and suffer many divisions.¹¹

This is not cant, but sincere concern (not for Indians, of course, but for the profiteers themselves). If land hunger came to override the religious mission of the colony, it was not under the deliberate cover of governmental rhetoric, but in spite of its expressed forebodings.

Even if we grant that King Charles, John Eliot, and even Cotton Mather were sincere in their desire to convert rather

than exterminate or expropriate the Indians--that souls as well as land were objects of conquest-- clearly by Mather's time this project had begun to seem all but hopeless. While the fight for land had by no means been settled decisively, the battle for souls was even less conclusive. In fact, Mather rightly feared that the Indians could count more "converts" to their undisciplined, "Abominable" lifestyle than the New English could count anglicized "Praying Indians." In addition to teaching them "*Our Vice*," he asked in 1690,

have not we also *followed* the *Indians*? The Indians are infamous, especially for Three Scandalous Qualities: They are *Lazy Drones*, and love *Idleness* Exceedingly; They are also most impudent *Lyars*, and will invent Reports and Stories at a strange and monstrous rate; and they are out of measure *Indulgent* to their Children, there is no Family-Government among them. But, O how much do our people Indianize in every one of those Abominable things!"¹²

The inaccuracy of this portrait of Indian character is beside the point: Mather was describing his own people, acknowledging that perhaps "irradiation" flowed in both directions. As his European colleagues had feared, the Christianization of the wilderness might become instead the "Indianization" of the New World Christians. The question of whether to embrace or repudiate, to convert or massacre the Indians had to be considered from the other end: would the Indians massacre or, worse, "convert" the Saints? The Puritan rhetoric of Indian-hating must be seen as intracultural criticism as well as paranoid propoganda; otherwise it becomes simply "evil," which is to say incomprehensible. The real referents designated by the sign "Indian" were often backsliders and unregenerates *within* the Puritan community.

None of this is meant to justify Puritan rhetoric or policy; on the contrary, the material violence visited on Indians stems directly from the Puritan habit of defining them completely in terms of how they can help him understand himself. It's hard to imagine a mode of understanding more ethnocentric, and ultimately imperialistic, than the kind of Biblical typology which casts all "others" in the role of the Devil's handservants. Moreover, the chronic vagueness and generality as to what "the Indian" was served an ideological function in itself: to insure that no one who read such descriptions, or heard them from the pulpit, could be sure that he was free of the tawny taint. As Ann Kibbey demonstrates in *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism*, "Indian," like "Catholic," became a kind of sliding signifier capable of latching onto any individual or group.¹³ Antinomians and Salem witches both shared the monstrous qualities of the Indian, and suffered his violent fate. (In fact, Cotton Mather privately suspected that Indian powwows were behind the whole Salem crisis.¹⁴) "The Indian's" ideological role, like that of the "wilderness" he represented, can hardly be overestimated. To the individual, he represented the kind of creature the unregenerate backslider could (or had) become. To the community, he loomed beyond the hedge as a physical and spiritual reprisal to divisiveness born of overexpansion.

What Puritan authority lacked, before Mary Rowlandson's pioneering narrative issued in 1682, was not an ideology of

Indian-hating, but a vehicle of conveying that ideology in concrete, affective terms. The lessons of the Old Testament needed to be dramatized in ways that reflected the New England experience; theology needed to be translated into narratives that readers could "relate to" more immediately. So, at a time of perceived spiritual and demographic crisis, the genre of the "Indian captivity" was born, providentially it might seem. For a variety of reasons, the "wilderness" was becoming increasingly attractive to Puritan settlers. Economically, the prospect of lands newly "liberated" from Indians beckoned. And by the town-based Puritan authorities' own admission, many New Englanders simply despised the rigorous discipline and hierarchy of town life. Predictably, such citizens were characterized as Indian-like. William Hubbard had remarked in 1677 that on the frontier, "many were contented to live without, yea, desirous to shake off all Yoake of Government, both sacred and civil, and so transforming themselves as much as well they could into the Manners of the Indians they lived amongst."¹⁵ The attractions of the wilderness needed to be offset by being shown to be dangers, pitfalls instead of opportunities. The centrifugal force of frontier expansion, and the spiritual backsliding of which it was both cause and consequence, needed to be checked. Characteristically, Puritan authority turned to the Word; and the Word turned to the form of the captivity narrative.

To understand the unique power of the captivity narrative, we must compare it to an already-established genre, the Indian war narrative. Both illustrated in vivid detail

the horrors of the wilderness and the demonic brutality of the Indian, thus emphasizing the virtues of the town and its institutions. Readers of both would be grateful to their ministers and armies alike, as well as to God who empowers both. And both genres cast the Puritans as underdogs--perhaps paradoxically considering the Saints' faith that an all-powerful God is on their side. But providential literature has to cast its victim-protagonists as underdogs, or else the saving grace of Providence would not be apparent. Here the captivity narrative has a clear ideological advantage over the war narrative, because the victim, as an individual (or a family) is clearly more vulnerable than an army. God's agency in preserving and rescuing her could not be more clear. She is also more clearly blameless (at least in an immediate sense--no one is free of sin or exempt from God's scourges); innocently tending her home or fields, she falls prey to the senseless violence of an Indian raid that justifies a violent response. (Encroachment by settlers onto Indian land was, of course, not "sensible" provocation.) Finally, since it recounts an individual's travails in the wilderness, conversion as well as Providence can become part of the plot and theme of the captivity narrative. If the war narratives speak primarily to the Puritan sense of destiny as a people, captivity narratives exhort their readers to a consideration of their destinies as persons.

Although nearly twice as many men as women were taken captive by Indians in colonial New England,¹⁴ women were the most useful victims of Puritan captivity narratives, because

they seemed to represent vulnerability and blamelessness especially well, and they seemed to correspond more completely to the patience and forbearance exemplified by the Jews in their Babylonian captivity. Also, Indians had long been useful in the rhetoric of Puritan ministers suspicious of the female capacity for grace and especially disturbed by the prideful rebellion of discontented New England women.

If all men are naked before God, Increase Mather suggested in 1676, the Indians might drive this general point home to primping women in a particularly brutal and literal way.

The Lord saith...because the Daughters of Zion are haughty therefore he will discover their nakedness...[as] when the Indians have taken so many and stripped them naked as in the day that they were born. And instead of a sweet smell there shall be a Stink. Is not this verified when poor Creatures are carried away Captive into the Indians filthy and stinking Hicwams?¹⁷

Despite the opportunities they provided the New England Jeremiah, however, Indian captivities could be at odds with the lessons they were supposed to convey. For all their ideological advantages, these stories were potentially subversive to the extent that they threatened to break out of their essentially passive, "feminine" mold. While they were supposed to show the need for the meekness and humility which the Puritans associated with women, they could easily become a stage for the kind of machismo exhibited, for example, by John Williams, who, by his own account at least, psychologically browbeat his Indian captors into amazement and confusion. What would later come to be known as the "frontier spirit" of "the individual" could easily take the stage away from Providence, and the audience might admire the spirit of the

hero or heroine rather than the spirit of God. The unwitting moral might be that faith on the frontier is no great trial, that the individual can triumph spiritually as well as economically "beyond the hedge" cultivated by the Puritan divines.

II. *Mary Rowlandson's Wilderness-Conventions*

The *Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, "written by her own hand for her private use," as the full title indicates, recounts her eleven-week captivity among the Wampanoags or some of their allies in 1676 during Meacom's or "King Philip's War." The narrative is structured like a sermon, with scriptural passages interspersed throughout and an enumeration toward the end of the general lessons learned, corresponding to the "Improvement" section of the traditional Puritan sermon. Rowlandson's discourse provides a fine example of typologic epistemology: the real "text" is not her wilderness experience but the Bible; experience is used to interpret, amplify and intensify scripture rather than the other way around. Thus, despite her three-month exposure to an Indian culture and the variety of individuals within it, she seems to learn nothing about them which she didn't already know--or should have known had she attended more closely to the scriptures. What she learns about herself, on the other hand, is recorded in minute psychological detail. Roy Harvey Pearce summarizes this ego- and ethno-centrism so characteristic of the Puritan's relationship to other peoples and to the landscape itself.

Always his mind had worked from the inside out, from God, Scripture, and reason to man and nature. Whatever he saw outside, he had somehow already seen inside. Understanding the Indian as he was related to man and nature, the Puritan thus succeeded, if he did succeed, only in knowing a little more about God, Scripture, and reason, and in understanding himself.¹²⁸

As we will see later, this mode of "understanding," and its fateful results for its "objects," by no means died out with Puritan culture. God and Scripture were replaced by their modern counterparts, Civilization and its text, History.

But despite its conventional portrayal of the "vast and howling wilderness" and the anticulture of the Indians, Rowlandson's narrative is not, like many later Captivities, a purely public performance. Its therapeutic "private use," we could say, is to achieve, through narrative representation, in the psychological realm what had already been effected in the physical realm--namely her "restoration" from the wilderness. Her own depravity or "Indian-like" nature had been borne in on her with such force that it threatened to drive her not to conversion or revival but to insanity. She had to convince herself that her experience meant precisely what her culture's authorities would insist it was supposed to mean: that sinners are helpless and all are sinners, that "whom God loveth he chasteneth," that she and her fellow captives "have been gainers thereby"(95). The painful and precarious emotional state of such chastened gainers, presumably the grim ideal of Puritan mental health, is revealed in Rowlandson's final image of herself lying awake contemplating "the extreme vanity of this world": "when others are sleeping mine eyes are weeping."¹²⁹

Annette Kolodny, troubled by Rowlandson's conformity to the traditionally feminine--and typologically useful--role of passive forbearance in the face of adversity, questions Mary's motives and even her authority. The narrative, "no doubt composed with her minister husband looking over her shoulder," reflects dominant masculine ideology more than a woman's authentic experience in the wilderness.²⁰ Such a distinction disappears, however, if we take ideology to comprise precisely those ways of seeing the world which tend to make "private use" correspond to public use. Rowlandson's psychological needs corresponded nicely to her culture's needs: to understand the wilderness and its inhabitants as objectified elements of their own souls, elements capable of subjugation within, by the individual, and without, by the Chosen People as a whole. In either case, the key point was that this subjugation could only be effected by God and through his duly appointed representatives, the Puritan clergy. Outside the mediating institutions, "beyond the hedge" that grows from the Word, lies chaotic savagery. If Rowlandson's narrative is anything, it is "authentic" in its profession of faith in this conventional, essentially conservative wisdom. Indeed, we sense that had she lost is faith, she would have lost her sanity; or, as she would say with David, "I had fainted, unless I believed"(63).

Mrs. Rowlandson's series of twenty "removes" into the wilderness, and into herself, begins with a baptism in blood. Ten people are killed in the first paragraph (one mutilated), and in the next two there are four references to Christians

lying or "wallowing in their own blood." The desolations of the Lord come like a gory revelation: "Thus were we butchered by those merciless heathen, standing amazed, with the blood running down to our heels"(60). That the massacre *is* the work of the Lord could be taken on faith alone, but as always there are material signs of providential design to reinforce blind faith: the Rowlandsons' "six stout dogs," normally Indian-haters all, lie still during the seige; a mother beseeches the Lord to let her die with her children, and is instantly struck dead.

Carried off into "the vast and howling wilderness" by the "ravenous beasts" of darkness, Rowlandson is made sensible of the utter absoluteness of her "removal" from civilization as she witnesses the obscene gluttony and revelry of a Black Mass-like ritual, "which made the place a lively resemblance of hell"(61). The "wilderness-condition" is more than the negation of civilization, for the void is filled with a Satanic parody of human community: beasts parading themselves as men, "roaring" passing itself off as song, a communion celebrating not the blood of Christ but the bloody murder of Christians. The wilderness is not a geographical void but an active spiritual force, and to escape from it one must recognize that it is an inner "condition" as well as an external circumstance. Physical humiliation is only the first step to true conversion; the next step is to realize that the enemy is us. Thus Mrs. Rowlandson's journey outward from her home is counterpointed by a journey inward toward her spiritual home, the "House not made with Hands." It is in

fact this move to internalize the wilderness, to swallow it up, which keeps her from being swallowed up herself.

Rowlandson's salvation depends, quite literally, on her ability to devour and digest the wilderness. An odd and affecting relationship pertains between her physical and spiritual sources of nourishment, between the Bible she reads and the bloody horse liver she eats. There are probably as many references to food as scripture in the narrative; the meaner the food, the more exalted the passage which follows it. Chewing on some moldy crumbs of cake, she says, "It was in my thoughts when I put it into my mouth, that if I ever returned, I would tell the world what a blessing the Lord gave to such mean food"(79). Eating the nearly-raw horse liver with relish, the blood smeared about her face she is put in mind of the proverb: "For to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet"(70). And, in one of the most self-debasing scenes ever played in the Puritan wilderness-theater, she steals a horse-hoof literally from the mouth of a child (English, as it happens). Finding it slobbery but savory, she reflects with Job, "'The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.' Thus the Lord made that pleasant refreshing, which at other times would have been an abomination"(82). The "abomination," apparently, is the horse-hoof and not the stealing; we are only told that she was scolded for disgracing her Indian master by begging in another wigwam.

Both food and scripture are revelatory; both make Rowlandson conscious of (paraphrasing the title of Cotton

Mather's later sermon) the deliverance to be found in humiliation, the way in which ground nuts become blessings. The controlling metaphor of the narrative is finally gastronomic:

The portion of some is to have their afflictions by drops, now one drop and then another; but the dregs of the cup, the wine astonishment, like a sweeping rain that leaveth no food, did the Lord prepare to be my portion. (95)

Deep in the bowells of the wilderness Mrs. Rowlandson digests the lessons of humility. She has been priveleged to drink from the dregs of this world's cup, to eat the filthiest trash earth can offer, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth"(95). Through God's grace delivered from her trials, she has written to tell "her dear children and relations" about her ordeal--yet she feels it is futile to try to convey the gift she brings back to those who have not felt the physical and spiritual hunger of the wilderness-condition.

I remembered how on the night before and after the sabbath, when my family was about me, and relations and neighbors with us, we could pray and sing, and then refresh our bodies with the good creatures of God; and then have a comfortable bed to lie down on; but instead of all this, I had only a little swill for the body and then, like a swine, must lie down on the ground. I cannot express to man the sorrow that lay upon my spirit; the Lord knows it. (79)

The humility that passeth all understanding is alienating in a world of vanity: "outward things...are but a shadow, a blast, a bubble, and things of no continuance"(96). Yet from these things we take our nourishment, construct our symbols, read our signs. Bondage to our bellies is humbling, but if through this humiliation we can discern the overmastering hand of God,

we the meek may inherit the earth. Through ingesting, or spiritualizing, the world, we give "outward things" their internal, and eternal, "continuance."

Rowlandson journeys inward with a vengeance, taking nature itself with her. Inevitably, Freud's postulation of an oral stage in sexual development suggests itself. In the oral stage, "ontogenetically" the "oldest," the most primitive form of object-relations obtains: all that is other I will eat and make mine. Incorporation is the characteristic mode of interaction with the world.²¹ Rowlandson describes nothing in the landscape that is not eventually eaten. The narrative itself is a kind of digestive process; the wine of astonishment does not go down easily. In the oral stage, the boundaries between self and other are poorly defined if at all; there is no self or, which is to say the same thing, there is nothing but self. For Rowlandson, the wilderness itself is a "condition," and within it there are no places or dates; her identity floats freely in space and time, merging now with Jacob's, now with Job's. The "narcissistic overvaluation of subjective mental processes" in the oral stage leads to a grandiose confidence in "the omnipotence of thoughts" which is quickly dashed by experience. Rowlandson's faith in faith itself appears unwavering, but is more likely the product of her narrative "incorporation" and recuperation of her experience than of the experience itself. And there is an obvious aggressive component to this kind of object-relation: "During the oral stage of organization of the libido, the act of obtaining erotic mastery over an object

coincides with that object's destruction."²² Mastery is in fact obtained through "cannibalism."²³ Mother Rowlandson, reduced to the role of helpless child, eats a child's horse-hoof supper and even a deer's fetus, "so young and tender, that one might eat the bones as well as the flesh, and yet I thought it very good"(79-80).

This analysis is meant to be suggestive rather than explanatory in any final sense. It may help later in explaining the paradox of sadistic, omnivorous meekness exemplified, for instance, in Cotton Mathers invocation of the genocidal power of humility in the "Improvements" section of his sermon based on the Hannah Dustan captivity.

If we did now *Humble* our selves throughout the Land, who can say, whether the *Revenge* on the *Enemy*, thus Exemplified, would not proceed much rather unto the Quick Extirpation, of those *Bloody and Crafty men*.²⁴

But without insisting on the Freudian framework, we should still note that the oral imagery of Rowlandson's narrative serves an ideological function in itself. Her yoking of food and scripture, and even her infantile regression, would not trouble but reassure her readers, because Puritan rhetoric had traditionally equated the Christian with the infant and the Word with its milk. "The Whole World," Samuel Willard explained in 1691, "is a sucking Infant depending on the Breasts of Divine Providence."²⁵ Puritan ministers, extending Willard's figure in a rather self-aggrandizing way, were wont to refer to themselves as the "breasts of God" who transmitted the "Milk of the Word" to the spiritually malnourished. The lips of the minister were the nipples at which the

congregation suckled.²⁴ The ideological value of the narrative consists in part in collapsing the wilderness back the female body: as Rowlandson eats her way to revelation, her audience comprehends both the (alien) world and the Word as consumables, both demanding "incorporation."

The implications for "the Indian" of this general way of seeing the world are clear enough: like the wilderness they will be swallowed up. Rowlandson's portrait of her captors is for the most part conventional, and since the conventions proved so enduring they are worth enumerating for future reference. The Indians are animals, "dogs" (85), "ravenous wolves," even "hell-hounds" (61) whose characteristic mode of expression is "outrageous roaring and hooping" or "yelping" (65,76). Even worse, they are Satanic, "as black as the devil" (85) and as devious: "So like were these barbarous creatures to him who was a liar from the beginning" (77). As Cotton Mather noted, they are "most impudent *Lyars*," pathogenic in their commitment to trickery and underhandedness. Inquiring about the welfare of her son, Rowlandson is told by a member of the band holding him that the boy had been roasted, that he himself had eaten a piece of him, and that "he was very good meat" (75). (The son was later redeemed unharmed.) Rowlandson was also assured that her husband thought she was dead and so had remarried; in fact, "the Governor wished him to marry; and told him he should have his choice" of prospective wives (77). (It's hard to interpret the intent of these "lies" without being privy to the tone in which they were delivered. Certainly to Rowlandson

they were cruel enough; the Indians may have considered them humorous, or simply strategic, part of the process of preparing a captive for adoption into the tribe by encouraging her to forget her past attachments.) And the Indians were of course cruel, especially, it seems, the "squaws." Finally, addressing a topical suspicion, Rowlandson shows several examples of the phoniness of the so-called "Praying Indians" (77, 83-4). Misrepresentation, as we shall see, is perhaps the fundamental behavioral characteristic ascribed to the Indian from the seventeenth century on through the nineteenth.

But for every instance of cruelty, Rowlandson records four or five examples of Indian kindness. Foremost among these is the gift of a Bible, which an Indian party had taken (along with several "English-men's scalps") in a raid on Medfield eleven days after Rowlandson's capture. After this Mary's spiritual fate is never really in doubt; in her hands at all times, through any bout of hunger, is "a sweet cordial to me when I was ready to faint" (67). The gift of the Bible is inconsistent with the New England tribes' sophisticated techniques for assimilating captives,²⁷ and may well be an artistic liberty encouraged by Mr. Rowlandson to give immediacy to the scriptural applications. But the gifts of her captors are generally more tangible, though no less emotionally comforting: when she is weeping in despair, a brave assures her "'none will hurt you,'" another then gives her cornmeal, and yet another gives her "half a pint of peas; which was worth more than many bushels at another time"(71). No slave, she is welcomed into the Indian economy, given food

and even a knife (71-2) in exchange for her sewing. She is allowed to travel, alone, "a mile" to see her son with another band, and though on the way she meets with "all sorts of Indians, and those I had no knowledge of...not one of them offered the least imaginable miscarriage to me" (72-3). She is given shelter when cold (73, 80, 83), food when hungry (73, 79, 83, 86), even tobacco to trade (80) or sell (87).

None of this kindness, however, redounds to the credit of the "hell-hounds"; rather it is a series of signs of God's mercy upon Mary. After a particularly timely--and touching--instance of Indian "favour," Mary concludes by quoting Psalms: "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives" (83). Her honest and detailed portrait of Indian behavior might have served to humanize the enemy; it might also have helped explain the remarkable success the enemy had in "converting" captives into loyal tribesmen. Instead, typology converts a potential bridge to sympathy and understanding into a closed circle of self-referential "private use" and cultural self-affirmation. Even from a purely practical, military standpoint, the providential reading of experience forecloses innovation and adaptation. A river which "the Indians with their squaws and children, and all their luggage" crossed with ease "put a stop to" the all-male "English army"--not because of Indian ingenuity or technology, which might be imitated, but because "God did not give [the English] courage or activity to go over after us" (68, 89). Indian strategy and woodcraft, like the Devil's own efforts, are effective only when God allows them to be.

Likewise, Indian cruelty and kindness are but opposite sides of a coin minted with the fall of the angels, the two faces of Satan himself.

Rowlandson's portrait of her captors is not subversive; Indian kindness can be explained--as in fact *anything* can be explained--in terms of God's inscrutable plan and his perverse habit of wounding with the left hand and healing with the right. Indian behavior shares this with God's own: both are fundamentally "unreadable," except through a line of paternal mediation beginning with the New England clergy and stretching back through their scriptural fathers to the Father Himself. This textual sense of history, beyond endowing the keepers of the Book with tremendous power, foreclosed any threat to that power in the form of local revision. Such diverse later Americans as Franklin and Thoreau shared the sense of history as a text, but for them it appeared as an opportunity for revision, not a mandate to conform. Franklin is able to both record and correct some of the "errata" in his life in and through his writing; and when Thoreau gets around to "retouching the old material" of the Hannah Dustan Indian captivity, his narrative is specifically and ingeniously devised to subvert and replace that of "the historian" he draws on, Cotton Mather.

With no such self-consciousness, Rowlandson nonetheless presents a challenge to official New England authority. If her husband was looking over her shoulder as she composed, as Kolodny envisions, he must have nodded off from time to time. Or rather, like the narrative itself, he provided intellectual

guidance without emotional support. The experience doesn't convert seamlessly into the text. Her bitterness at the cowardice of the English army, and her gratitude for Indian kindness, threaten to subvert her official endorsement of the men's activity as agents of God's plan and her repudiation of the Indian-devil. Within the terms of the morphology of conversion, she does attain the anxiety of the saint: back home weeping in her bed, she realizes that no sign, not even bodily deliverance, is final, clear, "readable" in any complete way. But as a mother who has stolen food from the mouth of a child, she seems incapable of reconciling her depravity with any type of "Restoration." She may have proven to herself her unfitness for any community, of heaven or of earth. Restored physically, reconciled intellectually, she remains alienated emotionally. Typology, it may be, is not as effective for one's "private use" as it is for "the comfort of the afflicted."

Rowlandson did not invent the wilderness-condition or its conventions, but she did establish their usefulness in comprehending the dire contemporary reality of Indian conflict. For a society feeling itself held hostage by murderous heathen, she presented a hopeful example or type of the appropriate attitude and response to captivity. Her solution is simplicity (and passivity) itself: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (96). Piety, not heroic exploit, was the key to overcoming the enemy. "Fear not enemies without, but your selves at home," Thomas Shepard had

enjoined in 1660²⁸; in a more recent formulation, "we have seen the enemy, and they are us." But there is a hawkish underside to this philosophy of the dove. If the enemy can be internalized, the self can also be projected, and psychic repression can beget military suppression. As Cotton Mather's faith in the genocidal capacity of "Lively Meditation" illustrates, turning the other cheek was a way of smiting the offender. When the captive Puritan was male, the violence lurking just beneath the surface of the *Judea capta* type was more likely to show itself. The theater of captivity could accommodate the aggressive battling hero as well as the embattled heroine.

Twenty-two years after the publication of Mrs. Rowlandson's narrative, a group of Indians was unfortunate enough to capture John Williams. He was to bear their threats and insults with equanimity, ridicule their popish rituals and repudiate their beliefs via the book of Mark, and eventually render them "so discouraged as never more to meddle with [him] about [his] religion." Upon his return to Zion, the Redeemed Captive felt moved to document his experiences among the heathen and his stern repudiation of all their ways. The resulting narrative, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*²⁹, is a purely public performance, with no conceivable "private use." There is no sense of need, no sense of the potential depravity of man that lurked beneath Mrs. Rowlandson's imagery: gone is the greedy hunger for a child's horse-hoof, the paranoid hoarding of cake crumbs and bear meat, the ravenous hunger that will draw the line only at drinking

straight deer-blood. Williams dominated the Indians as surely as if he had massacred and scalped them--or made them wear waistcoats and carry Bibles. With Rowlandson he shares the typological interpretation of his experience--but without the swings of despair and hope which give dramatic force to her references--and her insistence on the justness and value of God's scourges and the necessity of humble submission to His will and power. The lessons are the same, but the student seems to have learned them too easily, to have memorized the form without understanding the content. The result is a narrative so stylized that the only "hero" is the style itself. Williams succeeds where Rowlandson fails--in making himself truly generic.

To speak of Mrs. Rowlandson's "failure" is to apply the criterion of self-effacement that is part and parcel of the lesson of Indian captivity. With his wife, Williams "never spake any discontented word as to what had befall'n us, but with suitable expressions justified God, in what had befall'n us" (533). The same can be said of Rowlandson, but for her the posture is hard-won. She protests almost too much that the massacre and her subsequent humiliations are God's mercies and that she and her fellow captives "have been gainers thereby." We don't for a moment doubt her sincerity in professing these beliefs; on the contrary, we have a sense that she must believe, or go crazy--"I had fainted unless I believed." Were she not, however faintly, Joseph and Job and Christ himself, she could not have sustained herself on stolen horse-hooves, or faced her neighbors if she had. Rowlandson

writes because she needs to, Williams because it is an opportunity to exhort one's neighbors. Everything about his narrative is "suitable"; in Williams's case, the clothes make the man. For Rowlandson the wilderness-condition was something to swallow, to internalize and take nourishment from, an opportunity for growth. For Williams the same experience was to be spit out and spit upon. Williams' repudiation, however, remained essentially within the paradigm of *Judea capta*: for all his vitriol, he "stands still" until he is redeemed (ransomed). Perhaps ironically, it took a woman to break the "feminine" mold of the captivity narrative once and for all--and yet, in the telling, even her furious violence was made into a lesson in meek and humble submission.

*III. Humiliation with a Vengeance: Cotton Mather on Hannah
Dustan*

Richard Slotkin, in his discussion of "Psychoanalysis Indian and Puritan," argues that the New England Puritans shared at least one psychological project with their Indian foes: within both groups, individuals felt a need to balance the desire for heroic activity with the dream-desire for passive submission to authority. Though it emphasized the latter half of the equation, the captivity narrative or "myth," in Slotkin's view, was one "ritual-therapeutic" means of attempting such a balance, both for the victim-narrator and her readers. Far more successful were the Indian techniques, which attempted a "real balance" through the ritual *enactment*

of psychic conflict and the symbolic gratification of repressed desires.³⁰ This assessment, though meant primarily to illustrate the "stupidity" and "poltroonery" of the Puritans, and "the poverty of their own insight," rings true.³¹ Wilcomb Washburn, citing Anthony Wallace's study of Iriquois rituals (some versions of which were common to the coastal tribes), notes their use of such techniques as role-playing (acting out fantasies in a masked Society of Faces) and free association (communal interpretation of individuals' dreams). "It would be fair to say," Washburn concludes, "that Iriquois and other Indian cultures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries possessed a deeper understanding of psychodynamics than most enlightened Europeans of the time."³²

Rather than testifying to the poverty of Puritan insight, however, the captivity narrative as sociopsychological "therapy" illustrates two fundamental features of Puritan culture which, in combination, were repressive but hardly stupid. First, the theocratic and patriarchal structure of that society placed the burden, and privelege, of interpretation in the hands and mouths of the ministers alone. Only God's delegates could mediate between individual experience and communal destiny, between psychology and teleology. No Society of Faces (itself a horrid concept to the iconoclastic, antitheatrical Puritan)³³ would put on the authority of the minister's real or articulated presence. The second, and related, assumption is the power of words, based on but not strictly limited to the Words of the Bible. Ritual centered around one man speaking to a congregation of

listeners. Passive submission to authority was not a dream-desire to act out through veiled symbolism, but an explicit communal imperative. "Days of Humiliation," as we will see, provided ample outlet for self-abasement; the repressed desire, presumably, would be the one whose outlet is denied or discouraged--heroic self-assertion.

If Puritan psychotherapy differs from its Indian counterpart, then, it does so because it approaches the fundamental conflict between autonomy and authority from the opposite end. According to Wallace, the Iriquois male, raised to be "brave, independent, and self-reliant," nursed "an unconscious craving to be cared for, to be passive."³⁴ Puritan child-rearing practices would seem to suggest an opposite psychic outcome. "Puritans placed exceptional stress on breast-feeding and infant care in general," says David Leverenz, but indulgence quickly gave way to rigorous discipline. In terms of Erik Erikson's scheme of development, the Puritan child came through the initial stage (developing basic trust) in good shape, but hit a roadblock at the second stage, when his struggle for autonomy was stifled by the injunction to prepare the child for conversion by breaking his spirit. Emory Elliott comes to similar conclusions in his discussion of the forces "Shaping the Puritan Unconscious."³⁵ This analysis is somewhat speculative, as Leverenz himself admits, but suggestive:

a logocentric, patriarchal culture could hardly employ a better recipe for reproducing itself.

In any case, there is no way to assess, in theoretical

terms, the collective mental health of the Puritan and Indian communities of 300 years ago. Our own "therapeutic sensibility"³⁶ tends to privilege happiness and self-contentment through the resolution of psychic conflicts, which would incline us toward Iriquois rather than Puritan methods. But the latter are not bumbling attempts toward the same goal; instead they reflect a quite different ideal of mental health. For the Puritan, "balance" comes not from reconciling tensions or ambiguities but by polarizing them, keeping them in tension. As Leverentz points out, one of the paradoxes of the "plain style" was that its message was anything but plain: "Making a virtue of anxiety, it was a language uncomfortable with any human certainty...It made struggle a necessity, security a sign of sin."³⁷ To be reconciled with the world--or the self--was to be reconciled to damnation. If we sympathize with the anxiety-ridden Mary Rowlandson weeping quietly into the night, we'll condemn this vision of human experience. But as the cornerstone of Puritan ideology, as a means of creating and perpetuating social cohesion based on the authority of the minister, the message and its rhetorical medium were consistent and effective.

As living proofs that anxiety was justified, victims of Indian captivity functioned vitally in the process of Puritan cultural self-affirmation. They were mediating figures on two planes: horizontally, or spatially, they connected town and wilderness; vertically, or spiritually, they connected Christian civilization and pagan savagery.³⁸ The captives "became, to some extent, symbolic amalgams of Indian and white

characteristics; and to that extent they resembled the most horrid figure in the Puritan hagiography, the spiritual half-breed."³⁹ But the captives differed from the more "secure" townspeople only in the vividness with which their experience illustrated this amalgamation; spiritually, there were no purebreds. The self, like the world around it, was structured like a peculiarly vicious and insidious parody: one could never be certain if God or the Devil, the saint or the Indian, was asserting himself. The drive for "purity" itself could be motivated by spiritual pride, the ultimate sin. Thus a militant paranoia characterized both intrapsychic and intercultural relationships with the "Indianness" of the world.

Perhaps no figure better symbolizes the spiritual miscegenation of the Puritan experience than Hannah Dustan (also spelled Dustin or Duston). On March 31, 1697, she escaped from Indian captivity along with her nurse (Dustan had recently borne a child, killed in the Indian raid on Haverhill, Mass.) and an English boy. The three captives rose in the night and tomahawked ten of a family of twelve Indians who apparently meant to adopt them. Two men, two women, and six children were bludgeoned or hacked to death; a woman and a boy escaped. Dustan and crew then scalped their ten victims, sank all the canoes except one, and escaped down the Merrimack River to the settlements. For their exploit, they received fifty pounds scalp bounty, as well as "a very generous token of his favour" from the governor of Maryland.

Upon their return, the women related their adventures in a private session with Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall. (Sewall's version is contained in his *Diary*.) Dustan never published a narrative of her experience, nor did the nurse, Mary Neff, or the boy, Samuel Leonardson. We can only speculate on their feelings before, during, and after their remarkable deed. (Even the bare facts are open to question: could the captives have simply stolen off with the Indians' scalp bag, and the Massachusetts council have paid for the top-knots of its own citizens?) The motives were probably simple enough: freedom and revenge. Dustan had seen the brains of her infant "dash'd out...against a Tree," and did not know the fate of her other seven children, whom she may have presumed dead. "Vengeance," as James Axtell notes, "like so many other Old Testament traits, was deeply engrained in the Protestant English character."⁴⁰ In any case, when Cotton Mather comes to tell the tale, it illustrates piety and humility, but vengeance is a prominent subtext. Indeed, the vengeful power of humility, as exemplified in the Old Testament as well as on the Indian frontier, is the real message of both "texts"--experience and sermon.

To what extent Dustan's sense of what she had done corresponded to Mather's interpretation is forever uncertain. What is clear is that, upon her return, Hannah Dustan created a widespread public sensation. The scalp bounty had been lifted during her captivity but was restored just for this exceptional case. (The first scalp bounty appeared on the books of the Massachusetts General Court on September 12,

1694; it would be renewed, off and on, in Massachusetts and other colonies, through the Revolution.) The Maryland governor's tribute suggests that the story spread far and quickly without losing its impact. And the preeminent Puritan spiritual authority of the day, Cotton Mather, saw fit to utilize the story in an important sermon preached shortly after her return. Mather saw a unique opportunity to touch base with the popular imagination, which Dustan seems to have captured; he also may have seen a grave danger to that imagination. Both the opportunity and the danger can be summed up succinctly: Dustan had become a hero. Her story smacked of a Faustian beating-the-Devil-at-his-own-game. Admiration for Dustan, pride in individual resourcefulness and self-assertion, was the danger; the opportunity was to show that even in this extreme instance, the "hero" was not exceptional but representative, simply another instance of God's mercy on the spiritually humble. Like Benjamin Church's pivotal adoption of Indian guerilla warfare tactics during King Philip's War, and his donning of the defeated Philip's mantle, Dustan's actions could be read as a triumph for the wilderness--and thus, in a symbolic sense, for the Indian.⁴¹ To defuse this potential irony, Mather needed in effect to save Hannah and her friends all over again, to bring the chaotic savagery of their experience back within the hedge.

For this demonstration of rhetorical chivalry, Mather had a large audience. He was speaking in Boston "unto the Christians of many Churches, here come together, in One Great Assembly."⁴² The occasion was to announce and prepare the

congregations for a week of "General HUMILIATION" (91), to take the form of fasting and prayer--"Lively Meditations" on scriptures treating or written during the Babylonian captivity. Like all sermons, it was a communal event, but in this case perhaps especially so since community itself was really the topic. Mather's goal was to impress upon his audience, through both theological and narrative forms of discourse, that individual and communal destinies were intimately linked. At the theological level, the conversion of the individual proceeds through three stages: humiliation (the annihilation of the self), submission (to God's duly appointed civic and spiritual authorities), and union (with a community of individuals who have likewise humbled and submitted themselves to those authorities).⁴³ During the week of general humiliation, the community as a whole was to trace, or retrace, these steps. Indian conflict had given rise to anxiety that the Puritans were losing their grip on the New Zion, not so much because of superior Indian force but from internal dissolution of the Puritan community.

We have been *Humbled* by a Barbarous Adversary once and again let loose to *Holve* it upon us, and an unequal Contest with such as are *not a People, but a Foolish Nation*. (119)

Mather employs two powerful rhetorical strategies to try to forge a true community among his "Foolish Nation." First, he invokes the long-standing concept of the barbarian as a means of validating his own culture, the members of which comprise--at least potentially--"a People" rather than a pack of wolves. Second, he asserts the insufficiency of the individual self in

a world where both God and the Devil delight in humbling the mighty. As Robert Breitwieser puts it, "in Mather's thought *self* and *sin* are practically synonymous," since "*self* is the name of the group of impulses and thoughts that tend to assert themselves against government by memorial rectitude."⁴⁴ In humbling themselves as a community, members of the General Assembly not only renounce a sterile and in any case illusory self-sufficiency, but reassert the authority of "memorial rectitude" by imitating the humility of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, the Molossians, the Ninivites, etc.

Mather's sermon begins with an explication of the role of humility in conversion, a liturgical history of the deliverances gained through humility, and a list of twenty communal transgressions all beginning "Let us Humbly Confess..." At the end of this harangue he perceives among the congregation three local celebrities--Hannah Dustan, Mary Neff, and Samuel Leonardson. Therefore, he deems it not "an Unsuitable or Unseasonable Digression, if I Conclude, this Discourse, with making this unexpected occurrence, to be Subservient unto the main Intention thereof" (126). This unique and "unexpected" opportunity to dramatize the abstractions of his sermon--quite as if Job himself had appeared to endorse his call for humility--allows Mather to "put the show on the road," to show humility in action. As Dustan and the rest of the congregation humbly attend, Mather reconstructs the events leading up to his sermon--because Dustan's experience really implies the sermon; the fulfillment, the fruition is in the narration, the conversion

of experience into text. While the "dismal *Tragedies*" wrought by "the formidable Salvages," the "furious Tawnies," the "Raging Dragons" are chronicled in lurid detail, there is a sense of gleeful inevitability to the narrative--"when the whole Crew [of Indians], was in a *Dead Sleep*, ('twill presently prove so!)"--which transforms the tragedy into triumph. Given the "fervent *Prayers*" of the captives and "their Praying Friends among our selves" (130-31), their fate is never really in doubt. Humiliation is indeed "an hopeful Sign" of impending deliverance; isolation is only the prelude to reconciliation. By way of contrast, the Indians are insolent to the point of taunting God himself. Their blasphemous humor turns out to be ironic prophecy. "*What need you Trouble your self?*" asked the popish idolaters. "*If your God will have you Delivered, you shall be so!*" Unappreciative of this rather telling barb, Mather, perhaps with a gesture toward Dustan and Neff, tops it: "And it seems, our God, would have it so to be!" (131).

Mather follows his account of the captivity with the traditional "Improvement" section, spelling out the significance of the story. It is not the murder of the captors or even their scalping which requires justification--all Hannah has done is to "Imitate the Action of *Jael* upon *Sisera*, and being where she had not her own *Life* secured by any *Law* unto her, she thought she was not forbidden by any *Law*, to take away the *Life*, of the *Murderers*, by whom her *Child* had been butchered" (p. 132). And she was correct: in the wilderness there is no such law, nor any of the laws which

lend comfort and security to the human community. As Glenn Todd notes, "Even God's law, which states 'Vengeance is mine,' did not extend to the lawless frontier."⁴³ What needs to be clarified is why Hannah Dustan is exemplary, why she has attained to her privileged place in Mather's sermon. Thus the "Improvement" stresses the exclusiveness of God's role in her escape, and emphasizes the problematic nature of her "deliverance."

You are not now the Slaves of *Indians*, as you were a few Dayes ago; but if you continue *Unhumbled*, in your Sins, you will be the Slaves of *Devils*; and, Let me tell you, A Slavery to *Devils*, to be in *Their Hands*, is worse than to be in the Hands of *Indians*! I beseech you then, by the Mercies of God, that you present your selves unto the Lord Jesus Christ; Become the sincere Servants of that Lord, who by His Blood has brought you out of the *Dungeon*, wherein you were lately Languishing. (p. 135)

Hannah is not to be admired for her bravery, nor censured for her adoption of Indian-like tactics. Christ long ago saved her; her humiliations at the hands of God's red-skinned scourges were prefigured at Calvary, and her deliverance was effected there as well. Just as Mather rescued Hannah from the wilderness of human motives so that her experience could be made "subservient" to his own "intention," God has delivered her from her slavery that she may become His own servant. Hannah's reconciliation with her community can be complete--if she will allow her minister to tell her what has happened to her, and give humble thanks to the Lord who has given her deadly aim, deliverance, and ten scalps' bounty.

As in virtually everything he ever said or wrote, Mather attempts in *Humiliations follow'd with Deliverances* to say the

last word, to foreclose inquiry into meaning and value by making concrete, local, historical experience "subservient" to the abstract metaphysical drama of conversion. Hannah Dustan is ushered back within the hedge, and like the magical shrubbery of medieval romance, the hedge closes as though nothing had passed through. But Mather was the gardener of an estate in decline, and he would not get the last word, at least on Hannah Dustan. Her story would be retold scores of times in written chronicles of New England, and rarely was the moral of the story one Mather would approve; it has become, to use Clifford Geertz's term, a well-encrusted "cultural artifact."⁴⁶ But even in 1697 the terms of her significance must have been in dispute. Was she really the patient, humble type of *Judea capta*, or the prototype of an emergent pioneer ethic of heroic self-sufficiency? Mather insists on the former; public reaction suggests the latter. In any case, Mather's bold interpretation stretches the captivity narrative to its limits, almost demanding of its hearers a rather unPuritan affirmation: *credo quia absurdum*. Only God's delegated authority can mediate between the chaos of local experience and the typological order of history. To become "a People," the members of the Puritan community must not isolate themselves on the frontier, but remain literally within earshot of Cotton Mather.

If the Dustan captivity demonstrates the elasticity of the poor victim's role, it also shows yet again the rigidity of the Indians' role. Worse, while the significance of Dustan evolves through the course of time, the Indian seems typecast

for all time, even after typology itself had ceased, in any official way, to be an influential mode of understanding past and present. A brief summary of the role of the "Indian" within the Puritan sign-system will conclude this chapter and provide a point of reference from which to compare "the metaphysics of Indian-hating" in the nineteenth century.

IV. The Theology of Indian-Hating

To the Puritans of seventeenth-century New England, Indians were bitter enemies and uneasy allies, teachers and students, fellow men (albeit temporarily ignorant) and irredeemably anticultural beasts or demons. To the true Puritan--a Winthrop, a Cotton Mather, perhaps a Mary Rowlandson--the Indian lifestyle was an abomination, a savage barbarity that seemed to validate both Puritanism and English culture in general. But Puritan hegemony was never complete (Gramsci insists hegemony never can be⁴⁷), and for many New Englanders "Indian" life represented not an abomination but a temptation, an alternative that seemed to hold forth all the elements of the good life denied by the City on a Hill--freedom, simplicity, individual autonomy, contentment, happiness. Moreover, if the Puritan psyche is structured in the way Slotkin and Leverentz suggest (and I have tried to indicate), then the desire for autonomy and heroic self-assertion connected with "Indianness" was close to the surface in even the most pious of Puritan hearts, and thus in need of particularly fierce repression. All of these seeming

contradictions can be summarized in one formula: the Indian was both the mirror image of the Puritan Self and its absolute Other.

Most obviously the Indian functions as the culturally self-validating Other, an example, as William Hubbard saw it, of human nature as chaos, bereft of "all Yoake of Government, both sacred and civil." That each tribe had complex forms of both types of government only emphasizes the disjunction between signified and referent and the fact that in Puritan discourse the Indian was the subject of ideological rather than scientific concern. Reject us, the government could say, and you become as they are. The smugness with which assumptions were made about who and what "they" were, and the resulting inability or unwillingness to test and alter those preconceptions, are perhaps the most disturbing features of Puritan culture. Worse, the blindness was willful--a political tool recognized and exploited at the expense of any true understanding of the native peoples.

But the Indian was more than a scapegoat, at least in the common understanding of the term, because it signified the hated Self as well as the hated Other. "O, how much do our people Indianize," lamented Cotton Mather, "in every one of those Abominable things" comprehended by the term "Indian." (How much indeed, we may be tempted to ask with Hawthorne,⁴⁸ when your mothers take the scalps of children--an act, by the way, which Indians would have held in abhorrence, as the Narragansetts did the burning of Pequot women and children at Fort Mystic.) To "Indianize" was to give in to the desires of

the sinful, unruly, depraved heart of darkness at the bottom of human nature. In this purely rhetorical sense, the Puritans were quite as violent toward themselves as toward their demonic doubles; as Mather reminded his listeners in *Humiliations*, "Our *Fasts* are to Slay our *Lusts*; those are the *Beasts*, which are then to be slaughtered" (107). Were this only the rhetoric of masochism it would have been destructive enough, but as Kibbey demonstrates, the "referential imperative" of Puritanism demanded a material, flesh-and-blood beast to be slain. It is in this sense that she calls Indians "living icons" to the iconoclastic European invaders.⁴⁹ In case there is any doubt that Mather's "Beasts" inhabit the New England forests as well as Puritan breasts, he makes the the connection between piety and genocide explicit: "If we did now *Humble* our selves throughout the Land, who can say, whether the *Revenge* on the *Enemy*, thus Exemplified [by Hannah Dustan], would not proceed much rather unto the Quick Extirpation, of those *Bloody and Crafty men*" ("Humiliations," p. 133). A siege mentality, it was hoped, could galvanize communities perceived as disintegrating. It was also the proper stance of piety in relation to the continual bombardment of temptation to, and by, Mather's unruly Indian "self." Ironically, the Indian performed social and psychological functions second in importance only to God Himself; if it had not existed, it would have been created. And indeed it was: though Indians were real enough, the Indian was a figment of a diseased political psyche, a rather poorly-written villain's role in a simplistic cultural melodrama.

Indian captivity provided one of the stages on which to act out this melodrama, and a variety of plotlines it could follow. The captivity narrative performed, in a particularly powerful way, the function Walter Sussman ascribes to history in general: to cast the "myth" or "central drama of any social order" in concrete, local, topical terms. History inevitably operates ideologically, since it "puts the show on the road," as Sussman says, defining and illuminating basic steps toward the utopian goal of the myth, or adapting its power to changing conditions that would seem to call it into question.⁵⁰ Narratives like Rowlandson's and Mather's play out the central drama of war between God's People and Satan's, also stressing the dangers of overexpansion on the frontier. Their appeal may also be traced to the even older archetype of the romantic quest: hero enters the underworld (or "wilderness-condition") by decree of king or father, overcomes trials, and returns not only reconciled with the father and the society he represents (i.e. converted), but bearing a valuable new gift (the message of the saved to the unregenerate). And of course captivity narratives not only instructed but entertained. They were cautionary tales with a sensationalistic "hook," analogous in many ways to the modern slasher movie. A lecture on the perils of premarital sex by an earnest teacher is one thing; seeing a teenage couple pured in the throes of ecstasy is another. Similarly, "a Slavery to Devils" may be even worse than Indian captivity, as Mather warned the redeemed captives, but is it as vividly imaginable as running the gauntlet naked or seeing a baby's brains dashed

out against a tree? If part of the "central drama" of Puritanism was its embattled underdog status in a corrupt world, no better means of putting the show on the road in the midst of "an Indian Wilderness" could be imagined than the story of a lone white woman helpless in the hands of murderous red savages.

And yet the remarkable thing about the wilderness-condition, finally, is not its horror and strangeness but its familiarity. It is only the human condition as the Puritans imagined it, magnified and dramatized. It is a psychic space where the ego is stripped clean, where individual identity melts into tribal identity, where Mary Rowlandson becomes *Judea capta*. To be stripped in this way is to face the uncanny, in Freud's definition--at once *unheimlich* and *heimlich*, alien and "homelike." For Freud the epitome of the uncanny is to find oneself buried alive; the ultimate horror is the familiarity of the womb. Rowlandson comes to understand the pain and wisdom of her forefather Job: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb," she quotes, "and naked shall I return" (70).

From the cultivation of corn and the use of snowshoes to the techniques of scalping and guerilla warfare, Indian culture was imitated by and adapted to that of the New English. The "irradiation" of the "Indian Wilderness" was not a process of purification but of "corruption," of mutual acculturation. But the lesson of captivity in the wilderness was that there is no lesson, nothing to be learned from experience that is not already there to be learned in one's

tribal history and one's Sunday sermon at home. The wilderness was to become the frontier, and the theology of Indian-hating the metaphysics of Indian-hating, but the fundamental cultural myth of purification was to endure. The drama of conversion gave way to the drama of Revolution, a "play" that could be reenacted all along the western frontier, where the forces of progressive republicanism would liberate the wilderness from an oppressive stagnancy imposed by the Indian. Hypostatized into a metaphysical principle of history, the Revolution not only justified violence but asserted a unity of purpose among diverse factions of a heterogeneous population not yet become "a People." Ironically, the homogenization of America depended on the preservation of race and gender differences familiar to readers of the old captivity narratives. In conjunction with Revolutionary ideology, these differences enabled a construction of "American" history which simultaneously justified Indian Removal and inspired a movement toward literary nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

¹Quoted in James Axtell, *The European and the Indian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 137.

²Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), pp. 46-47.

³See Nash, *Red, White and Black*, pp. 68-121, esp. 105-6.

⁴ Cotton Mather, *India Christiana* (Boston, 1721), p. 3; c.f. Mather's "Life of John Eliot" in *Magnalia*, Book III.

⁵See Axtell, "Introduction" to *The European and the Indian*, for a discussion of the terms and methods of modern ethnology.

⁶In *The Halfway Covenant* (Princeton, 1969), Robert G. Pope provides evidence that the rhetoric of backsliding in late-seventeenth-century New England sermons did not correspond to any actual decline in church membership among the Puritan communities. Instead, the jeremiad constructs a myth expressing the inner doubts and anxieties of the still-zealous third generation. But these anxieties themselves reflect the decline of Puritan hegemony in New England as well as the increasing Indian resistance to expansion on the part of economic opportunists and pious Puritans alike.

⁷*Magnalia Christi Americana* (Hartford, Conn.: Silas Andrus and Son, 1855), p. 25.

⁸William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation* (Boston, 1856), 340-341.

⁹Wigglesworth, "God's Controversy With New England" (1662), reproduced in Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 611.

¹⁰Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975). Jennings's brilliant historical and ethnological study argues that the Puritans did not find a "virgin land," but created a "widowed land," and cloaked their violence in the rhetoric of "crusader ideology." A wealth of detail and vehement argumentation make the case convincing. But to abandon the distinction between civilized and savage would have been literally unthinkable in seventeenth century New England; Jennings finds hypocrisy in sincerely-held beliefs. The sincerity, however, does not lessen or even excuse the violence.

¹¹William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, quoted in Alan Heimert, "Puritanism, The Wilderness, and the Frontier," *The New England Quarterly* XXVI (Sept. 1953), 362.

¹²Quoted in James Axtell, *The European and the Indian*, 160.

¹³Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 111.

¹⁴Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 239.

¹⁵Quoted in Axtell, *The Indian and the European*, 134.

¹⁶Alden T. Vaughan and Daniel K. Richter, "Crossing the Cultural Divide: Indians and New Englanders, 1605-1763," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 90, pt. 1 (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), pp. 55-57. Glenda Riley summarizes the findings of this study in *Women and Indians on the Frontier, 1825-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), pp. 209-210. "A study of the gender of captives in the New England area between 1675 and 1763 indicated that 349 were male, as opposed to 186 female and 35 of undetermined gender." However, many more women than men became willing members of adoptive tribes: "Of those who chose to remain among the Indians, a greater number of females than males stayed. Although nearly a third of the female captives chose to remain, less than one in ten males stayed."

This fact suggest a number of interesting interpretations. The Indians probably chose their captives for different purposes: men for ransom, women and children for adoption. As Hawkeye notes in *The Last of the Mohicans* (New York: Penguin, 1988), the value of women on the frontier is not remotely comparable to that of men. Scorning Magua's offer to trade his captive Cora for "the long rifle" himself, Hawkeye explains, "It would be an unequal exchange, to give a warrior, in the prime of his age and usefulness, for the best woman on the frontier" (314). But the high rate of voluntary defection on the part of women might also suggest that New England society, and Puritan society in particular, had little to offer women beyond passive submission to patriarchal authority.

¹⁷*Earnest Exhortation*. Quoted in Emory Elliott, *Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 66.

¹⁸Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1965), 35.

¹⁹Mary Rowlandson, *Captivity and Restoration* (Boston, 1682), reprinted in *Norton Anthology of American Literature*,

ed. Nina Baym et. al. (New York: Norton Press, 1980).
Subsequent citations from this edition.

²⁰*The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 17.

²¹Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), p. 25.

²²Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 48.

²³*Three Essays*, p. 25.

²⁴Cotton Mather, *Days of Humiliation and Other Sermons*, p. 133.

²⁵Quoted in David Leverenz, *The Language of Puritan Feeling* (Rutgers: State University of New Jersey Press, 1980), p. 3.

²⁶Leverenz, p. 17; c.f. Kibbey, pp. 7-8.

²⁷See James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America," in *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Development*, ed. Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murrin (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1983).

²⁸Thomas Shepard, *Parable of the Ten Virgins* (London, 1660), p. 6.

²⁹John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion* (Boston, 1707), reproduced in Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 530-536.

³⁰Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan U. Press, 1973), 143-144.

³¹Slotkin, 164; 125.

³²Wilcomb Washburn, *The Indian in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 24.

³³See Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism* (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1986).

³⁴Washburn, 22.

³⁵David Leverenz, *The Language of Puritan Feeling* (Rutgers: The State University of New Jersey Press, 1980), 12-14. Emory Elliott, *Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New*

England (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 63-87.

³⁴Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1979), 33-43. Lasch uses the term to designate the modern desire for "mental health" and well-being rather than the personal salvation sought by our grim but more active ancestors. For Lasch, religion and even politics have become forms of therapy, pieces of the world's mirror in which the narcissistic individual hopes to view a comforting reflection of himself. In some ways the typological phenomenology of Puritanism represents the inverse of this process: instead of the self being constituted by reflections from the world, the world is understood as a projection of the individual's psychomachia, which in turn reflects the antitype of Christ meeting Satan in the wilderness.

³⁷Levernz, 9.

³⁸Hayden White discusses the mediating functions of "the Wild Man" in his essay "The Noble Savage Theme as Fetish," in White, *The Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1978), ch. 8.

³⁹Slotkin, 114.

⁴⁰Axtell, 240.

⁴¹For an insightful--and admiring--account of Church's heretical but pragmatic "Indianization," see Slotkin, 158-190. Church "treasured equally the praises of a New England governor and an Indian chief," and during King Philip's war prayed that his men would be "Patient, Courageous, and Prudently sparing of their Ammunition."

⁴²Cotton Mather, "Humiliations followed with Deliverances" (1697). Reprinted in *Days of Humiliation and Other Sermons* (Gainsville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970), p. 91.

⁴³Mitchell Robert Breitwieser, *Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin: The Price of Representative Personality* (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1984), 27-28.

⁴⁴Breitwieser, 27; 7.

⁴⁵Glenn Todd, introduction to *The Captivity Narrative of Hannah Duston*, Richard Bosman, ed. (San Francisco: Arion Press, 1987), 6.

⁴⁶Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

⁴⁷Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (New York: International

Publishers, 1971).

⁴⁶Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Duston Family" (1836), reprinted in *Hawthorne as Editor*, ed. Arlin Turner (Baton Rouge, 1941), pp. 131-37. Hawthorne calls Duston (as he spells the name) a "raging tigress" and a "bloody old hag," imploring her in the present tense to spare "the copper coloured babes." While Hawthorne criticizes Mather's version of the story, he shares a Puritan-like sense of the Indian's habitat and lifestyle as a kind of wilderness-condition. "Mather, like an old hard-hearted, pedantic bigot, as he was, seems trebly to exult in the destruction of these poor [Indian] wretches, on account of their Popish superstitions. Yet what can be more touching than to think of these wild Indians, in their loneliness and their wanderings, wherever they went among the dark, mysterious woods, still keeping up domestic worship, with all the regularity of a household at its peaceful fireside."

⁴⁷Kibbey, 103.

⁵⁰Walter Sussman, *Culture as History* (New York: Random House, 1973), 9.

THE ROMANCE OF INDIAN-HATING

This chapter will focus on two popular historical romances of Indian warfare written during the 1830's in order to demonstrate a relationship among the contemporary policy of Indian Removal, the uses of history that justified it, and the concurrent artistic project to create a distinctively "American" literature. The first section of my analysis will examine an American Enlightenment metaphysics of civilization which based its conclusions on its study of the "natural history" of the various races or species of man in America. This "science" was meant to comprehend what we would now call the disciplines of zoology, human physiology, anthropology, and archaeology. The point of the research, however, was not its scientific rigor but its policy implications. It should properly be called political science, but the "science" of race was fictional not only in its many untrue assumptions and conclusions, but in its very structure. The natural history of the Indian, for example, was not undertaken to gather facts but to tell a two-part story: the decline of the Indian and the rise of civilization. The two investigative parameters, nature and history, corresponded to the fictional elements of character and plot. The Indian's manifest inability to adjust could be explained by his naturally inferior character, or by his unfortunate entanglement in "history"--that is, the plotline of European expansion and conquest. In any case, the natural history of the Indian does not tell his story, but Europe's, or "America's,"--or even that of history itself,

reified as an impersonal mechanism of "progress."

The second part of the chapter examines how the abstract discourse of science or natural history translates into, and is supplemented by, the concrete dramatizations of romantic fiction, where the Indian is subjected to a different type of history but the story is still America's. My two principal examples, *The Yemassee* (1835) by William Gilmore Simms and *Nick of the Woods* (1837) by Robert Montgomery Bird, represent the two ways of justifying the expropriation of the Indian suggested by Enlightenment natural history. Simms's novel, rather complimentary to Indian character, emphasizes the historical "plot" in which that character has become enmeshed: "the inevitable progress of the Anglo-Norman" race. There is nothing particularly wrong with the Indian himself; he just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. (This story-line provided perhaps the most common argument for the Removal Act in the Congressional debates.) Bird's novel, while it also takes white supremacy and expansion for granted, stresses the squalid degeneracy and the indiscriminate bloodlust of the savage character. While Bird effectively justifies Removal, he implies that a better strategy would be to leave the Indians where they are and simply wipe them out tribe by tribe in the movement west, in a series of mini-*Revolutions* gradually liberating the wilderness from the oppressive stagnancy imposed on it by the savages. Both writers explicitly compare Indian war to the War for Independence; for Bird the genocidal liberation of Kentucky illustrates nothing less than "the efficacy of the republican

principle" itself. Both writers adapt Enlightenment natural history to the nationalism of the Jacksonian age: they want to dramatize "the American spirit" (i.e. the Nature of America as revealed by its History); and they want to embody that spirit in a distinctively "American" literature.

The starting point for my discussions of Simms and Bird will be Roy Harvey Pearce's concept of "savagism" as a culturally self-authenticating device for white America. My focus, however, will allow me to be more detailed than Pearce in my analysis of the ideological implications of the "historical" representations of the Indian. Pearce's invaluable *Savagism and Civilization* is "A Study of the Indian and the American Mind," and that mind is dominated by the belief in Manifest Destiny. "The system of thought and action [within which "the Indian" functions] is, of course, that which we associate with the ideology of progress and civilization in American culture through the 1850's."¹ But the white male American, especially the Southerner like Simms or Bird, had more than progress on his Mind. He had problems at home as well as on the frontier--notably with blacks, women, and a restless and shiftless lower class. To each of these problems the Indians of Simms and Bird are made to respond. The Indian attains his full ideological power only within the intersecting hierarchies of race, class, and gender. And the historical romance, the preferred mode of emplotting the Indian during the tragic years of Removal, attains its full ideological force only through a complex blending of the theoretically discrete discourses of science,

history, and romantic esthetics.

In order to adequately understand the Indian romance as a specific if somewhat heterogenous discursive formation, it is necessary to examine in some detail the language of natural history as it relates to the Enlightenment science of race, and show how that language translates into the cultural emplotments of American history upon which the romancers drew so freely.

I. *The Science of Race*

The wane of Puritanism in America seemed to bode well for "the Indian" and real Indians. Typecast less and less as the Devil's handservants, they began to appear more deserving of sympathy than censure. Science promised to prevail over superstitious imagination, and the Indian, upon empirical observation, would prove to be an unfortunate human being rather than a malicious demon or dog. Jefferson's Lockean environmentalism would explain the Indian's most glaring deficiencies--for Jefferson, his warlike tendency, his reliance on hunting, and his consequent lack of government--as products of his "pursuits," "manners," and "customs," not his inherently savage "nature." The Indian's history (or lack of it), not his character, was to blame for his primitive state. Thus he was susceptible to improvement under civilizing influences, if only red and white alike could lay aside their historical enmity and allow those influences to operate "naturally."

Jefferson and other Enlightenment men of the eighteenth

century advocated replacing the Biblical, typological model of history with what they generally called "natural history." For the Indian, this meant in theory that he was rescued from the demonic realm and reclaimed by the human race. Unfortunately for the adopted red orphans, however, they had merely been shuffled from one hierarchy into another. Beneath the democratic surface of environmentalism, where "all men are created equal" and circumstances determine their differences, lurks the imperative to explain scientifically why the white race has been able to create for itself such manifestly superior "circumstances." "I do not mean to deny," says Jefferson, "that there are varieties in the race of man, distinguished by their powers both of body and mind. I believe there are, as I see to be the case in the races of other animals."² Based on the available evidence, Jefferson is inclined to rank the Indian variety of man somewhere between the white and the black. While blacks ought to be freed from slavery, they should also be shipped from the country, "beyond the reach of mixture"--partly because of "deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites" but mainly because of "the real distinctions which nature has made" between the races. (Of course, because of these distinctions, prejudice itself is "natural.")³ Indian deviation from the white norm is not so blatant or insuperable. His racial differences probably consign him to certain classes within the republic (a competent yeoman, yes; a politician or natural historian, probably not) but do not compel his expulsion. In order to qualify for inclusion, the Indian need only

revolutionize his pursuits, customs, and manners--dissolve his culture and remake it in the image of white normalcy--and the nation would welcome him with open arms.

Because culture itself was conceived as a superficial veneer overlaying the "natural" man of whatever race, such a demand did not seem to Jeffersonians extreme or overbearing. Like Aylmer in Hawthorne's fable of scientific progress, they believed that "The Birthmark" of Indian culture could be lifted without disrupting the essential human being underneath. The hunting lifestyle was simply a blemish which could be cleared up--lightened--just as Jefferson's contemporary Dr. Benjamin Rush proposed to "cure" Negroes of black skin.⁴

For all of this, the most remarkable thing about eighteenth-century theories of race in America is how sincerely well-meaning they are. Jefferson wanted to free blacks from slavery, and free Indians *into* white American society, the greatest boon he could imagine for a people. Rush, with a different sense of the zoological hierarchy of the human races, wished to enable blacks to cohabit America with whites--albeit in separate "colonies"--but pronounced Indians unfit and advocated their removal for "medical" reasons. And while Jefferson was by no means averse to hazarding educated guesses about the essential natures and destinies of Indians and blacks, he at least admitted that the data were not all in.

To our reproach it must be said, that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history. (*Notes*, p. 143)

Despite their liberal intent, however, these are among the most ominous words ever written about the Indian or the black in America. The worst thing a "race" or people could possibly be subjected to is natural history of the kind Jefferson has in mind. Better to be in the sights of Hawkeye himself than "under the eyes" of the natural historian. If a race's "nature"--its "character" or essence--isn't found lacking, its "history"--the trajectory of its fortunes since coming into contact with the white man--most certainly will.²⁵

Clearly the two "empirical" parameters, racial essence and racial history, work together to produce "the Indian" or "the Negro" who will be the subject of governmental policy as well as scientific postulation or fictional representation. Had the nature of the Indian been less belligerent, for example, his history (which begins with European colonization) would have been quite different. But nature undergirds history, which is really only nature-in-action--that is, a series of concrete examples demonstrating racial essence. Far from compelling inquiry into how a given people's "nature" got that way, history provides only a narrative gloss illustrating that static essence. Plot reveals character, and character determines plot. The Indian's trajectory is a downward spiral, like that of the tragic hero or the melodramatic villain. However the character was conceived, and whatever its function in the national romance, the outcome of the story was always the same--the end of the Indian.

The essential unity of the various discourses

constructing "the Indian" of Jacksonian America cuts across the theoretical distinctions between nature and history, science and fiction, metaphysics and politics. As we will see, all of these seemingly discrete discursive forms come together in the popular genre of the historical romance, perhaps especially in the important subgenre of the romance of Indian war. Significantly, this subgenre reached its peak in popularity during the years of Indian Removal in the 1830s. Nostalgic and generally sympathetic literary representations of the Indian coexisted with a brutal "realism" in Indian policy which recognized what nature and history had been trying to say all along--that the two races were incompatible. Indian assimilation was a romantic (read: sentimental) dream; they would have to be banished to the West. But by no means do the "realistic" and "romantic" conceptions of white-Indian history contradict one another. On the contrary, the same "political unconscious" animates the romantic fiction and the realistic policy; neither can be fully understood without reference to the other.

One can begin to understand this seeming paradox by noting that assimilation or "marriage" of the Indian to white culture and his Removal from it amounted to the same thing: the whitening of the American republic.

II. Make Love or War?: Cultural Emplotments

In 1728 the Virginian William Byrd proposed standing Puritan Indian policy on its head. The Puritans had invited

the Indian into the American family provided he converted to Christianity, moved into town, forsook the hunt for the farm-- in short, became English in all but skin color. For Byrd the same mission could be undertaken in precisely the opposite sequence: first change the Indian's color, then civilized behavior will follow naturally. John Eliot and his Indian Bible might have a limited effectiveness, but "a sprightly Lover is the most prevailing Missionary that can be sent amongst these, or any other Infidels." The injustice of the Red Man's position in America is all too apparent, but the red woman can take heart--if not in her own future then in her children's: "for if a Moor may be washt white in three Generations, Surely an Indian might [be] blancht in two."⁶

This is a clubhouse joke rather than a serious policy proposal, a dig at the impotent Roundheads on behalf of the worldly-wise Cavaliers. Like much humor, however, Byrd's only exaggerates common assumptions, poses an accepted truism in refreshingly blunt language. In this case, the assumption is that on which Jefferson and Dr. Rush would operate later: that whiteness is the ideal of beauty and that color is a kind of genetic dirt which needs to be "washt" off before an individual becomes presentable in civilized society. Significantly, Byrd does not consider recruiting "sprightly Lovers" among English *women*; his sanitizing "mission" is literally paternalistic. The "marriage" of white (man) and red (woman) issues in phallogentric violence, as the Indian race is "blancht" out of existence.

A less literal, and more enduring, emplotment of the

savage-civilized wedding is that popularized by Hector St. John de Crevecoeur in his portraits of the nature and function of the "back-settler" on the American frontier. For Crevecoeur the white frontiersman enters a marriage of convenience which, if permanent for the individual, is temporary in the history of his race. Although the Indians "appear to be a race doomed to recede and disappear before the superior genius of the Europeans", the mechanism of this recession is a "class" of men, genetically white and yet "a mongrel breed, half civilized, half savage," who adopt the customs and lifestyle of the Indians they are destined to displace. Such men personify a true cultural marriage, an interpenetration of character rather than a simple subjugation of one "spouse" by the other; but it is an ill-conceived union, combining the worst rather than the best of both partners. "As old ploughmen and new men of the woods, as Europeans and new-made Indians, they contract the vices of both". The moralist in Crevecoeur laments the formation of this class--it composes, quite simply, "our bad people"--but the utilitarian in him celebrates it, and his tragic-progressive vision of history allows the celebration to drown out the lament.

Thus are our first steps trodden, thus are our first trees felled, in general, by the most vicious of our people; and thus the path is opened for the arrival of a second and better class, the true American freeholders, the most respectable set of people in this part of the world: respectable for their industry, their happy independence, the great share of freedom they possess, the good regulation of their families, and for extending the trade and the dominion of our mother country.⁷

This is the plot of Crèvecoeur's national drama: the illegitimate offspring of a profane union between Indian and European do the dirty work necessary to pave the way for their own demise at the hands of their "respectable" brothers, the true sons of "our mother country." Substitute "the Revolution" for England, and it is also the plot of the *Leatherstocking Tales* or other Indian romances like Robert Bird's *Nick of the Woods*.

Crèvecoeur does not deny the violence which is the historical price of respectability; on the contrary, he emphasizes it, along with the "lawless profligacy" and the unbounded "avarice" which fuel it. But if American history is stained red, by the unholy union of savage and civilized on the frontier and by the bloodshed it spawned, "time will efface those stains."¹⁸ As for Cotton Mather in his justification of Hannah Dustan, the holy end justifies the unholy means. But Crèvecoeur adapts this traditional racial teleology to a more secular age: his is a philosophy, not a theology, of American civilization. God may well be on our side, but more perceptibly, and more immediately to the point, nature and history are on our side. The proximate cause of the Indian's doom is not divine mandate, but "the superior genius of the Europeans"; and while past history illustrates that same genius, future history will vindicate it, "blanch" away all "stains," as Byrd might have said. No particular animus against the Indians is implied; it is simply fruitless to lament their passing. For pass they must, just as the "mongrel" frontiersmen who wed their ways to those of the

Indians must pass before the progress of the purebred Europeans. Both the character of the Indian (his nature, his "inferior genius") and the plotline in which he has become entangled (European "history" conceived as the progressive extension of "the dominion of our mother country") doom him to extinction.

Despite an explicit sympathy for the Indian, the natural history of Jefferson and the social history of Crèvecoeur are more sinister, because more insidious, than the emplotments of Mather or Byrd. They share with these earlier versions a sense of marriage as domination, or at best a temporary accommodation preparatory to masculine incorporation of the feminine--a white male version of the Black Widow myth. But they also reify the process of intercultural conflict in an extreme way: it is not men--missionaries or "sprightly Lovers"--who marry so as to subjugate the Indian, and thus could conceivably choose to contract a different kind of relationship. Rather, it is "natural history" itself acting independently of the wills of men and determining those wills. Human agency drops out of history: just as the Vanishing American is unable to change--not *unwilling* to change, for reasons that might teach white America something about itself as well as about its Indian "wards"--whites are unable to arrest their own "progress," or even alter its goals or mechanisms.

This intellectual heritage is crucial to understanding the role of the Indian in the movement for literary nationalism, which was in full swing in the 1830's, and its

relation to contemporary economic and political conditions. As I have suggested, Removal represented the assertion of a manly realism in Indian relations (and, paradoxically, a nostalgic sympathy): Indians were not about to be yeomanized, as Jefferson had hoped, nor were they going to be "blanched" out of existence by either scriptural or phallic missionaries. The romance of assimilation was over, and the sentimental idealist had best cover her eyes, because men confronting the necessities of history and nature are not always a pretty sight.

III. The Indian and Literary Nationalism

At least until quite recently, theorists and historians of American literature have almost unanimously regarded Cooper as the father (or in any case the eldest uncle) of truly "American" fiction. Of course, as Nina Baym among others has pointed out, the idea of the "American" tends to be constructed in such a way as to deny that all-important appellation to the works of women (and minorities). Defined in terms of content, "Americanness" is the original, the self-defining, the pioneering--and finally the anti-social; whereas women represent the social, the derivative, the artificial, the *domestic* in all ways--tame, house-ridden and servile. A vaguely European entity, the woman enters literary history as the enemy, the best-selling defender of the consensus, which the "best" writers fight.⁹ Baym's further and related point is that the concept of "American literature" has always taken

the latter term more or less for granted; the question has been, what is *American* literature?: "Beginning as a nationalistic enterprise, American literary history has retained a nationalistic orientation to this day" (66). Through a kind of tautological reasoning, the "literary," in America, turns out to be the kind of writing which is most "American."¹⁰

Thus the birth of American literature seems to coincide historically with the birth of *theories* of American literature, and the two are related in their efforts to wrest this prestigious cultural activity from the two "factions" that dominated its market: European writers and (American) women writers, those "scribbling women" who were later derided by Hawthorne. The obvious means of asserting both virility and cultural identity in the field of literature was by turning to the American history of Indian war: the scribbling women had never fought, and the Europeans had never fought Indians. This indigenous American "material" promised to answer the twin complaints of early American novelists (which echoed the charges of European critics): that America lacked history, and it lacked romance. As the uniquely American subject, the Indian could provide both antiquity (his history was arguably *longer* than the European's) and, as exotic villain or tragic hero, romance.

Cooper had already exploited both possibilities with his portrayals of Magua and Uncas in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). But he was also among the strongest exponents of the theory that America was too homogeneous and matter-of-fact to

furnish models for the complex and heroic characters of romance. In *Notions of the Americans* (1828) he lamented not only the American writer's competition with unprotected British novels, but also "the poverty of materials" available to the New World author.

I have never seen a nation so much alike in my life, as the people of the United States, and what is more, they are not only like each other, but they are remarkably like that which common sense tells them they ought to resemble...

...All the attempts to blend history with romance in America have been comparatively failures, (and perhaps fortunately,) since the subjects are too familiar to be treated with the freedom that the imagination absolutely requires.¹¹

Cooper's complaint is lack of materials (he would hardly complain of lack of ability to do anything with material), and he was not the first to express this lack. As Sergio Perosa points out, "the scantiness and thinness of American materials" was among the first issues raised in discussions among American authors.¹² Lacking were distinct social classes which produced not only conflict but interesting characters. Crèvecoeur had already commented on the "pleasing uniformity of decent competence" obtaining in the new republic,¹³ but for novelists republican homogeneity was a mixed blessing. Edward Tyrell Channing and James Kirke Paulding preceded Cooper in asserting the difficulty. Channing, a Harvard Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, declared in 1819 that the American middle class, "composed of sensible, industrious, upright men, whose whole experience seems at war with adventure," precluded its incorporation into "a story to call forth extraordinary and violent interest."

"With such a class of men," he continued, "we should find more instruction than entertainment, more to gratify our kind feelings and good sense than to fill our imaginations." Both Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin, of course, would have been thrilled with this state of affairs, as they would have been with the proposal of Paulding, himself a novelist, to deal with it through writing "Rational Fictions" emphasizing just that "common sense" which Cooper thought unusable.¹⁴

Other writers were far more optimistic about the potential of indigenous American "material" to inspire "extraordinary and violent interest." Perhaps the most influential of the patriotic theoreticians was William Gilmore Simms of Charleston, South Carolina. In Simms's critical writings we can see clearly how the Indian can serve as the ostensible material of the historical romance while the real subject is "American" history, which the Indian is always outside, the adversarial "other" to progress and civilization.

Simms's *View and Reviews in American Literature, History, and Fiction*, published in two volumes in 1846 and 1847, comprised "a virtual manifesto in the Young America literary wars of the 1840's." The Young America group was composed of young writers "who were liberal and radical democrats in politics, ardent nationalists in literature, and committed foes of conservatism in Whig politics and Anglophile criticism."¹⁵ *Views and Reviews* is not "radical" or even original literary criticism, nor was it to inspire the kind of great works it describes and prescribes. In retrospect, its celebration of the historical romance is eulogistic; the

document better describes the theories and practices of the 1830's than it does the 1850's. With unabashed chauvinism and boosterism, the various essays proclaim the unrivaled opportunities for American fiction, and locate those opportunities in the American past. Pervading the essays is a temporal equivalent of the Romantic esthetic of the picturesque: the object's historical distance from the self confers an imaginative freedom in its treatment. And, since romantic history is a notorious vehicle for nationalistic ideology,¹⁶ it is natural that Simms would call upon its fictional equivalent to establish a national, and nationalistic, literature.

That the overriding purpose of literature is or should be patriotic, Simms never questions. In an essay on "The Writings of James Fenimore Cooper," Simms bestows high praise on his rival's romances of the forest, the sea, and the Revolution, but reserves some mild censure for the White Novels. Not the goal, but the tone of these works is objectionable: Cooper wants to be a patriot and educate his fellow Americans, but takes a "malicious delight" in satirizing them "which it had been the better purpose of the patriot to hide if he could not heal" (290). Even works of social criticism should be gentle and vaguely reassuring. For Simms, literature is not *meant* to question values or counter hegemonic assumptions but to reinforce them. Simply put, it should make us feel good about ourselves.

Simms is not at all advocating willfully misleading propaganda. For him, the whole of American history, properly

(which is to say romantically) conceived, tends inevitably to produce a natural pride. The whole point of "American" literature, in fact, is to "naturalize" that history in two related senses. First, it must be claimed as our own; "our" history is neither a feeble offshoot of European history nor a (tragic) stage of Native American history. Second, what the uninformed might call the blemishes on our history--notably the violent expropriation of the Indian and the continuing institution of slavery--must be shown as inevitable, "natural" developments in the progress of the (English) colonies and later of the nation.

The production of great American literature depends on a domestication of the present as well as the past. Rather than a lack of material, it is the restless spirit of the nation itself that has delayed its literary coming of age. "The temptations of our vast interior keep our society in a constant state of transition. The social disruptions occasioned by the wandering habits of the citizen, result invariably in moral loss to the whole" (11). Nomadic, disorganized societies are not artistic ones. To verify this, one need only consider the example of the Indians, which Simms does in his essay on "Literature and Art Among the American Aborigines." Indians possess all of the natural faculties and sensibilities necessary to produce great art, but have failed to do so. Interestingly, the Indian produces no art because he is a kind of Emersonian transcendentalist: self-reliant, individualistic, indifferent to the praise or censure of others, virtuous but not in the way (European) social training

aims for, a lover of nature and freedom (135). The Indians lack a Homer for the same reason white Americans do: not because of "native incapacity" but because of their "pursuit and condition" (135). A consistent Jeffersonian, Simms supplements his environmentalist analysis of the problem with an agrarianist solution. What Indians--and presumably Americans in general--require in order to fulfill their artistic potential is an "amalgamation into one great family,-- in a fixed abode--addressed to the pursuits of legitimate industry, and stayed from wandering either by their own internal progress, or by the coercion of a superior power" (131). Clearly for whites "their own internal progress" will suffice to bring about this transformation; Indians, like blacks, will need to be subjected to the benevolent "coercion of a superior power." Though at this stage in his career Simms is far less polemical than in his later vehement defenses of slavery, obviously his theory of culture implies that slavery and Indian Removal should be seen as contributions to the beneficial "amalgamation" of the subject races.

Echoing the lament of Cotton Mather--"oh, how our people do Indianize"--Simms ascribes the failure of American literature to the lifestyle of Americans, and that lifestyle to the geographic and demographic peculiarities of America. It is a kind of sociological version of Buffon's theory of the degeneration of species in the New World environment, with the decisive difference that Simms conceives of "environment" as man-made as well as man-making, a historical as well as

natural condition. While the settlement of the "vast interior" of the American continent necessitates Indianization and thus entails a temporary loss of artistic capacity, this very process has transformed the hunter's environment into the artist's. Loose conglomerations of settlers have become stable communities capable of fostering and supporting serious literary enterprise. The process of Indianization, a natural part of the "internal progress" of Anglo-America, is now ready to be reversed. If this sounds remarkably like the process described by Crèvecoeur and dramatized in the *Leatherstocking Tales*, it may be because Simms's "history" is literary in its origin as well as its function.

While the American author must not be the kind of rude frontiersman Simms seems to have associated with his father,¹⁷ the American hero really should be. (Again, the writer and his "material" should be distanced, in space if not in time.) Above all, the American author "must learn to dwell often upon the narratives of the brave fathers who first broke ground in the wilderness, who fought or treated with the red men, and who, finally, girded themselves up for the great conflict with the imperious mother who had sent them forth" (17). (The conjunction of Indian fighters and revolutionary fathers is unremitting in the writings of Cooper, Simms, and Robert M. Bird, and must be analyzed in detail later.) In his own schematization of the usable past, Simms identifies four "epochs" in American history, each with its own peculiarly romantic appeal: the age of discovery (from Cabot to the founding of Jamestown): the colonial period (when adventure

and empire-building became a "duty" instead of a "phrenzy"); the Revolutionary era; and post-revolutionary exploration, expansion, and conquest (as inaugurated and personified by Daniel Boone). Lest he be accused of "reading into" history, Simms proceeds to "naturalize" his scheme in both of the senses mentioned above.

This division, however arbitrary it may seem, is one that belongs naturally to our modes of progress, and would suggest itself to the most casual inquirer into the moral steps by which we attain the several successive epochs in our national career. (76-77)

At least three of these eras (all but the Revolutionary) depend heavily for their dramatic interest on the conflict between the "brave fathers" and the "red men." (And the Revolution, as we shall see, is really the fulfillment, or antitype, of all the wars to liberate the wilderness from the savage.) Not content with general suggestions as to historical settings, Simms provides the aspiring author with epic plotlines as well. For example, his prescriptive description of the period of empire-building:

The period of which we now speak was full of incident--a rare life, teeming in animation and exertion, derived from sources of this character--from the inevitable progress of the Anglo-Norman--from the inevitable fate of the Indian--a fate as relentless as that of the victim in the Grecian drama, and which, coupled with the history of his own gods, may be wrought into forms as nobly statuesque as any that drew a nation's homage to the splintered summits of Olympus. (82-83)

Historical romance is not escapism, for it would portray large forces in operation now as at all times; the brave fathers only personify "the inevitable progress of the Anglo-Norman." And, as if there were an esthetic principle at work in history itself, "the inevitable fate of the Indian" provides a nice

counterpoint to the upward trajectory of the fathers, an ominous bass line undergirding the triumphant bugles. A tragic victim, a not-so-poor man's Oedipus, the Indian is useful insofar as he can be made "nobly statuesque," fixed in his eternal posture of defeat. Again, Simms seems to have learned his history from Cooper. His description of the empire-building epoch owes an obvious debt to Cooper's statuesque portrayal of Uncas, who appeared as "some precious relic of the Grecian chisel" in *The Last of the Mohicans* (p. 53; c.f. p. 248).

For Simms, as for the American historians of his day like George Bancroft and Francis Parkman, the best historiography should partake liberally of literary effects so as to produce that "extraordinary and violent interest" that Professor Channing felt the American audience demanded. History and literature were complementary, not distinct fields, a claim Simms himself makes in *Views and Reviews* (p. 31). David Levin describes the project of the romantic historian in terms that emphasize this point.

The subject had to be an interesting narrative, on a "grand theme," in which a varied group of remarkable, vigorous characters acted heroically on the largest possible stage. The grand theme involved the origins of a nation (preferably, in some way, America), the progress of Liberty in her battle against Absolutism, the conquest of a continent, or all of these. It included, if possible some "poetic"--that is, melancholy--incidents. The scenery had to include something of the picturesque, and as much of the sublime as possible.¹⁰

For Simms, as for his more "factually"-oriented historian contemporaries, the American past offered all of these dramatic elements. The "grand theme" (the "epic" theme as

Simms would insist in his preface to *The Yemassee*) was of course the making of America; the "poetry" or melancholy would be provided by the demise of the Indian.

Simms is hardly unique or original in his "melancholy" emplotment of the Indian. Indeed, the nostalgic vision of "the vanishing American" was so pervasive as to have attained the status, and power, of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Both advocates and opponents of the Removal Act tended to argue from this fundamental premise.¹⁹ But Simms was, above all, a literary man, and he departs from--or at least supplements--this simplistic, comforting ideology insofar as he attempts to depict the Indian as truly tragic, not simply doomed and pathetic, or viciously depraved. If only for purely formal reasons--dramatic tension, complexity of characterization--he advocates a portrayal of the Indian stressing his nobility and heroism as well as his fatal flaws. And, in the true tragic tradition, these "flaws" are really virtues, virtues in fact shared with the "brave fathers" themselves: an intense pride and spirit of independence, a profound nationalism that prefers death to subjugation. In *The Yemassee* we see how close, and yet how fatally far, the Indian is to being a true American.

Simms also seems to hold out the possibility that part of the usable past in America might be the Indian's history *as told by himself*, "the history of his own gods." But Simms is not proposing ethnohistory; on the contrary, the allure of Indian history is precisely its lack of documentation, its lack of visible monuments, its essential opacity to the white

historian. "The real genius wants but little of the absolute in fact upon which to work" (76); Indian history is not to be discovered but imagined. For the historian-romancer no less than the empire-builder there are "large liberties of conquest" (*Views*, p. 43) to be taken in Indian country. Part of the process of "naturalizing" American history is to subject the very history of the land's native peoples to "the coercion of a superior power" or authority. Simms the author would feel no compunction--indeed he would feel pride--in admitting that in *The Yemassee* the detailed descriptions of Indian rituals and the poetic transcriptions of their "traditional" songs were the pure fabrication of the author.²⁰ The material of the historical romance of Indian war is not Indians, after all, but "history" itself; and the motive force of history is the desire for conquest and expansion.

IV. The Romance of Indian War: The Yemassee

The desire to extirpate the Indian. And the contradictory desire to glorify him. Both are rampant still, today.

--D. H. Lawrence²¹

The ostensible "material" of *The Yemassee* (1835) is an uprising by the tribe of that name, along with as many as fifteen allied tribes, in 1715 South Carolina. Simms's highly fictionalized version of that war is roughly as follows. In league with the Spanish, who provide weapons and even some soldiers, the Indian confederation tries to drive the English colony back into the sea, to repel the encroachments of "civilization" once and for all. This

desperate undertaking is against the nature of the generous and hospitable Yemassee, who have previously fought alongside the Carolinians against the Tuscaroras only two years before. But the Yemassee have suffered themselves, over the course of a half-century, to be crowded further and further west. At last they are fed up with the incursions of settlers onto their lands, the abuse and cheating of traders, and above all (Simms insists several times) by a dawning sense of their own racial inferiority. In league with the other coastal tribes, they decide to make a last-ditch effort to preserve their integrity, their self-respect, their very survival. This is their War for Independence, and the novel is essentially the story of how and why they lose it.

In Simms's version, the war is decided primarily by the foresight and heroism of South Carolina's governor Charles Craven, who until the very end of the novel masquerades as the common frontiersman Gabriel Harrison. (Of course, not even the rude settlers believe for a moment that "Harrison" is common; he virtually reeks of aristocracy.) The governor, who knows the proud Indian character and is aware of the abuses of his white subjects, goes undercover on the border in order to gather intelligence and prepare the settlers for the impending war. This he is able to do, with the result that the Indian armies meet with fierce and unexpected resistance on their way to Charleston. Returning to the capital, Craven institutes martial law, recruits 400 loyal slaves as well as all able-bodied white

men, and is able to repulse the native war party. Seizing the initiative from his demoralized foes, he pursues them back through the woods and swamps and sets up an ingenious ambush in which the insurgents are wiped out, not a single warrior surviving.

There was in fact a Yemassee (or Yamasee) War, the Indians did lose it, and there was a Governor Craven who presumably contributed to his colony's victory. As we will recall, however, "the true genius wants but little of the absolute in fact upon which to work," and these essential facts (or "material") are all that Simms went to work with. Simms had several good reasons for elevating Craven to the status of romantic hero, none of which had to do with documented historical fact. First, he wanted his novel to sell, and believed (correctly) that he would need a love interest on the highest plane. (The dashing Craven successfully woos the beautiful and unaccountably ladylike frontier wench Bess Matthews.) Second, Simms utilizes Craven to dramatize his theory of the "natural" authority of the aristocrat: as "Harrison" the governor commands scarcely less respect than he would have as his "real self." Finally, Craven personifies the ideal qualities of "the Anglo-Norman race" which make the Indian defeat inevitable. Craven's character does more than pander to the romantic cult of the hero; it also explains and justifies Simms's theory of civilization.

Craven represents a "type" familiar to American readers of history as well as historical romance, the

"natural" or "progressive" man. David Levin's characterization of this typical figure describes Craven as well as any of the heroes of the historians he studies.

The progressive man was usually an energetic, warm-hearted protestant cutting through the layers of artificial forms that unnatural intellects had wrapped around the simple truths of politics and religion. The natural man was an active man, usually taught as much by experience as by books; the reactionary forces that opposed him often included "theorists," "casuists," "philosophers."²²

One of the "reactionary forces" Craven must contend with is the Reverend John Matthews, "an old English Puritan" (23) and father of the governor's beloved Bess. Within the love plot the humorless Matthews provides opposition to the prospective match (which we see is as inevitable as the English victory over the Yemassee) as well as a foil for the wit and easy manner of the cavalier Craven. Within the war plot Matthews illustrates the naivete of beautiful and just sentiments in regard to race relations. Informed by Harrison-Craven of the impending Indian war, the minister exclaims, "Why do we thus seek to rob them of their lands? When, O Father of mercies, when shall there be but one flock of all classes and colours, all tribes and nations, of thy people...?" Harrison replies to the effect that we will be one flock once we *have* stolen all their lands.

"The prayer is a just one, and the blessing desirable; but, while I concur with your sentiment, I am not willing to agree with you that our desire to procure their land is at all inconsistent with the prayer. Until they shall adopt our pursuits, or we theirs, we can never form the one community for which your prayer is sent up; and so long as the hunting lands are abundant, the seductions of that mode of

life will always baffle the approach of civilization among the Indians." (136-7)

Matthews learns the folly of his "guileless," sentimental, idealistic pacifism (his femininity, we might say) when he is nearly killed and scalped the first night of the war.

"Puritanism" and its strategies--appeasement, conciliation, conversion--are unrealistic means of advancing the cause of civilization for either race. Simms's Indian romance is meant to reveal this fundamental reality: that the metaphysical principle, the very "nature," of civilization is progress, and its mechanism is war. To emphasize the transcultural validity of this revelation, Simms often has it expressed in the words and thoughts of Sanutee, chief of the Yemassee and meritocratic counterpart to Craven. Sanutee had welcomed the settlers as brothers ("with a sentiment rather more Christian than Indian").

But his eyes were now fully opened to his error. It is in the nature of civilization to own an appetite for dominion and extended sway, which the world that is known will always fail to satisfy...Conquest and sway are the great leading principles of her existence, and the savage must join in her train, or she rides over him relentlessly in her onward progress. Though slow perhaps in her approaches, Sanutee was sage enough at length to perceive all this, as the inevitable result of her progressive march. (76)

The Yemassee themselves had been riding the conquest train, forging their own great nation by subduing and subsuming their local rivals: "Like the Romans, in this way they strengthened their own powers by a wise incorporation of the conquered with the conquerors" (10). Now Sanutee

perceives that his own people are threatened with "incorporation."

To his credit, Sanutee understands the Simmsian theory of the progressive unification of the world under the rule of the strongest. To his further credit, he perceives the racial basis of that theory and foresees the dire consequences for his people of becoming incorporated by the English, whether by conquest or by appeasement and assimilation. Sanutee is an Enlightenment noble savage, "a philosopher not less than a patriot," and he understands with Jefferson that racism is as natural as the fact that the human eye perceives color.

He well knew that the superior must necessarily be the ruin of the race which is inferior--that the one must either sink its existence in with that of the other, or it must perish. He was wise enough to see, that, in every case of a leading difference betwixt classes of men, either in colour or organization, such difference must only and necessarily eventuate in the formation of castes; and the one conscious of any inferiority, whether of capacity or of attraction, so long as they remain in propinquity with the other, will tacitly become subjects if not bondmen. (22)

Sanutee could only have learned this "natural" law of society by observing the fate of blacks in the English colony, for no similar "necessity" prevailed in the Yemassee nation; the subordinate tribes were compelled to fight alongside their "Roman" conquerors, but were not enslaved by them.

Sanutee is too much the proud "patriot" to consider absorption, and too much the nationalist to consider moving from his homeland. In these sentiments he is representative of his tribe; indeed, the Yemassee "chiefs

were elective, and from these the superior, or presiding chief, was duly chosen; all of these, without exception were accountable to the nation" (82). Sanutee, the popular favorite, is able to turn the tribe into a band of "revolutionists" (100, 291) rebelling not only against the appeasement policy of the decadent older chiefs but against the tyranny of a felt inferiority to what is rapidly becoming a ruling "caste"--that is, the English. Like the united Anglo-American colonies sixty years later, the Yemassee League chose to revolt against paternalistic government by foreigners. Tragically--since their motives in so many ways foreshadowed those of the "brave fathers" of 1776--their sense of inferiority was justified, and they were doomed to fail.

In no way is this inferiority a moral or spiritual one. Following Natty Bumppo's theory of red and white "gifts," Simms does not criticize the Indians' methods of warfare: "'deception with them is the legitimate morality of the warrior'" (137). Scalping and torture, while described in almost lovingly lurid detail, serve similarly legitimate ceremonial purposes within Indian culture. Nor does Simms condemn the oft-criticized "warlike nature" of the Indians, since "conquest and sway" are the mechanisms of progress. Further, in this particular war, the Yemassee League has a plethora of concrete, and compelling, reasons to fight. (Indeed, had they not gone to war, Simms implies, they would have been like servile Negroes, hardly suitable "material" for an "epic" romance.) Simms recognizes that

the warlike "nature" so often attributed to the American native by Europeans is in part produced by "a system of foray" instituted by rival European powers in the New World who use the Indians to wage war while allowing their monarchs to retain the illusion of peaceful relations (252). And, though they remain vague and abstract, Simms acknowledges "the frequent aggressions of the whites, the cheats practised by some of their traders, and other circumstances" (284). Some of "our European ancestors," he admits, were simply "monstrous great rascals" (244).²³

Moral arguments for the extermination or expropriation of the Indian, for Simms, were simply Puritanical hypocrisy. In *Views and Reviews* he was to argue for a kind of realism which acknowledges "our blinding prejudices against the race--prejudices which seem to have been fostered as necessary to justify the reckless and unsparing hand with which we have smitten them in their habitations, and expelled them from their country. We must prove them unreasoning beings, to sustain our pretensions as human ones--show them to have been irreclaimable, to maintain our own claims to the regards and respect of civilization" (142). Consistent with his view of progress as a natural and not a moral law, Simms concedes that in this great conflict of cultures, "abstract justice" clearly favors the Indian, and any attempt to cloak the will to power in the vestments of Christian benevolence is, to use Francis Jennings' phrase, "the cant of conquest."

An abstract standard of justice, independent of

appetite or circumstance, has not often marked the progress of Christian (so-called) civilization, in its proffer of its great good to the naked savage. The confident reformer, who takes sword in one hand and sacrament in the other, has always found it the surest way to rely chiefly on the former agent. (*The Yemassee*, p.22)

Simms's moral modesty is exceeded only by his martial confidence. But he can only gaze admiringly on the spectacle of the Vanishing American, who has chosen to die by the sword rather than be reformed by it. Simms's "realism" is in fact a *Realpolitik*, a metaphysics of civilization based on the inevitable conquest (or "reform") of the weak by the strong. The fundamental assumption of this metaphysics is that people of different races can never live together except in a master-servant relationship. Assuming this, and admiring the Indian spirit of independence, Simms must have endorsed the Removal policy in effect as he wrote his novel in 1835, and in fact *The Yemassee* presents numerous variations on the benevolent realist's argument for this policy. Hugh Grayson, the moody intellectual of the Carolina frontier, states the case for Removal as eloquently and poignantly as his author could make him:

...it is utterly impossible that the whites and Indians should ever live together and agree. The nature of things is against it, and the very difference between the two, that of colour, perceptible to our most ready sentinel, the sight, must always constitute them an inferior caste in our minds. Apart from this, an obvious superiority in arts and education must soon force upon them the consciousness of their inferiority. When this relationship is considered, in connexion with the uncertainty of their resources and means of life, it will be seen that, after a while, they must not only be inferior, but they must become dependant. When

this happens, and it will happen with the diminution of their hunting lands, circumscribed, daily, more and more, as they are by our approaches, they must become degraded, and sink into slavery and destitution...They lose by our contact in every way; and to my mind, the best thing we can do for them is to send them as far as possible from communion with our people. (291-2)

This is essentially the argument of Andrew Jackson himself, who, speaking as a "father" concerned about the future of his Indian "children," advised them to move west of the Mississippi in order to escape "the mercenary influence of the white men."²⁴ And, as we have seen, Sanutee, the philosophic savage, perceives "the nature of things" as outlined by Grayson. We should note, however, that not all "savages" ascribed to this reified view of history that casts concrete historical conflicts as the inevitable results of "natural" forces. In 1829 the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the tribal newspaper, protested Removal and questioned its metaphysical justification by citing specific governmental policies as causes for the decline of the Southern tribes, not the abstract "nature of things."

The causes which have operated to exterminate the Indian tribes, that are produced as instances of the certain doom of the whole aboriginal family...did not exist in the Indians themselves nor in the will of Heaven, nor simply in the intercourse of Indians with civilized man; but they were precisely such causes as are now attempted by the state of Georgia; by infringing upon their rights; by disorganizing them, and circumscribing their limits.²⁵

Unfortunately such clear-eyed descriptions went unheeded, largely because of simple greed, but perhaps even more because the power of a set of ideas (about civilization and savagery, society and race, history and nature) was such that if Cherokee society for instance did not seem to bear

out their validity, that society would be changed (forcibly if necessary), not the ideas.

Similarly, if certain episodes in American history seemed to challenge Jacksonian ideology, it was not because those ideas needed to be qualified or complicated; rather, those historical episodes needed to be rewritten in light of the ideas. Simms does this with the Yamasee War, which was not decided by the heroism of Governor Craven or anyone else, but was really a decisive victory for the English colonial system of promoting intertribal hostility so as to foster Indian dependence on trade in slaves and guns. The proximate cause of the English victory was not the Governor's foresight but the unforeseeable eleventh-hour decision of the Cherokees to take the side of the Carolinians rather than the Indian confederacy. This powerful interior tribe had wavered for four months, wooed by both sides, before deciding that trade with the English was too valuable to lose. Had they decided otherwise, the English presence south of Virginia may well have been ended. Gary Nash summarizes the Cherokee reasoning and its consequences:

It was the Cherokees' dependency on English trade goods that finally swung them against the Creeks [the primary emissaries of the confederacy]. As they told the Carolinians, unless they were at war with the Creeks "they should have no way in getting of Slaves to buy ammunition and Clothing" from the white traders... ..When the Cherokees refused to join the Creeks, the English policy of divide and rule, practiced so extensively in the New World, prevailed. When the English promised them a shower of trade goods for their help, the Cherokees accepted the payoff rather than risk a prolonged war with the Europeans. Even with the best opportunity since the arrival of

the English at hand, the Cherokees chose to assist rather than to assault the white colonists.²⁶

By making Craven into a Romantic hero, Simms mystifies the Southern system of colonial exploitation. Further, he "naturalizes" New World history in the two ways I have suggested earlier. First, he appropriates that history for the branch of "the Anglo-Norman race" that is destined to become American. The key players in the war are all Englishmen; the decisive role of the Cherokees is ignored. And in attributing the victory to racial character rather than political process (the heroism and foresight of Craven rather than the policy of the Cherokees) Simms removes that specific conflict from history and locates it in the eternal realm of "the nature of things." History is used ahistorically, as an opportunity to meditate on the "natural history" of the races and its role in a metaphysics of civilization based on the progress of the stronger race through conquest, and of the weaker through its "amalgamation" under "the coercion of a superior power."

Of the inferior races, the black, due to his complacency, docility, and loyalty to kind masters--his canine nature, we might say--can remain in Southern society as a useful member of the family. For the feline Indian--fiercely independent, solitary denizen of the dark woods and swamps--domestication seems impossible, and his amalgamation should take place, in Hugh Grayson's words, "as far as possible from communion with our people." The

Indian is a dangerous "panther," while the blubbering objections of Hector, Craven's loyal slave, to the Governor's offer of freedom (pp. 391-2; probably the most oft-quoted passage in the novel by modern commentators) can only be compared to the whining of a house dog being forced to go outside. (In an apt and probably intentional symbol, Hector is usually anchored to the leash of Craven's bloodhound Dugdale. The two perform similar service for, and are awarded with similar "respect" and appreciation by, their big-hearted master.) But like "man's best friend," the slaves are eminently useful; in fact, it is they who do most of the dirty work of hacking and bludgeoning the Indians to death in the novel's climactic massacre. "As wild almost as the savages" (406), still they know a winning team when they see one, and do not think of turning their weapons on their owners.

While Simms's theory of civilization pervades the novel, we must not forget that he was a professional man of letters first and a philosopher only incidentally. His purpose was commercial as well as didactic--to write a novel that made money. He had to "sell" his story and its attendant vision of American culture to an audience composed primarily of women. And sell it he did; the novel was a huge success. The dashing and good-humored Craven, who combines the courage and woodcraft of Leatherstocking with the sensitivity of an Effingham, clearly was calculated to appeal to a feminine audience as much as to

demonstrate that good breeding does not necessarily equal sissiness. But the portrayals of "the gentler sex" in *The Yemassee* must also have struck a chord of response in his readers. None of the novel's women are particularly original, but to identify them as conventional is to beg the question of why those conventions seemed to have such a peculiar hold on the novel-reading imagination in 1835. It may be the configuration of the women characters, constructing a composite definition of the feminine, rather than any one of the individuals which provides the key to this attraction. One way of describing this configuration in *The Yemassee* is to say that the four main female characters represent distinct types we could call the lady, the woman, the man-woman, and the transcendent Mother. Another way is to say these types represent, respectively, the useless, the worse-than-useless, the useful, and the Indian.

To begin with the most familiar case, the "lady" heroine Bess Matthews is strictly fictional--too good to be true. As J.V. Ridgely comments, "Like every other beautiful, virginal, intelligent heroine of this period of American fiction, Bess strikes us as having been constructed of some chemical compound known only to novelists."²⁷ Useless in the war itself, she contributes mightily to the *meaning* of the war by representing all of the virtues threatened by the savage and by the howling wilderness itself. In one scene, a Simmsian tour de farce meant to dramatize the exotic perils of nature in the New

World, Bess wanders the woods in a Wordsworthian rapture until nature reaches out and almost bites her--literally. She has been hypnotized by a rattlesnake, and is only just saved before she can reach out and pluck what she perceives to be a flower in the pattern of the serpent.²⁸ And of course her ebon tresses are threatened by the scalp-knife of a Yemassee chieftain (not the noble Sanutee): in a remarkably voyeuristic scene we see Bess in bed, "a picture softening any mood but that of the habitual murderer," and are treated to the prospect of a knife plunging into her half-exposed "fair bosom." Bess contributes most to the drama when she is asleep or dreaming.

Worse than useless is Hugh Grayson's mother, whose heartfelt religious convictions are admirable until, hidden from the Indians in the woods, she commences belting out songs of praise and entreaty to Providence in a situation where her survival and that of her sons and neighbors depends on absolute silence. But another woman character provides a kind of alternative role-model to Bess: Mrs. Granger, the wife of an Indian trader. To keep her in her place Simms never endows her with a given name--she is always "the wife of Granger"--but she overshadows her husband and many other males with her manly resourcefulness and resolve. In her big scene she holds down the undefended upper floor of the blockhouse--the bungling men have broken the ladder--by levering an encroaching Indian's arm across the window sill and inflicting a gruesome compound fracture ("the jagged splinters of the broken limb

were thrust up, lacerating and tearing through flesh and skin"), causing the Indian to hurtle to his death (354). She is described as "masculine" (102, 141) and as "a woman with a man's spirit" (351-2). Apparently Simms was so concerned with defeminizing his heroic virago that he committed an unconscious slip at one point in relating that "the wife of the trader...had contrived to busy himself in one corner with the wares of her husband" (332-3).

Sanutee's wife Matiwan completes Simms's portrait of the frontier feminine. First it must be noted that Matiwan is not representative of her race; the general run of Indian women calls to mind the witches of *Macbeth* (189). But Matiwan represents the transcendence of race by gender: both of her big scenes subvert the "patriotic" purposes of her husband. In the first, she saves her son, the traitor Occonestoga, from the ignomy of having his tribal tatoos burned off by mercifully tomahawking him to death. In the second, she helps Craven escape from captivity in the Yemassee village because she wishes to spare his mother the anguish she is enduring over the death of her own son (276-280). In doing so, she effectively dooms her husband and her nation to certain death, for (as Simms would have it) Craven is the difference in the war. In a bizarre plot twist that exploits the sentimental cult of motherhood, Simms has Matiwan decide the fate of her own people by allowing her maternal "instincts" to override her personal and racial interests. Womanhood overcomes Indianness--as if the two were abstract qualities at war with one another.

Simms's scheme of the frontier feminine is calculated to provide something for all of his women readers. For the young unwed reader there is the irreproachable example of Bess Matthews. For the less young, ambitious feminist the example of Mrs. Granger suggests itself. (This reader is duly warned, however, that she risks unsexing herself.) And for the matrons, the character of Matiwan demonstrates maternal power and also panders to the liberal, and sentimental (for Simms), belief that all women, if not all men, are created equal. For Simms the woman, like the Puritan John Matthews, remains outside of history, unable or unwilling to comprehend the reality of progress-by-conquest. Even the active women, those who make a difference in the war, do so only by betraying their sex (the wife of Granger) or their race (Matiwan).

In the apocalyptic final scene, the reality principle reasserts itself, and Simms's theories of race and gender take their proper places with respect to the mechanism of progress. Bess and Mrs. Granger are safe within the walls of Charleston, and the men and their slaves have hunted down the remaining Indian revolutionists. Lured into ambush by a Craven strategem, the Indians find themselves hopelessly surrounded, and fight a last heroic but doomed battle. The slaves especially revel in the massacre, "a pursuit to them so very novel," and go about their business a bit overzealously, "frequently inflicting the most unnecessary blows, even upon the dying and the dead" (406). But the deaths themselves are necessary. Extermination of

the weak is the legitimate strategy of civilization; those who won't be slaves will be corpses. Simms means to reconcile two seemingly conflicting imperatives: to inspire the "extraordinary and violent interest" of his readers, but also to comfort them, to reassure them that the violence of American history was, if not exactly justified (by "an abstract standard of justice"), necessary and inevitable. The reader can be shocked at the shards of bone jutting through the arm of Mrs. Granger's victim, or the brains of an Indian victim splattering on Craven's face (263), and still be comforted by the larger picture of civilization, in 1715, already advancing toward the 1830's. Warm and fuzzy generalizations take the edge off the hatchets of the bloodthirsty slaves. Conversely, the warm personal touch of Craven, last seen leading Matiwán "tenderly away" from the gory battlefield, redeems him from the cold-blooded necessity of slaughtering every last man in the Yemassee nation. It was nothing personal, after all; "the nature of things" compelled it.

Finally we can console ourselves with the "fact" that "the Anglo-Norman race" is scrupulously discriminating as to whom it kills in its wars of progress. Craven spares the blow of a slave meant for Matiwán, and the transcendent mother is spared. Unlike the Indians and the blacks, white warriors grant noncombatant immunity to women and children. If Simms questions the abstract justice of the Indian wars, he affirms that at the very least we have fought bad wars well. Robert Montgomery Bird, the Southern contemporary of

Simms, goes a step farther by elevating the single "fact" of Indian indiscriminacy into a moral imperative to exterminate the race. *The Yemassee* is primarily about why the Indian wars were fought; Bird's *Nick of the Woods* is about how they were fought. Simms shows why the Indian must necessarily disappear; Bird shows why they *deserve* to disappear.

U. *The Chivalry of Indian-Hating in Nick of the Woods*

"The man that deals unfairly by a woman can be but a mongrel, lad, for the Lord has made them helpless on purpose that we may gain their love by kindness and sarvice."

--Natty Bumppo²⁹

Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods, or The Jibbenainosay. A Tale of Kentucky* (1837) recounts the wilderness adventures of two well-born Virginia cousins, Edith and Roland Forrester. Defrauded of their inheritance through the machinations of the villain Richard Braxley, the Forresters travel west to seek their fortunes. Braxley, however, seeking to cement his shaky legal claim to the Forrester estate, contrives to have Edith captured by Indians so that he can coerce her into marrying him. Roland is not quite bungling enough to nullify the titanic efforts of his new Kentucky friends--in particular those of the mysterious Quaker, Nathan Slaughter. The Indians are exterminated, Braxley killed (and scalped), Edith rescued, and the Forresters safely reestablished in their Virginia manor, where their more-than-familial affection presumably flourishes forever after.

As in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, however, the romantic plot is intersected and overshadowed by the story of the wilderness hero, the mediator between savagery and civilization. Nathan Slaughter, scorned by the settlers as unmanly and unpatriotic for his apparent refusal to kill Indians, turns out to be Nick of the Woods, the Jibbenainosay or "spirit who walks" to the Indians, the deadliest Indian-hater of all Kentucky. True to his faith, Slaughter had tried to befriend the Indians, only to have them murder his family before his eyes, bludgeon and scalp him, and leave him for dead. But he survived, forsook farming for hunting, quickly gained woodcraft that would have made Leatherstocking envious, and devoted his life to killing and mutilating any and all Indians who crossed his path. (Slaughter not only scalps his prey, but carves a cross in its chest--surely an ironic reference to Cooper's "man without a cross.") By the novel's end, Nathan's true vocation is revealed to his appreciative neighbors, but he remains homeless, internally torn by the contradictory injunctions of Quakerism and vengeance. Eminently useful in the campaign to wrest Kentucky from the savages, he will never share in the Edenic fruits of its success.

Oddly enough, through this mixture of the conventional upper-class romance and American forest Gothic, Bird meant to dramatize nothing less than "the efficacy of the republican principle" itself. As described in the first preface to *Nick*, this principle animated an ambitious lower class to improve itself by improving the "great

ultramontane Wilderness" of the West. Originating in "the humbler spheres of life," a rag-tag bunch of emigrants tried to convert "a desert hunting-ground into the home of civilized men." And within sixteen years they had succeeded, had "wrested from the savage the garden-land of his domain, and secured to their conquest all the benefits of civil government and laws," and Kentucky became a state in 1792.

Bird's tale, however, is set in 1782, during the "wresting" stage, when law and order was still far on the eastern horizon. That same year witnessed the publication of Crèvecoeur's *Letters From an American Farmer*, which outlines the identical mechanism of "progress" that Bird sees in retrospect. Crèvecoeur's "mongrel breed" of useful but immoral backwoodsmen have already begun the process that, as he predicts in "What Is An American?," "will change in a few years that hitherto barbarous country into a fine, fertile, well-regulated district. Such is our progress; such is the march of the Europeans toward the interior parts of this continent. In all societies there are off-casts; this impure part serves as our precursors or pioneers..." Crèvecoeur notes that the pioneers "are often in a perfect state of war" against the wilderness and its human representatives, the red men.³⁰ Bird concurs, and his novel is meant to dramatize this "perfect state," where Indian-killing is the primary, almost the only activity of "civilized men"--or rather the white savages who cleared the way for civilized men. But Bird has a much higher

opinion of "the humbler spheres" than Crèvecoeur, and a much lower opinion of their Indian foes.

The expropriation and colonization of Indian country, for Bird, is justified by its mechanism: the manly exertions of an expanding yeoman class. But *Nick of the Woods* illustrates a far more complex mechanism than its author intended. It shows how the colonizing impulse creates, and depends upon, the production of specific racial, sexual, and social differences. Furthermore, it shows how these sites of ideology are made to interlock to form a seamless, "natural" portrait of that "perfect state of war" which is the American frontier. The "manly" work of Indian-killing precludes the participation of aristocratic (i. e. squeamish and citified) men and excludes women. The woman contributes to progress on the frontier primarily through being killed or captured by Indians and so justifying massive retaliation against that cruel and ungentlemanly race. Thus the material exigencies of clearing the Kentucky "garden-land" of its original inhabitants take on the significance of a holy war justified by a peculiar lower-class chivalry of Indian-hating.

This circle of ideology is masked or naturalized most obviously by lifting it out of history, making it simply an instance of a metaphysic of progress-through-conquest in operation. Headed with an epigraph from *Paradise Lost*, the novel's first chapter begins by painting Kentucky in the most richly romantic hues. It is an "Eden," "a second

elysium," as fertile a field for imaginative as for land speculation.

The Dorado of the Spaniards, with its cities built of gold, its highways paved with diamonds and rubies, was not more captivating to the brains of Sir Walter Raleigh and his fellow freebooters of the sixteenth century, than was the KENTUCKY of the red men, with its fertile fields and ever-blooming forests, to the imaginations of their descendants, two hundred years after. (39)

Nothing could be more natural than to want Kentucky; and nothing could be more natural than to take what one wants, as did the Vandals to whom an emigrant party is compared (41). The appeals to history and the appeals to Christian mythology work the same way: to dehistoricize the war for Kentucky by embedding war itself solidly within "the nature of things." Killing the Indians who occupy the Kentucky garden, in this view, is justified simply because they won't leave; but Bird employs an ideological arsenal to ensure that his readers understand that Indian war is not only necessary but moral.

The cornerstone of this ideology is the familiar distinction between the savage Indian and the civilized white. Bird is not interested in subtle philosophizing about whether savagery is innate or environmental, whether the savage can be civilized, whether distinctions can be drawn among savages. He bases his portrait of the Indian--and in fact his entire frontier society--on one simple "fact": that Indians kill and even scalp women, while white men do not. This is the Red Man's Original Sin, as it were, for which he must be expelled from the Kentucky Eden.

In his preface, Bird forewarns the reader not to expect to encounter any noble savages in his "Tale of Kentucky."

The single fact that [the Indian] wages war-- systematic war--upon beings incapable of resistance or defence,--upon women and children, whom all other races in the world, no matter how barbarous, consent to spare,--has hitherto been, and we suppose, to the end of our days will remain, a stumbling-block to our imagination. (29)

Needless to say, there are no tomahawk-wielding Hannah Dustans in *Nick of the Woods*. The more helpless women are, the more heinous the Indians' crime and the more laudable the white male enterprise--killing Indians--which makes Kentucky safe for them, the "valuable chattel" borne along by the Vandals. Furthermore, Indian men treat their own women so badly that the latter are at least deserving of some pity. Bird describes a set of Indian cornfields, "fields enriched by the labor, perhaps also by the tears, of their oppressed and degraded women" (264). Given their oppression, "the fierce and unappeasable malice [toward captives], that was in those days seen rankling in the breast of many an Indian mother"--malice that "might have put warriors to shame" (284)--can be understood. In determining how savage or civilized a race is, the index is how the women act and are treated. By this criterion, the Indians damn themselves as surely as they do by esteeming "the golden ringlets of a girl as noble a trophy of valor as the grizzled locks of a veteran soldier" (282). Women should not be scalped--nor should they work in cornfields.³¹

Bird's savagism is based on ideological assumptions

about gender as well as race (not to mention a willful misreading of history), and his criticism of noble savagism--as exemplified by Irving's King Philip, Cooper's Uncas, and Simms's Sanutee--is based on its relation to class issues. In his preface to the revised edition of *Nick* in 1853, he responds to attacks by "the critical gentry" on his unremittingly hostile portrayal of Indians. Bird asserts that the noble savage is a figment of an effete aristocratic imagination, while he has "confined him[self] to real Indians" (32). His "realism" is to serve as an antidote to the "poetical" spell cast by Cooper and his French influences: "such conceptions as *Atala* and *Uncas* are beautiful unrealities and fictions merely, as imaginary and contrary to nature as the shepherd swains of the old pastoral school of rhyme and romance" (32). By linking Cooper to Chateaubriand (and Marmontel), Bird implies that his famous forebear is not only idealistic and pastoral but unAmerican. Only a Frenchman or an Englishman (like the "polite" William Harrison Ainsworth, to whom Bird responds later in the preface) could take exception to Bird's racial realism. Americans, who experience Indian war directly, cannot afford such sentimental and "poetical illusions" about Indian character. Cooper, frenchified and aristocratic, is sheltered by his wealth and position; Bird is the champion of the lower-class emigrant-frontiersmen, the true sons of the Revolution.

For Bird as for his Kentucky heroes, there is in fact a revolutionary imperative to liberate Kentucky from an

oppressive Indian stagnancy. Forrester, who acquitted himself well in the recent War, explains his mission: "'I will plunge into the forest, and scatter it as I have seen a band of Tories scattered by my old major'" (46). Later, describing the disgust of the true Kentuckians for Slaughter's Quaker pacifism, Bird explains that religious qualms "no more exempted him from contempt and persecution in the wilderness, than it did others of his persuasion in the Eastern republics, during the war of the revolution" (79). Patriotism demands violence: like the nation itself, Kentucky was baptised in blood.

The liberation and purification of the wilderness requires a special breed of white man. He must be a kind of natural aristocrat--like Roland, "faithful to the honor and integrity of spirit which conducted the men of that day, the mighty fathers of the republic, through the vicissitudes of revolution to the rewards of liberty" (326). But unlike the knights who conquered the British, the frontier soldier can not afford to indulge in mercy for the enemy, and "sublime military ardor" must be supplemented by barbaric cruelty. Roland's squeamishness upon seeing his white compatriots scalp the fresh corpses of their vanquished Indian foes simply reveals his ignorance of frontier necessity.

Such is the practice of the border, and such it has been ever since the mortal feud, never destined to be really ended but with the annihilation, or civilization, of the American race, first began between the savage and the white intruder. [Scalping] was, and is, essentially, a measure of retaliation, compelled, if not justified, by the ferocious example

of the red-man. Brutality ever begets brutality; and magnanimity of arms can only be exercised in the case of a magnanimous foe. With such, the wildest and fiercest rover of the frontier becomes a generous and even humane enemy. (257)

Interestingly, Bird holds out the possibility of the "civilization" of the Indian, but his model of mimetic, retaliatory violence undercuts this possibility: if "brutality ever begets brutality," then the cycle of violence is perpetual and self-generating. It can only end, as does the novel, with the extermination of the enemy and the establishment of a new "border," upon which the same dynamic, the same "practice," begins again.³²

Frontier Indian war, then, is a revolution in two senses: an overthrowing of the wilderness status quo, and a cyclical pattern of recurrence. As long as there are land-hungry lower classes, land to be "liberated," and white women to protect, America can continually reenact its revolutionary origins without threatening its own political identity. The discontent of the "humbler spheres" can be displaced from the American government or the landed gentry (like the Forresters) onto an enemy more unequivocally unAmerican than even the English.

By making the ostensible heroes of the novel, Forrester and his cousin Edith, dispossessed aristocrats, Bird would seem to betray his avowed allegiance to "the humbler spheres." But Forrester's republican allegiance during the Revolution and his willingness to make his own identity out west redeem him somewhat. Furthermore, the Forresters highlight the virtues of the frontier--by

displaying none of them. Roland is snobbish, has no woodcraft or understanding of forest tactics (despite his surname), and willfully ignores the advice of those who do. He apologizes to the dainty Edith for bringing her among people "'but one degree elevated above the Indians, with whom they contend'" (45), but of course owes to these same people his own life and Edith's many times over by the end. Even his absurdly stagey dialogue ("'Sdeath!" he exclaims at one point) highlights the richly humorous frontier "roaring" of Ralph Stackpole and the crude dialect of those who speak ungrammatically but carry a potent hatchet.

For her part, Edith is fair, pure, swooning, and utterly helpless and useless. Though we are often assured that she suffers her (inevitable) Indian captivity bitterly, she seem unconscious most of the time. The villain Braxley has what would seem to be the only possible motive for desiring her: she is an heiress and he wants her estate. (Characteristically, when Roland learns of the plot, he is more distressed at Braxley's "presumption" than his tactics [232].) Bird makes no effort to endow Edith with any but the most conventional identity; drained of individuality, she functions all the more clearly as a sign of "womanhood." The chivalry of the rude knights of Kentucky is organized around loyalty not to an aristocracy but to the sign of pale, fragile femininity. Femininity not only defines the moral significance of white-Indian conflict, but defines racial character itself: it is that which the Indian violates. The fates of the Indian and the

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woman are inextricably linked: the bloodier the former, the more bloodless the latter. The one becomes a rigid corpse, the other a rigidified abstraction.

The noble white males--even the outlaw Ralph Stackpole--will sacrifice life and limb to save even the insipid Edith. So will old Emperor, the loyal black slave of the Forresters who is killed during their capture. For all his willingness, however, Emperor lacks the intelligence and resourcefulness of the white Indian-fighters. Blacks are often linked syntactically with Indians in the epithets of the frontiersmen, as when Roaring Ralph clarifies his philogeny for Roland: "'I am neither hog nor dog, Injun nor outlandish niggur, but a man,--a man, strannger!'" (97). Indians are "red niggurs" (48) or "half-niggurs" (179); but in the Kentucky ethnology such terms constitute slander of the black race. Stackpole speaks for his neighbors when he relates his conviction that "'the red abregynes war the rale children of Sattan, and niggurs only the grand-boys'" (265). Indians are not only brutal and cowardly (engaging in an indiscriminate "scalp-hunt--which we dignify with the name of war," as Bird insists in his preface [32]), but their speech is redundant and stupid, their music monotonous, their emotions shallow and violently capricious, and their village squalid beyond the power of the English language to signify. There is a "street, (if such could be called the irregular winding space that separated the two lines of cabins composing the village)," a "public square--if such we may call it," and a "rude

shed...which custom had dignified with the title of Council-house" (277).

Red and black have no place on the dark and bloody ground of Kentucky. The slave is an aristocratic superfluity in the self-making, self-regulating environment of the revolutionary frontier--the King has been expelled, and Emperor must die. Neither is the Indian a viable republican; unable to control his vicious blood-lust, he must give way to the "Regulators" who can make the crucial distinction between "war" and the "scalp-hunt." The Revolution was a moral as well as a military war, and so it was a war that could never end, a continuous revolt that required the continual construction of revolting antagonists. In his study of race relations in nineteenth-century America, Ronald Takaki formulates the "moral" legacy of the Revolution: "The culture of republicanism had to be hegemonic in American society. Required to be virtuous, the people had to elevate their consciences into guilt-inflicting authorities; they could not be allowed to be 'Hottentots' or 'degenerate' into 'savages.'" ¹⁵³ Bird's "republican principle" is not only hegemonic, it is hegemony in that it substitutes the "self-rule" of the guilty conscience for external authority. Society must not only be egalitarian, it must be homogeneous: neither the servile Emperor nor the monstrous Indian need apply for membership.

Organized under the sign of the feminine, energized by the racial hatred it helped to spawn, and legitimized by

the ideology of self-making, the "Regulators" take possession of the land and the meaning of Kentucky and America. But for Wandering Nathan, "Nick of the Woods," no such naturalization of Kentucky is possible. His mission is personal, not national, and his home is the "woods"; any place with an anglicized name is too far east for the true Indian-hater. Stranded outside the comforting orbit of the republican ideological "revolution," he remains unable to reconcile violence and virtue. For the Indians he is the devil personified, for the Kentuckians he is a patriot, but for him his actions have no meaning.³⁴ He can invest in no structure of significance, no ideology, that reconciles the cross he worshipped as a Quaker and the cross he hacks into Indian breasts. Takaki does not contradict himself when he describes Nathan as "psychotic" and yet possessed of "a singular sanity" lacking in real-life Indian-haters like Andrew Jackson.³⁵ The more insidious insanity, the cultural psychosis of Indian-hating, consists precisely in the ability to rationalize genocide--in the name of women, of the lower classes, of America itself. The "naturalization" of Kentucky, as of South Carolina in *The Yemassee*, consists of two related operations: "freeing" the land for incorporation into white America and constructing a "revolutionary" view of history that makes white expansion "natural," inevitable. Slaughter, on the other hand, is unnatural (psychotic) or supernatural (Nick of the Woods, the Jibbenainosay). Like Natty Bumppo, he is central to the plot but marginal in the scheme of

civilization emplotted.

VI. "A Perfect State of War"

The connection between revolution and national identity was not entirely a historical, or literary, issue in the 1830's. The most pressing problem in American government during the "Jacksonian Revolution" was how to accomodate the demographic and economic upheaval that threatened national stability and the delicate equilibrium between North, South, and West. The population of the United States had tripled (to thirteen million) between 1790 and 1830, with most of the increase in the North and West. Faced with diminishing economic and political power at the federal level, the South entrenched itself in arguments for states' sovereignty--in criticizing federal economic policy, in responding to abolitionists, and in justifying Indian removal.³⁶ Simms, from Charleston, the "Cradle of Secession," wrote *The Yemassee* three years after his state had threatened to secede over the Tariff of 1832. Revolutionary rhetoric could cut two ways in such a context: it could heal regional splits by appealing to a time when all America was united in a common cause, or it could exacerbate the rifts by likening the oppressive authority of "the Union" to that of "the British."

Donald Pease argues that, forced to disown the local traditions of a "British" pre-Revolutionary past, Americans were left with an "oppositional model" of identity: freedom

was defined negatively, as freedom *from* a coercive foreign power.

Now, as long as the British tradition along with all its coercive laws, customs, and regulations remained a presence in America, the authority invested in our liberation from its oppression remained unchallenged. But by the middle of the nineteenth century, when most of America's classics were written, the presence of an oppressive British past had all but disappeared, leaving Americans with a problem in self-legitimation. Without a British tyrant and his Old World customs to oppose, Americans had to discover a basis for the nation's identity in something other than a break from Britain's past.³⁷

A national identity based on revolution is always threatened *by* revolution, as the signifier of oppression can always slide from the old government to the new.

The Yemassee and *Nick of the Woods* represent a last-ditch attempt to recuperate the oppositional model and the authority of the Revolution. Both Simms and Bird use "the mighty fathers" to legitimize sectional claims (and absolve sectional sins) by making them versions of the national mission as revealed in history. In order to reintegrate South Carolina with the Union while still asserting its regional identity, Simms demonstrates the continuity of his state's colonial past with the Revolution. Governor Craven is one of "the brave fathers who first broke ground in the wilderness, who fought or treated with the red men, and who, finally, girded themselves up for the great conflict with the imperious mother who had sent them forth."³⁸ While Craven represents a distinctively Southern component of the American character--as the Cavalier antagonist to the Puritan Matthews--he also embodies the larger national

destiny: "the inevitable expansion of the Anglo-Norman." By conceiving this mission in racial terms, Simms not only justifies slavery and Indian removal (or elimination) but also asserts a unity of purpose among white Americans.

Bird, though he is sometimes lumped with his friend Simms as representing "the social values and literary affectations inherent in southern social philosophy,"¹³⁹ speaks to the concerns of the West. He legitimates total and continual Indian war by making it the mechanism of "the republican principle" of self-determination applied at the local level. An early exponent of the Turnerian safety-valve theory of the frontier, Bird proposes the continual remaking of the American character, in the "revolutionary" forge of frontier warfare, from the humble masses huddled in the East.

Since the story of Indian warfare is the story of civilization, the ideology of savagism in these novels pervades not only race but class and gender relations. Civilization progresses through warfare, so history is made primarily, almost exclusively, by men. Thus the historical romance, the story of "the mighty fathers," is paternalistic as well as nationalistic. Its popularity coincides with a growing movement for literary nationalism as well as a more general crisis in cultural self-legitimation or "paternity." It also coincides with a period of manly realism in Indian relations: the sentimental dream of assimilation was over; the Indian must be removed. Although Jackson expressed some hope that

behind the "permanent" borders of the new Indian country (which lasted about fifteen years) the united tribes might "raise up an interesting commonwealth,"⁴⁰ the government's true expectations are reflected in the extinction clause of the Removal Act itself. The newly-ceded lands are to belong to the Indians forever, "*Provided always, that such lands shall revert to the United States, if the Indians become extinct, or abandon the same.*"⁴¹

In its attempt to justify the removal or elimination of the Indian, to "naturalize" racism, to situate women as "valuable chattel," to channel class tensions into a race war, to mediate local and national identity, to stabilize the potentially subversive ideology of the Revolution, and to turn the troubling history of war into the comforting metaphysics of progress, the romance of Indian-hating celebrated the "perfect state of war" that was America.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

¹Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965) p. vii.

²*Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1982), p. 63. Jefferson is most concerned with countering Buffon's argument on the degeneration of species in the New World, and especially Reynal's extension of that theory to the emigrant population of America. While Jefferson derides these theories, he does not challenge the eminent natural historians on their fundamental premise that there are essential (physical) distinctions between the races of man.

³*Notes*, pp. 143, 138. The physical distinctions are essentially that blacks are ugly and that they stink. The latter attribute is explained by the scientific "fact" that "they secrete less by the kidneys, and more by the glands of the skin" (139). Most probably, the observations that have led Jefferson or his sources to this conclusion are those of field bosses, and Jefferson does not consider the possibility that the social and historical condition of slavery may have more to do with the fact that blacks seem to sweat more than they urinate than does "natural" kidney function.

⁴Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), pp.16-35.

⁵For a thorough explication of Jefferson's "benevolent racism" and its policy implications during his years as President, see Bernard Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973).

⁶William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), p. 4.

⁷*Letters From an American Farmer* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), pp. 122, 77-79.

⁸*Letters*, p. 79.

⁹"Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." Reprinted in Elaine Showalter, ed., *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

¹⁰For example, Richard Chase defends his thesis that the best American writing has been in the "romance" form on the grounds that that term "has appropriately signified the peculiar narrow profundity and rich interplay of lights and darks which one associates with the best American writing."

The American Novel and its Tradition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957), p. 21.

¹¹James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans* (Philadelphia, 1828), Letter XXIII.

¹²Perosa, *American Theories of the Novel: 1793-1903* (New York: New York University Press, 1983) p. 12.

¹³*Letters*, p. 67.

¹⁴Quoted in Perosa, pp.12, 13.

¹⁵C. Hugh Holman, introduction to *Views and Reviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. ix, xxii.

¹⁶See David Levin, *History as Romantic Art* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1959).

¹⁷Alexander Cowie, Introduction to *The Yemassee*. Soon after his birth in 1806, Simms's mother died and his father went bankrupt and moved to the southwestern frontier, where he lived as a nomadic mercenary and sometime planter. Simms was raised by his grandmother in Charleston, but visited his father in 1824 or 1825, and was profoundly affected by the energy, and crudity, of the "border" country. He also visited settlements of Cherokee and Creek Indians, and came away impressed by their character but saddened by their dismal condition and prospects.

¹⁸*History as Romantic Art*, p. 11.

¹⁹See Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, pp. 56-71 for an account of the political debates over Removal focussing on the role of this nostalgic ideology.

²⁰In his 1853 Preface, Simms flaunts his pseudo-anthropological skills: "What liberties I have taken with the subject [of the Indian] are wholly with his mythology. That portion of the story, which the reverend critics, with one exception, recognised as sober history, must be admitted to be a pure invention..." *The Yemassee* (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1962), p. 4.

²¹*Studies in Classic American Literature*, p. 41.

²²*History as Romantic Art*, p. 36.

²³For a more concrete account of the "monstrous" behavior of the Carolinians toward the Yamasee--which included raping the Indian women while their men were on hunting expeditions and seizing women and children to be sold into slavery--see Gary Nash, *Red, White, and Black*, pp.149-150).

²⁴Quoted in Takaki, *Iron Cages*, p.101. For an extended study of Jackson's paternalistic Indian policy and its complex relationship to Jackson's own psychological makeup as well as free market ideology, see Michael Rogin, *Fathers and Children*.

²⁵Quoted in Dippie, p. 71.

²⁶*Red, Black, and White: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974), pp. 151-3.

²⁷William Gilmore Simms, p. 57.

²⁸*The Yemassee*, pp. 151-8. As a satire on Romantic nature-worship the scene would be hilarious, but whether the humor is intentional is questionable. Simms includes an elaborate footnote stressing the authenticity of the rattler's hypnotic powers, but identifying the source of the scene as "a verbal narrative furnished the author by an old lady, who never dreamed, herself, of doubting the narration." Even this shaky "authority," however, is "quite sufficient for the romancer." I give Simms the benefit of the doubt: he is lampooning not only a naive faith in the benevolence of nature but the restrictive pretenses to verisimilitude under which more "realistic" authors labored.

²⁹*The Pathfinder*, p. 438.

³⁰*Letters From an American Farmer*, pp.72-73.

³¹The popular myth that Indian women were degraded and overworked appears, in the cases of most tribes at least, to have been only a myth. White women captured and adopted by Eastern tribes testified almost unanimously to the relatively light burdens imposed on them and their tribeswomen. See James Axtell, "The White Indians of Colonial America."

³²Richard Drinnon traces this process all the way to the Pacific Ocean, and across it to the Phillipines and Vietnam, in *Facing West*. Slotkin's American "myth" of *Regeneration Through Violence* posits a similar dynamic.

³³Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), p. 35.

³⁴Revenge, the assertion and enforcement of justice in the world, is certainly "meaningful," but as Nathan Quaker no doubt has heard, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." By assuming the responsibilities of God Himself, Slaughter

commits the sin of Hannah Dustan without being able to perform the casuistic recuperation enabled by Cotton Mather's typological model of human activity.

³⁵Takaki, pp. 91, 107.

³⁶The Cherokees, appealing to the federal government for protection from the "wanton usurpation of [their] power" by the state of Georgia, were told that that President Jackson would not and could not encroach upon the sovereignty of his states. Interestingly, in a letter to the Cherokee leaders in 1829, Secretary of War John H. Eaton invoked the Revolution to establish a moral as well as legal claim to the tribe's land. "During the War of the Revolution, your nation was the friend and ally of Great Britain, a power which then claimed entire sovereignty, within the limits of what constituted the thirteen United States. By the declaration of Independence and subsequently the Treaty of 1783, all the rights of sovereignty pertaining to Great Britain, became vested respectively in the original States, of this union, including North Carolina and Georgia..." (Prucha, p. 45). That the Cherokees might have a claim predating 1776 is not considered; Indian history begins with colonization, and "American" history begins with the Revolution.

³⁷Donald Pease, *Visionary Compacts and the Cold War Consensus*, p. 8. Pease argues that this new basis was found in the recuperation of local traditions, legends, "twice-told tales," and that the tendency of modern criticism to define the literature of the American Renaissance in terms of its opposition to Old World traditions instead of its positive assertion of particular communal values reflects an oppositional model of the twentieth century, not the nineteenth. The Cold War critic buys into Revolutionary rhetoric because he perceives his own world as divided into democratic nations (born of revolution) and authoritarian regimes (organized under the static signs of tradition or, in the modern version, of communism).

³⁸*Views and Reviews*, p. 17.

³⁹Slotkin, p. 515. Though he traveled extensively in the South and West, Bird lived most of his life in Philadelphia. The Southern characters in *Nick of the Woods* are so weak as to leave no doubt that Bird's affiliation is with the dynamic West and not the class-bound, slave-owning, aristocratic South.

⁴⁰First Annual Message to Congress, December 1829. Reprinted in Prucha, p. 48.

⁴¹Prucha, p. 53.

THOREAU: INDIANS AND INDIANNESS

The ages of the past, my friend,
are to us as a book with seven
seals.

--*faust*

In 1859 Henry David Thoreau made one of his many remarks about the poverty of history that were to make their way into, and enrich, the cultural history of America. Asked to subscribe for a statue to Horace Mann, he declined on the grounds that a man "ought not any more to take up room in the world after he is dead...It is very offensive to my imagination to see the dying stiffening into statues at this rate."¹ The suppleness of live limbs vs. the rigidity of corpses and stone, living matter vs. dead clutter--this is the familiar Thoreau, ready to praise the least of the living over the greatest of the dead. Mann should have no authority after death; history should not be allowed to exercise its restrictive and often despotic control over the present, let alone the future.

Thoreau did not live to see the erection of a statue in the neighboring town of Haverhill, Mass. in 1874, so he was spared a much greater offense to his historical sense of propriety than that occasioned by the proposed monument to Mann. This statue, still standing, represents Hannah Dustan, the Puritan matron who earned fifty pounds and immortality by killing and scalping ten of her Indian captors. Leslie Fiedler's description of the statue is irresistible:

...the stone figure of a long-skirted, sunbonneted woman with a tomahawk raised aloft in her delicate hand--so like the standard Freudian dream of a castrating mother that it is hard to believe it has not been torn down long since by some maimed New England male just out of

analysis.²

We will recall Cotton Mather's interpretation of Dustan in his 1697 sermon "Humiliations followed by Deliverance"; Dustan has survived the long historical journey from meek exemplar of patient humility to castrating mother. But Thoreau, poised roughly halfway between Mather and Fiedler, also tried his hand at deciphering the enigmatic Dustan in the "Thursday" chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. There he found, like Mather before him, the difficulty of making Dustan "subservient unto the intention" he had in mind: to use historical narrative as a way of illustrating metaphysical propositions. In *A Week* Thoreau developed a theory of language based on its correspondence to the natural laws of reflection. Intimacy with nature could allow one access to a "universal language" free of the trivial distinctions between different eras and different cultures. He also discovers, however, that nature as well as language reveals traces of unresolved cultural conflicts. Seeking an ahistorical presence in the American landscape, Thoreau turns to the Indian, the aboriginal, "prehistoric" inhabitant of New England. But the Indian is gone, a casualty of Hannah Dustan and Cotton Mather, muskets and land-deeds--the entire history of New England. Realizing that he is *particeps criminis*, Thoreau writes the Indian into his natural history of New England. Not until he visits Maine and encounters living Indian products of this history, however, is he able to conceive of "the Indian" as other than the kind of static monument to a dead past that he abhorred in the Mann statue.

Only then did his evolving theories of nature, language, and history achieve some harmony.

I. Tripping Over the Graves: A Heek on the Musketaguid

There have been some nations who
could do nothing but construct
tombs, and these are the only traces
which they have left. They are the
heathen.

--A Heek²

Critics of *A Heek on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, from Thoreau's time to our own, have commented on its episodic, disjointed quality, its seeming uncertainty of purpose--or rather its bewildering multiplicity of purpose, as if its author were experimenting with as many genres of writing as he could fit between two covers. The *topoi* include abstractions like Friendship and arcania like classical poetry as well as the contemporary state of nature and culture in Massachusetts. The commentary of James Russell Lowell may be taken as representative of this strain of criticism.

We have digressions on Boodh, on Anacreon (with translations hardly so good as Cowley), on Persius, on Friendship, and we know not what. We come upon them like snags, jolting us headforemost out of our places as we are rowing placidly up stream, or drifting down. Mr. Thoreau becomes so absorbed in these discussions that he seems as it were to catch a crab and disappears uncomfortably from his seat at the bow oar...[The digressions] are out of proportion and out of place and mar our Merrimacking dreadfully. We were bid to a river-party,--not to be preached at.⁴

Part of this "problem" is the lack of definition of the genre Thoreau was writing in and the consequent lack of definition of the audience addressed. As John Hildebidle points out, works of "natural history," of which we can loosely identify

Wauwaxet as one, were widely read in Thoreau's day, but for widely varying reasons; no one was quite sure in precisely what the value of such works consisted.⁵ *A Week* is more than just a "nature book"--to Lawrence Buell it is an attempt to "take in the whole cultural history of mankind" as well as to describe local scenery--but this only reinforces the sense of an uncertainty of purpose in the book.⁶ Robert Sayre's focus in *Thoreau and the American Indians* leads him to argue a somewhat more restricted ambition for Thoreau's first book: it "contained the history, in abbreviated visionary form, of savage-civilized relations in America."⁷ Sayre argues persuasively that, if read in this way, the apparent digressions of *A Week* cohere. Lowell's annoyance has given way to the ingenious syntheses of modern critics, and rightly so, but *A Week* remains a problematic work which seems to come together and then dissolve before the reader's eyes.

As Sayre has demonstrated, a key to the work is the imagery and history of the Indian used by Thoreau. Perhaps a better term for this organizing principle is "Indianness"--at once more descriptive and more vague. In the New England landscape traversed by Thoreau and his brother John, his unnamed companion, the Indian is at once a haunting presence and a palpable absence. Like John, who died before Thoreau finished the book, and like the past itself, Indianness pervades the literary voyage in undeniable yet largely undefinable ways. Ending in a celebration of Silence, *A Week* repeatedly demonstrates that, as Thoreau elsewhere puns, "the past cannot be presented." The work's fundamentally elegaic

tone derives from Thoreau's acceptance of this bare fact; its superabundance of vitality derives from his resistance to this same fact. Both John, who travelled the rivers so recently, and the Indians who once fished and hunted on their banks are gone. But their trails can be followed, the traces of their activity can be read in Nature, whose book never really closes on a human life. Thoreau's book is almost obsessed with representing the past: it is a kind of monument to the unmarked graves of the first Americans as well as to his unnamed brother.

The Indian enables an even more audacious resuscitation, for he functions as a trope connecting the American landscape to classical antiquity, as represented by the poets of ancient Greece and Rome. Time and again, the trace of Indianness inspires Thoreau to reflect on the process, if not the progress, of civilization. Connecting place and time, nature and history, the speechless but palpable Indian has his complement in the disembodied speech of the classical poets.

Unlike his friend Hawthorne, Thoreau was no lover of ruins, tombs, and monuments, which he generally considered scars on the body of Nature. Emerson describes this aversion, and Thoreau's preference for the "freshness" of the New World, in his eulogy for Thoreau. In the famous paragraph which begins "No truer American existed than Thoreau," Emerson reports his friend's disgust with the imitative nature of Europe, which is dominated by history.

"In every part of Great Britain," [Thoreau] wrote in his diary, "are discovered traces of the Romans, their funereal urns, their camps, their roads, their ruins. We

have not to lay the foundations of our houses on the ashes of a former civilization."

But a few pages later Emerson acknowledges that "Indian relics"--including "ashes" as well as "arrow-heads" and other artifacts--"abound in Concord."²⁶ Presumably such "traces" did not constitute evidence of "civilization" for Emerson or impose a historical burden on the Massachusetts settlements. But for Thoreau, the simultaneous absence and presence of Indianness indicated by the word trace was both a problem and an opportunity: a problem because it undermined his much-coveted sense of an original and unmediated relationship to the New World landscape; and an opportunity in that it provided him a kind of "natural" language through which he could read American history in the "runes" and ruins of the landscape itself. In the absence of a Native American literature, Thoreau the scholar could not "read" the American past except through the mediation of nature; and he could not read nature without encountering the Indian. But as Thoreau discovers, the "Indianness" of America intrudes a history of cultural conflict into the "natural" language of its landscape.

Derrida's description of the trace applies remarkably well to the function of Indianness in the landscape and history of New England as recounted in *A Week*.

The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself. The trace has, properly speaking, no place [*avoir lieu*--also does not take place], for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace.²⁷

While the Indian literally has no place along the Concord and

Merrimack rivers--his past presence is signified only by a few half-forgotten names--he has a prominent place in Thoreau's travelogues. In *A Week* the Indian "displaces" Thoreau epistemologically, almost always "re-minding" him of an inaccessible American antiquity that links him by association to the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. If the "digressions...on Anacreon...mar our Merrimacking dreadfully," as Lowell complained, Thoreau's didacticism and scholarly hubris may be less to blame than the fact that his "presence" on the river is continually being disrupted by his historical sense of following in the trackless paths of Indian canoes.

The "effacement" of the Indian from the landscape has been very nearly complete. Thoreau meets no live Native Americans, and encounters very few traces of their activity. On "Wednesday" he comes upon a series of curious "holes" or basins in the rock beneath some waterfalls. Citing the "tradition" that the local Indians had used these holes to hide provisions during wars, he questions the conclusion of "the Royal Society, who in their Transactions, in the last century, speaking of these very holes, declare that 'they seem plainly to be artificial'" (201). Thoreau inclines to the "geological" explanation--that the basins are a product of a complex process of erosion. Still, these rocks speak to us--"verily there are 'sermons in stones'"--and they speak of an age compared to which "the periods of Hindoo and Chinese history" comprise current events (202).

These, and such as these, must be our antiquities, for lack of human vestiges. The monuments of heroes and the temples of the gods which may once have stood on the

banks of this river are now, at any rate, returned to dust and primitive soil. The murmur of unchronicled nations has died away along these shores, and once more Lowell and Manchester are on the trail of the Indian. (203)

While this passage seems to affirm the silence of the Indian--not even the "murmur" of his former activity can be heard--it also gives voice to the "unchronicled nations" by providing their eulogy. There is an unmistakable sense of loss in the transition from an age of heroes and gods to one of factories. (In a similar passage in *Walden*, Thoreau recounts the "Indian fable" that the stones "paving" the shores of Walden Pond rolled there from the hills when the Indian gods sent an earthquake to punish a tribe's profanity. Thoreau is disappointed to discover that most of the rocks probably rolled, and were piled, onto the shore during the building of the railroad [468].) Thoreau's American Iron Age nostalgia is conventional enough, but it clearly acknowledges that, his own assertion notwithstanding, America is indeed built on "the ashes of a former civilization."

The apparent absence of Indians from the American scene, their seemingly complete erasure from the chronicles of history, is so striking to Thoreau that he is compelled at every opportunity to "write them into" his own natural and cultural history of Massachusetts. Having recounted the tale of "Lovewell's fight" in King Philip's War, Thoreau reflects on the distance of even this relatively recent bit of history from the contemporary consciousness:

These battles sound incredible to us. I think that posterity will doubt if such things ever were; if our bold ancestors who settled this land were not struggling

rather with the forest shadows, and not with a copper-colored race of men. They were vapors, fever and ague of the unsettled woods. Now, only a few arrow-heads are turned up by the plough. In the Pelasgic, the Etruscan, or the British story, there is nothing so shadowy and unreal. (136)

An entire "race of men" has been vaporized by history and by historians; the ancients of Europe are more familiar to Americans than the Native Americans they have displaced. This process of effacement might be more memorable had it been entirely a product of wars, but in fact it was primarily a combination of commercial and linguistic transactions.

[The white man] buys the Indian's moccasins and baskets, then buys his hunting-grounds, and at length forgets where he is buried and ploughs up his bones. And here town records, old, tattered, time-worn, weather-stained chronicles, contain the Indian sachem's mark perchance, an arrow or a beaver, and the fatal words by which he deeded his hunting-grounds away. He comes with a list of ancient Saxon, Norman, and Celtic names, and strews them up and down this river,--Framingham, Sudbury, Bedford, Carlisle, Billerica, Chelmsford,--and this is New Angleland, and these are the New West Saxons whom the Red Men call, not Angle-ish or English, but Yengeese, and so at last they are known for Yankees. (44)

Ironically, the Indian has named the Yankee but the Yankee has renamed the American landscape in the process of seizing it for his own. The only remaining traces of the former inhabitants are a few bones and pictographic signatures in local "chronicles." (In *Walden* the chapter on "Former Inhabitants" describes only the previous white settlers; the "prehistoric" Indian tribes are not mentioned.)

For Thoreau at this stage, the romance of Indianness lies in its remoteness. Like Melville's definition of fiction (and religion), evidence of past Indian civilizations "present[s] another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie."¹⁰

Throughout *A Week*, Thoreau plays with the triangular tension between three ties: between himself, the American past, and the European past. Thoreau wants to be a kind of abstract citizen of the world, to speak a "universal language" (49) capable of harmonizing the experiences of all three elements of his American Self. But this fragile transcendental fiction-religion is continually being threatened by the Indian, who reminds Thoreau that his American selfhood is not the product of a harmonious fusion of cultures but a bitter historical conflict between them. *A Week* enacts a variety of strategies to smooth over this conflict; the passage just cited ignores the fraud and violence that had cheated and coerced many a "sachem's" signature. In the next chapter we will examine Melville's criticism of the institutional, "legal" erasure of the Indian from America. As we will see, Thoreau later came to respect the otherness of Indians and renounce his "universal language." But even in *A Week* the violence of a Hannah Dustan haunts his attempts to transform cultural conflict into natural harmony. First we will look at Thoreau's strategies for uniting white and Indian ways of seeing and being, then examine how they fail.

Though I will not make great claims for the unity of *A Week*, for reasons to be discussed later, rarely does a book so well enact the old adage that the first sentence should be a microcosm of the whole work.

The Musketaquid, or Grass-round River, though probably as old as the Nile or Euphrates, did not begin to have a place in civilized history, until the fame of its grassy

meadows and its fish attracted settlers out of England in 1635, when it received the other but kindred name of CONCORD from the first plantation on its banks, which appears to have been commenced in a spirit of peace and harmony.

For Joan Burbick, this sentence sets the project of *A Week*, which "reflects Thoreau's realization that the history of civilization is in no way equivalent to human history"--along the banks of the river, cultures have lived and died before white scribes came along to initiate it into "civility" and dub it Concord.¹¹ While the river itself is as old as the Nile in terms of Absolute or Natural history, only its colonization by the English has allowed it to enter "civilized history." The prehistoric activity of the "extinct race" of Indians--hunting and fishing--is all but forgotten. Only a name remains: "the Musketaquid, or Grass-ground River." Thoreau gives the Indian name syntactical priority not only because of its chronological precedence but because it is rooted in the concrete natural details of the setting, not the fragile historical relationship of "Concord." (As Sayre points out, that "concord" was interrupted by the battle of 1775; Thoreau implies it broke down much earlier, when he finds "arrow-heads, and also bullets of lead and iron" at the same site on the river near Litchfield.¹²) Here Thoreau sets up the classical savagist associations of the Indian with Nature and the white man with History by comparing their languages, which reflect different ways of seeing the world. Later Thoreau was to write: "I observed [the Indians'] inability, often described, to convey an abstract idea."¹³ The Indian mode of perception is more direct, unmediated by

metaphysical conceptions like concord, and their language is more concrete, less symbolic, than the English. (Even the Indian word for meadow is a compound of the constituent natural elements grass and ground.) Rather than stressing the antagonism between these modes of perception, however, Thoreau emphasizes their complementarity: Concord is "the other but kindred name" for the river. Indeed, the truest use of language, as Thoreau will try to demonstrate throughout *A Week*, is that which utilizes its capacity to refer simultaneously to the physical and the metaphysical, to natural details and natural laws. If the Indian epistemology is trapped in Nature, the white man's is alienated from Nature: the goal is to unite white and Indian ways of naming and knowing.

This project is rooted in Thoreau's sense of the referentiality of language, which is based not on any transcendental connection between word and thing, but on an analogy between the language of man and the "language" of nature, each of which signifies at both physical and spiritual levels. Thoreau draws this analogy most explicitly in a passage which prefigures the "Sounds" chapter of *Walden*.

All these sounds, the crowing of cocks, the baying of dogs, and the hum of insects at noon, are the evidence of nature's health or *sound* state. Such is the never-failing beauty and accuracy of language, the most perfect art in the world; the chisel of a thousand years retouches it. (35)

The sounds are both particular noises and signs of the soundness of nature. Thoreau emphasizes the pun both to show the "accuracy" of language, which has built into it the same

doubleness of meaning as the sounds themselves, and to downplay his role as the discoverer of this doubleness--the cleverness is in language itself and not its user. Natural detail is an articulation of natural law; language, in its dual referentiality, reflects this structure.

Thoreau is quite insistent on the empirical, "natural" basis of this correspondence. As Philip Gura says, "in Thoreau's writing what words were a *symbol* of--the natural cipher itself--assumed primary importance."¹⁴ The correspondence of words to things, the "natural cipher," is based on the ability of words to register on both literal and symbolic levels, just as natural phenomena can be seen or heard both as themselves and as a reflection or echo of the laws which "understand" them. In the Friday chapter Thoreau employs the metaphor of translation to indicate the interrelationship of natural fact, natural law, and language.

The most distinct and beautiful statement of any truth must take at last the mathematical form. We might so simplify the rules of moral philosophy, as well as of arithmetic, that one formula would express them both. All the moral laws are readily translated into natural philosophy, for often we have only to restore the primitive meaning of the words by which they are expressed, or to attend to their literal instead of their metaphorical sense. They are already *supernatural* philosophy. (294)

Words *are* philosophy, for language reflects the relationship between the natural and the moral which it is philosophy's business to explore. Just as moral laws translate into natural ones, the metaphorical significance of words is grounded in--and enriched and justified by--their literal, "primitive" referents.

Thoreau reverses the traditional sequence of such translation; ordinarily we read the metaphorical *from* the literal, as we perceive moral law from natural law. But Thoreau emphasizes the pun on "sound" because we would have been likely to read it only metaphorically; we need to be forced to translate "backwards," from the figurative to the literal, from the law of nature's health to the noise of bugs and dogs. In this process of defiguralization, the "primitive" language of Indians provides a model: "the other but kindred name" of Concord is "Grass-Ground River," a name which harmonizes the three major elements of the landscape rather than simply signifying harmony in the abstract.

Paradoxically, Thoreau's drive towards a "universal language" (282), a mathematics of expression corresponding to the "natural cipher" itself, leads him to postulate an essential linguistic difference between red and white men which remains inaccessible to translation in the ordinary sense. Rooted in a fundamentally different relationship to nature, the Indian language even sounds more "wild and primitive" to Thoreau (*Maine Woods*, 697). "White man's poetry" is unable to capture "other, savager, and more primeval aspects of nature" which find their voice in "the chant of the Indian muse" (46-7). Part of this theory derives from the familiar savagist conception of the Indian as "child of Nature."

We talk of civilizing the Indian, but that is not the name for his improvement. By the wary independence and aloofness of his dim forest life he preserves his intercourse with his native gods, and is admitted from time to time to a rare and peculiar society with Nature.

(46)

Thoreau's odd twist on this formula, however, is to assert that the Indian is also more detached than the exploitive white man from Nature's "society" as well as man's.

The Indian's intercourse with Nature is at least such as admits of the greatest independence of each. If he is somewhat of a stranger in her midst, the gardener is too much of a familiar. There is something vulgar and foul in the latter's closeness to his mistress, something noble and cleanly in the former's distance. (46)

Like a respectful child, the Indian does not contemplate the kind of incestuous relationship with Mother Earth that Thoreau associates with agriculture, or the rapacious one he associates with mining and logging.¹⁵

Thoreau aspires to an "Indian-like" mixture of involvement in and detachment from nature, a vantage point from which he can appreciate equally the river itself and the "other but kindred" quality of concord it embodies. But his reflective model of language and the stance he adopts as a naturalist force him to try to efface his own involvement with or activity in nature. Thoreau "could not bear to hear the sound of his own steps, the grit of gravel," Emerson tells us,¹⁶ nor could he hope to compete with nature or language in the realm of art. Just as the naturalist hates to see or hear his own activity in nature, the naturalist-writer tries to efface his own activity by emphasizing the transparency of language. One should not "read into" nature but simply extract the truth and beauty which are already "there"; similarly, one's writing style should not distract from the natural referential quality of language itself. The

analogical economies of nature and language are best perceived when the writer, like the observer, is effaced.

The opening pages of the "Sunday" chapter enact this detachment. The "heathenish integrity" of the morning hearkens back to a prelapsarian state in which man and nature, consciousness and perception are undivided. The smoke of the travelers' campfire is but "a still subtler mist" curling upward through the fog; the campers' activity does not intrude upon but blends imperceptibly with nature's own. Dipping slowly on up the river, Thoreau and his brother pass islands they don't explore but name (in the Indian spirit of "Grass-Ground River")--Fox Island, Grape Island--and float on past landscapes too "oriental" and "artificial" to be mistaken for simply New England wilderness. The still river reflects the air down to the depths of the heavens, and one is "uncertain whether the water floated the land or the land held the water in its bosom" In his detachment and passivity, the observer of the scene reflects the almost consciously Platonic structure of nature.

For every oak and birch, too, growing on the hilltop, as well as for these elms and willows, we knew that there was a graceful ethereal and ideal tree making down from the roots, and sometimes Nature in high tides brings her mirror to its foot and makes it visible. The stillness was intense and almost conscious, as if it were a natural Sabbath, and we fancied that the morning was the evening of a celestial day. The air was so elastic and crystalline that it had the same effect on the landscape that a glass has on a picture, to give it an ideal remoteness and perfection. (38)

The syntactical coupling of "remoteness" and "perfection" reflects the perceptual experience of the picturesque. Nature is perceived in all its decorative artistry; the reflective

consciousness, in its detachment and "regularity," provides, from the added distance of memory, the linguistic analogue of the picturesque. The writer's art showcases the art in nature, providing another glass laid over the crystalline air through which nature's "picture" is viewed. Emerson remembers that Thoreau "delighted in echoes"; he delighted in reflections as well.¹⁷

But the Sunday travelers are roused from their reverie; they are unable to remain wholly detached.

It required some rudeness to disturb with our boat the mirror-like surface of the water, in which every twig and blade of grass so faithfully reflected; too faithfully indeed for art to imitate, for only Nature may exaggerate herself. The shallowest still water is unfathomable. Wherever the trees and skies are reflected, there is more than Atlantic depth, and no danger of fancy running aground. We notice that it required a separate intention of the eye, a more free and abstracted vision, to see the reflected trees and the sky, than to see the river bottom merely; and so are there manifold visions in the direction of every object, and even the most opaque reflect the heavens from their surface. Some men have their eyes naturally intended to the one and some to the other object. (40)

The naturalist seer's eye is "intended" for both "objects," the material and the spiritual, the earth and the heavens. Reflection is the perfect figure for this doubleness of vision, which the writer does not create but merely discloses. In the depths of the water are the heights of heaven, if one can maintain the "free and abstracted vision" which reads figuratively as well as literally, sees the reflection as well as the river bottom. The ideal observer would indeed be nothing more than "abstracted vision," a type of Emerson's transparent eyeball--then boat as well as "fancy" would be in no danger of running aground, and reflections need not be

disturbed by the "rudeness" of activity.

Though analogous, man's art is inferior to nature's, since it cannot "exaggerate" nature as nature herself can. Thoreau was to worry in *Walden*:

I chiefly fear lest my expression may not be *extra-vagant* enough, may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. *Extra vagance!* it depends on how you are yarded...I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression...The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly translated; its literal monument alone remains. (580)

In Thoreau's odd version of the mimetic standard, truth is a function of exaggeration. In its extravagant fecundity nature is akin, not to the "artist," but to the "poet"--not to the narrator or portraitor but to the creator. In Thoreau's aesthetic lexicon, the "poet" is "The Man of Genius," who while he may be an artist as well, is not to be equated with this lesser figure.

The Man of Genius, referred to mankind, is an originator, an inspired or demonic man, who produces a perfect work in obedience to laws yet unexplored. The artist is he who detects and applies the law from observation of the works of genius, whether of man or nature. (*A Week*, p. 267-8)

The highest more prosaic minds can attain to is the detached objectivity of Goethe, who "speaks as an unconcerned spectator" and "was satisfied with giving an exact description of things as they appeared to him, and their effect upon him (266)." The consummate artist, Goethe yet "lacks the unconsciousness of the poet"; like his character Wilhelm Meister, he envisions experience as "a magnifying of the theatre till life itself is turned into a stage, for which it

is our duty to study our parts well, and conduct with propriety and precision" (266-7). This description recalls Thoreau's earlier remarks about "white man's poetry"; narrative "theatre" cannot contain those "other, savager, more primeval aspects of nature" which the Indian celebrates.

The opposition of artistic "precision" to the "demonic" inspiration of the poet is standard in Romantic and Transcendental aesthetics, as is the connection of originality and demonism with the lawless savage or wild man.¹⁶ What is perhaps less usual is Thoreau's awareness that his own reflective model of language and writing consigns his work to the second-class status of "art." He also seems aware of the problems inherent in that model. While the dual referentiality of language is supposed to be analogous to that of nature, the natural object simultaneously is itself and reflects (both other objects and natural laws), whereas language is committed to a time sequence. The linearity of sentences distorts the "natural" reflective experience; syntax is at odds with the simultaneity of perception and reflection experienced by the observer of nature. The "rudeness" of the writer's activity inevitably undermines his capacity to represent "free and abstracted vision." Furthermore, language cannot function as a transparent "glass" laid over the picturesque landscape any more than it can "re-present" the past, because its meaning is always mediated by social and historical processes from which the "artist" cannot detach himself. To take a particularly ironic example, the "Indian" for Thoreau often signifies an original, primeval genius

untamed by social convention, yet this meaning is itself highly conventional, the product of four centuries of cultural arbitration. And of course the word itself is a notorious misnomer, dating back to Columbus's mistaken destination. All language is misnominal in that it designates not unified objects of knowledge, whether things or events, but loci of contention.

Further undermining Thoreau's reflective theory of representation is the fact that perception itself is mediated by history, as Thoreau himself seems to acknowledge. Although a river may remain essentially unchanged over centuries, it makes a difference whether its observer identifies it as Concord or Musketaquid. In identifying it as both, Thoreau calls attention to a historical process of physical as well as linguistic displacement. Searching for an original relationship with a New World, Thoreau finds that he has been preceded: the trace of Indianness pervades the landscape, and more than a trace of ancient Rome pervades his rhetoric. In a passage prefiguring the description of the thawing railroad bank in *Walden*, Thoreau finds the "runes"/"ruins" of Nature etched on a rock wall, but it turns out that these inscriptions, far from communicating immediately, speak through classical allusion.

Our own country furnishes antiquities as ancient and durable, and as useful, as any; rocks at least as well covered with lichens, and a soil which, if it is virgin, is but virgin mould, the very dust of nature. What if one cannot read Rome, or Greece, Etruria, or Carthage, or Egypt, or Babylon, on these; are our cliffs bare? The lichen on the rocks is a rude and simple shield which beginning and imperfect Nature suspended there. Still hangs her wrinkled trophy. And here too the poet's eye

may still detect the brazen nails which fastened Time's inscriptions, and if he has the gift, decipher them by this clew. The walls that fence our fields, as well as modern Rome, and not less the Parthenon itself, are all built of *ruins*. (204)

Although Thoreau means to place American antiquity on a par with that of the ancient civilizations, to suggest (as Burbick would say) an "uncivil history" ignored by Western historians, the effect of the passage is to reinscribe the authority of the classical tradition as the locus of history, thus undermining the status of American antiquity as derivative. In the lichen on the rocks Thoreau reads Rome. Perhaps he is acknowledging that he lacks the "gift" to decipher "Time's inscriptions"; certainly he is demonstrating that "Time" writes in a conventional, culturally-specific language--and so does Nature.

The related problems of language and history, as I have suggested, find a focus in Thoreau's treatment of Indianness. The Indian, in *A Week*, constitutes a kind of pressure on the reflective model of language, as his physical and linguistic traces mediate the landscape. Similarly, the Indian calls into question Thoreau's theory of the "indifferency" (as Emerson put it) of time and place to the essential life of man.¹⁷ One way of avoiding or denying cultural and historical differences is to collapse them into myth.

To some extent, mythology is only the most ancient history and biography. So far from being false or fabulous in the common sense, it contains only enduring and essential truth, the I and you, the here and there, the now and then, being omitted. Either time or rare wisdom writes it. (49)

One vehicle of myth is the fable, "naturally and truly

composed"; in it "time or rare wisdom" purges experience of its personal, circumstantial dimension and brings out its archetypal patterns of significance.

This is an approach to that universal language which men have sought in vain. This fond reiteration of the oldest expressions of truth by the latest posterity, content with slightly and religiously retouching the old material, is the most impressive proof of a common humanity. (49)

Neither truth nor man changes, according to Thoreau's vision of mythology; history is composed of virtually indistinguishable variations on familiar themes. In retelling our tales we are only "retouching the old material," engaged in "fond reiteration" of ancient wisdom and ancient tableaux. Just as the ideal naturalist would be a transparent eyeball, with no feet to grind the gravel, the ideal poet or storyteller would speak a "universal language" free of social, psychological and historical determinants.

This theory is put to the test of application in "Thursday" as Thoreau retouches the old material of the Hannah Dustan captivity. This section has always posed a problem for critics determined (against all odds) to demonstrate the coherence of Thoreau's first book, and an opportunity for critics like Richard Bridgman who want to reduce Thoreau's complexity to a series of "sterile contradictions."²⁰ It seems to fit more easily into thematic studies of literary and cultural history, like Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence* or Leslie Fiedler's *The Return of the Vanishing American*, than it does into Thoreau's own book. But the enigmatic tale does fit, if only as yet another example of the

aporia, the impasses of meaning, created by the intrusion of the Indian into Thoreau's impersonal schema of language and history. Although Thoreau asserts that "We can never safely exceed the actual facts in our narratives" (265), the Dustan tale demonstrates that narrators are never safe, since violence and excess are of the very nature of storytelling.

Thoreau finds himself floating on the same part of the Merrimack, at the same time of day, as Dustan and her companions must have been, escaping from Indian captivity, 142 years before. He begins his retelling of the story of Dustan's capture and removal with "mythic" simplicity, like a history that wants to be a fable, in a sentence that recalls, in its series of carefully embedded clauses, each revealing a simple "fact," the famous first sentence of *Walden*.

On the 15th of March previous, Hannah Dustan had been compelled to rise from childbed, and half dressed, with one foot bare, accompanied by her nurse, commence an uncertain march, in still inclement weather, through the snow and the wilderness. (262)

Dustan, her nurse, and an English boy effect their escape by killing their captors in their sleep, then taking to the river in their canoes. But their business with the Indians is not yet complete, they realize.

But after having proceeded a short distance, fearing that her story would not be believed if she should escape to tell it, they returned to the silent wigwam, and taking off the scalps of the dead, put them into a bag as proofs of what they had done, and then, retracing their steps to the shore in the twilight, recommenced their voyage. (263)

All this we know from Cotton Mather's history, save the crucial imputation of motive for the scalplings. But Thoreau is preparing for a more blatant narrative intrusion; at this

point he shifts the tale from past to present tense--"Early this morning this deed was performed"--and sustains it as he completes the story of their escape, finally merging their "presence" with his own.

While we loiter here this autumn evening, looking for a spot retired enough, they thus, in that chilly March evening, one hundred and forty-two years before us, with wind and current favoring, have already glided out of sight, not to camp, as we will, but while two sleep, one will manage the canoe, and the swift stream bear them onward to the settlements, it may be, even to old John Lovewell's house on Salmon Brook tonight. (264)

Far from being the impersonal medium of the old wisdom, Thoreau inserts himself into the drama, makes his own actions contemporaneous with those of his characters. Instead of "the I and you, the here and there, the now and then, being omitted," they are merged. While this amounts to the same thing--the collapsing of history into a timeless present tense--it also foregrounds the "I" who does the merging.

This strange mixture of detachment and involvement on the part of the narrator lends a curious ring to the moral of the story. There is a postscript:

According to the historian, they escaped as by a miracle all roving bands of Indians, and reached their homes in safety, with their trophies, for which the General Court paid them fifty pounds. The family of Hannah Dustan all assembled alive once more, except the infant whose brains were dashed out against the apple tree, and there have been many who in later times have lived to say that they have eaten of the fruit of that apple tree. (264)

"The historian" is both the literal-minded accountant of the value of the trophies and the spiritual appraiser, Cotton Mather, who, in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, made of Dustan herself a trophy, an emblem of God's mercy, "escaped as by a

miracle." This conflation of seemingly unrelated assessments of the value of Dustan's experience into the account of "the historian" does more than give the captivity narrative an ironic twist. It shifts the frame of reference toward a larger perspective subsuming both assessments, both historical "accounts." This perspective is one which calls into question the nature, not of Dustan's experience or even of Mather's account of it, but of history itself. The apple tree of historical knowledge is a mixed blessing, for it engenders repression as well as revelation. Each tale within this tale-- "the historian's," Mather's, the apple-eaters'--represents a violent displacement of Dustan's experience into a variety of symbolic systems capable of incorporating it: like Mary Rowlandson's "wine of astonishment," the Dustan-baby's apple must be digested and does not go down easily. The Court assessor translates the horror of mutilation into "trophies" worth fifty pounds; Mather translates the chaos and hysteria of vengeance into a gleeful exegesis of righteous indignation and passive submission to the divine will. And the "many" who have eaten of the tree apparently have converted death into life, as the baby's brains have borne nourishing fruit.

Perhaps this is Thoreau's monomyth, the "fond reiteration" of which justifies his foray into colonial history. Death begets life, justice is served, and virtue has its reward in heaven and from the General Court. But these lessons are themselves trophies, symbolic recuperations of an inaccessible past experience. Each is a kind of scalp which makes the story believable, because meaningful. Dustan had to

take the scalps, "fearing that her story would not be believed." Presumably she and her companions were inexperienced scalpers and may have taken some time to reap the ten trophies; the sacrifice of escape-time suggests that credibility was as important as survival, or that the two were inextricable. Dustan had to go back for the sake of the story, cut away the scalps so that her experience could be represented materially. She composed her story as she carved, attempting to objectify her terror and triumph into the material signs for which she would receive both bounty and, more importantly, belief.

Thoreau makes the association of scalping and a certain kind of art explicit a few pages after the Dustan story.

The talent of composition is very dangerous,--the striking out the heart of life at a blow, as the Indian takes off a scalp. I feel as if my life had grown more outward when I can express it. (268)

Dustan's "dangerous talent" was primitive and violent, but it made for awfully convincing storytelling, and her life and legend grew immeasurably as a result. She is a kind of primal narrator, and storytelling--the representation of past experience--is a uniquely and fundamentally human activity. At first Hannah simply killed and ran; this is violent but "natural," understandable. But then she turned back, adding to her risk of not surviving to tell the tale at all, in order to cut the scalps. At this point the act becomes recognizably human; animals don't mutilate for symbolic purposes. To compose the story is to add the "unnatural increment," to coopt Marx's term for money is a context not inappropriate.

For the scalps not only brought Dustan fifty pounds but gave her story credibility, instant negotiability, currency.

If all of these complications seem beyond or beside Thoreau's intentions in retelling the Dustan tale, this only illustrates the more clearly that if "we can never safely exceed the actual facts in our narratives," then no narrative is "safe." Despite his paeon to the fable, Thoreau suggests that it is impossible to construct a narrative that is "naturally and truly composed," that the process of "composition" does indeed commit one to taking scalps, to "striking out the heart of life," in order to understand, be understood, and above all be believed. The story is a kind of trophy or monument, a linguistic tomb which conveys both the absence and the presence (or re-presence) of the past.

As Fiedler and Sayre point out, Dustan's imitation of Indians (by scalping them) both alienates her from nature and consigns her to second-class status, in Thoreau's terms, as an American "artist." Having murdered the human representatives of the wilderness, Dustan hears Indians in every rustling leaf and is unable to enjoy the leisurely float down the Merrimack that Thoreau juxtaposes with her flight.

Thoreau's depiction of her alienation is subtle, for "Truth never turns to rebuke falsehood; her own straightforwardness is the severest correction." Thoreau's natural fable, his straightforward account of the tale, does rebuke Dustan, but it also satirizes "the historian." In doing so, it implicates its author in the historical process of American alienation, through violence, from the American

landscape and the Native American. "As long as there is satire, the poet is, as it were, *particeps criminis*" (252). While Thoreau wants to contrast his experience of nature with those of Dustan and Mather, they intrude upon that experience, writing themselves into the travelogue. Again Thoreau is forced to see (or at least write) nature as mediated, as a "language" not "universal" but local, haunted by a specific history of racial conflict. His coveted detachment from history and involvement in nature is thwarted as this antagonistic opposition is deconstructed by the Indian, who presents himself as both nature and history. As *particeps criminis*, the poet must take history personally; ergo, he must meet the Indian himself.

III. Indians Alive: The Maine Woods

His visits to Maine were
chiefly for love of the Indian.
--Emerson on Thoreau²¹

Thoreau's theoretical "love of the Indian" was put to the test when he encountered living Native Americans during his first trip to Maine in 1846. Early in "Ktaadn" he provides a scathing verbal portrait of the Vanishing American analagous to the paintings of George Catlin, Seth Eastman, and Karl Bodmer, but without their nostalgic regret at the passing of distinctively American cultures.²²

The ferry here took us past the Indian island. As we left the shore, I observed a short, shabby, washerwoman-looking Indian--they commonly have the woe-begone look of the girl that cried for spilt milk--just from "up river"--land on the Oldtown side near a grocery, and, drawing up his canoe, take out a bundle of skins in one hand, and an empty keg or half-barrel in the other, and scramble up

the bank with them. This picture will do to put before the Indian's history, that is, the history of his extinction. (595)

The pathetic effects on the Indian of the commodity market, liquor, and a hopeless sense of inferiority were all commonplace elements in pictorial and literary representations of the Indian by mid-century--we have seen them all in Simms's *The Yemassee*. A single picture of one individual Indian could represent the entire "history" of his race because all of its compositional elements--the empty keg, the woe-begone aspect, even the emasculated "washerwoman" look--were so well established in the white mythology of race. At this stage of his career, Thoreau subscribed to the theory if not the policy of Indian Removal: that assimilation was impossible because Indians adopted only the vices and not the virtues of civilization. "We talk of civilizing the Indian," he had commented in *A Week*, "but that is not the name for his improvement." In fact there was no name for "his improvement," for just as all Indians possessed the character of "the Indian," all were caught in the fatal plotline of his "history, that is, the history of his extinction."

In "Ktaadn" Thoreau's assumptions about racial history seem only to have been confirmed by his first meetings with individual Indians, who are "real" and yet unreal, only shadows of their former selves, scarcely more alive than the aboriginal graves and the traces of Indianness Thoreau had found in his Massachusetts ramblings. His subsequent visits to Maine in 1853 and 1857, however, recorded in "Chesuncook" and "The Allegash and East Branch," respectively, left him far

less certain that Indians were unable to adapt to changing historical conditions, that they were doomed to extinction, or even that they were fully comprehensible from the white cultural perspective. Robert Sayre establishes decisively that Thoreau's guides on these latter trips, Joe Aitteon and especially Joseph Polis, influenced Thoreau profoundly and led him "beyond savagism" to an appreciation of their highly individualized characters.²³ Thoreau makes clear that, in the terms of *Haiden*, both these men have escaped the "lives of quiet desperation" which plague Indian and white "washerwomen" alike, have sagely ascertained that "it certainly is better to accept the advantages, though so dearly bought, which the invention and industry of [white] mankind offer," and have become in fact the very embodiments of "civilized" men: "more experienced and wiser savage[s]."²⁴

The "washerwoman" passage in "Ktaadn" ends with what is meant as a scathing summary of the Abenaki tribe's present condition in Maine: "These were once a powerful tribe. Politics are all the rage with them now. I even thought that a row of wigwams, with a dance of powwows, and a prisoner tortured at the stake, would be more respectable than this" (596). The fall from power into politics signals the decline of the race: like their "wolves" who have degenerated into dogs (598), the Maine Indians have lapsed from predatory power into the collective whining and barking of the town-bred dog pack. (For Nietzsche religion is the refuge of the weak, the defenseless, the "womanly"; for Thoreau it is politics.) Echoing one of the "benevolent" arguments for the Removal Act,

Thoreau implies that the only "respectable" Indian is the apolitical wolf, the lone predatory brave in the woods. Indians engaged in organized communal living and its attendant processes of negotiation and compromise are not only degenerate but somewhat ludicrous. Thoreau's derisive pun on "rage" shows the depth of the Fall: what was once a deadly (and noble though cruel) energy is now a fad, a pastime.

But like Cotton Mather lamenting the "scandalous qualities" of the Indianizing Englishman, or Crèvecoeur those of the "back-settler," Thoreau's criticism is meant for both races. The Indian has fallen no lower, though it is low enough, than the poor white classes produced in the cities. Thoreau had contracted with two Indians, Louis Neptune and an unnamed companion, to guide his trip to Mount Katahdin, but they had failed to show at the appointed time, and Thoreau hired instead two white woodsmen. Later he runs into the hung-over Neptune and friend near the Millinocket River.

At a little distance they might have been taken for Quakers, with their broad-brimmed hats, and overcoats with broad capes, the spoils of Bangor, seeking a settlement in this Sylvania,--or, nearer at hand, for fashionable gentlemen the morning after a spree. Met face to face, these Indians in their native woods looked like the sinister and slouching fellows whom you meet picking up strings and paper in the streets of a city. There is, in fact, a remarkable and unexpected resemblance between the degraded savage and the lowest classes in a great city. The one is no more a child of nature than the other. In the progress of degradation the distinction of races is soon lost. (651)

In this portrait of the Vanishing American Thoreau creates the rhetorical equivalent of a camera lens zooming in from a respectful distance to a highly unflattering closeup. The three stages of perception--the Indians as Quakers, as

debauched gentlemen, as urban underclass--correspond to the historical stages in the civilizing of America as well as the Indian. Just as the Indian has been converted to religion, then to fashion, then to alcohol, so has the Christian ideal turned somehow "sinister" in the cities, issuing in a decadent upper class and a pathetic but dangerous lower class. A cliché as applied to the Indian, "the progress of degradation" is almost an oxymoron in post-Jacksonian America as applied to white citizens. But Thoreau's "unexpected" analogy makes clear that degraded savages and degraded poor whites alike are children of civilization; "the spoils of Bangor" have corrupted and repressed them both.

A fundamental mechanism of "the progress of degradation" is the exploitative relationship to nature fostered by a market economy in which the spoils of the wilderness are transformed into the spoils of Bangor. Just as the "shabby washer-woman-looking Indian" had been willing to exchange animal furs for whiskey, the life of the forest for the death of the city, both white and Indian loggers transform living trees into dead but marketable lumber. Joe Aitteon, at least initially, represents the erasure of racial identity by the market, defining himself more through his present function than his past heritage: "He had worked a good deal as a lumberman, and appeared to identify himself with that class" (661). Like the mythical Indian, the logger wrests his living from the forest, and sings the praises of nature; but unlike the Indian, he sings of the death, not the life, of Creation.

The character of the logger's admiration is betrayed

by his very mode of expressing it. If he told all that was in his mind, he would say, [the pine tree] was so big that I cut it down and then a yoke of oxen could stand on its stump. He admires the log, the carcass or corpse, more than the tree. Why, my dear sir, the tree might have stood on its own stump, and a great deal more comfortably and firmly than a yoke of oxen can, if you had not cut it down. What right have you to celebrate the virtues of the man you murdered? (769)

Possessing "the talent of composition"--"the striking out the heart of life at a blow, as the Indian takes off a scalp"--the logger celebrates, and is paid for, the trophies of the woods. In its conversion of living spirit into marketable commodities, the lumber trade is analogous to the colonial scalp bounty.

The Indian suffers the same fate as the white pine and the beaver: assimilated into the American economy, he loses his living identity and becomes a "class," no longer an identifiable "race." In "Chesuncook" Thoreau encounters yet another degenerate Indian village, characterized by "an abundance of weeds, indigenous and naturalized; more introduced weeds than useful vegetables, as the Indian is said to cultivate the vices rather than the virtues of the white man." On the whole this village is "far cleaner than such Irish villages," and the children are "not particularly ragged nor dirty," but they nonetheless exhibit the debilitating effects of the market.

The little boys met us with bow in hand and arrow on string, and cried, "Put up a cent." Verily, the Indian has but a feeble hold on his bow now; but the curiosity of the white man is insatiable, and from the first he has been eager to witness this forest accomplishment. That elastic piece of wood with its feathered dart, so sure to be unstrung by contact with civilization, will serve for the type, the coat-of-arms of the savage. Alas for the Hunter Race! the white man has driven off their game, and

substituted a cent in its place. (704)

Leaving aside Thoreau's conventional image of civilization castrating the savage, this passage contains a number of insightful and even prophetic observations. The replacement of game with money, of use-value with exchange-value, debases the ancient art of the bow, while at the same time forcing the archer into a relationship of dependency on the white connoisseur of savagery. An intimate relationship between hunter and prey has been displaced by a relationship between paid performer and paying spectator.²⁵ All that remains to convert these young Indian entrepreneurs into true wage slaves is their incorporation into Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. As Thoreau observes, "the curiosity of the white man is insatiable," and the exoticism of "savage" stunts would continue to draw crowds into the next century.

One sign that the Indian's bow is unstrung is Joe Aitteon's dependence on "provisions" in the woods. When Thoreau mentions that Joe's ancestors lived independently. "wholly on what the woods yielded," the humor of Aitteon's reply is lost on Thoreau.

"Yes," said he, "that's the way they got a living, like wild fellows, wild as bears. By George! I shan't go into the woods without provision,--hard bread, pork, etc."
(674)

Nor does Aitteon know much about the construction of a canoe (674) or even about his tribal history (696). Thoreau had hired Aitteon to learn about "the Indian," but from the very beginning his subject embodied not a mythical essence but a complex process of acculturation.

I narrowly watched his motions, and listened attentively to his observations, for we had employed an Indian mainly that I might have an opportunity to study his ways. I heard him swear once, mildly...--an accomplishment which he owed to his intercourse with the whites; and he remarked, "We ought to have some tea before we start; we shall be hungry before we kill that moose." (665)

Afternoon tea for "the Hunter Race"? Thoreau meant to answer the Indian element of Jefferson's "reproach": "that though for a century and a half we have had under our eyes the races of black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed by us as subjects of natural history." But Thoreau finds that his "study" of the "natural history" of race has been complicated, even in the relatively remote Maine woods, by the incursions of human history--specifically, the history of white-Indian interaction. (Late in his life Thoreau would travel to Minnesota still in search of the unadulterated savage.²⁶) Aitteon exclaims "By George!" as often as "Ugh!" (699); he hunts moose but packs along salt pork and bread to tide him over on the trip. Towards the end of his excursion, however, Thoreau is granted a glimpse of "natural" savagery which lifts him out of history.²⁷

Faced with the choice of camping with white lumberers or Indians near the Caucomgoc, Thoreau chooses the Indians as the "more agreeable, and even refined company" (694). The Indian camp is centered around a huge fire; moose hides are being cured on poles, and huge chunks of meat--including "the whole heart, black as a thirty-two pound ball"--are "impaled" on sticks, roasting in the flames. Twice Thoreau is put in mind of cannibalism, as the torches flicker and the meat smokes. "Altogether it was about as savage a sight as was

ever witnessed, and I was carried back at once three hundred years" (695). Thoreau finds his companions "very sociable," and with some prodding they relate "some tradition about the Mohawks eating human flesh," but on the whole "they knew but little of the history of their race, and could be entertained by stories about their ancestors as readily as any way" (696). (Later in the trip Thoreau would find some arrowheads and a stone chisel, "which were greater novelties to the Indians than to me" [707].)

But in his moment of intimacy with the Indians, Thoreau is conscious of his distance and difference from his Abenaki friends. Laying with them on moose hides by the fire, Thoreau remains an outsider, for he cannot speak their language.

While lying there listening to the Indians, I amused myself with trying to guess at their subject by their gestures, or some proper name introduced. There can be no more startling evidence of their being a distinct and comparatively aboriginal race, than to hear this unaltered Indian language, which the white man cannot speak nor understand. We may suspect change and deterioration in almost every other particular, but the language which is so wholly unintelligible to us. It took me by surprise, though I had found so many arrowheads, and convinced me that the Indian was not the invention of historians and poets. It was a purely wild and primitive American sound, as much as the barking of a *chickaree*, and I could not understand a syllable of it; but Paugus, had he been there, would have understood it. These Abenakis gossiped, laughed, and jested, in the language in which Eliot's Indian Bible is written, the language which has been spoken in New England who shall say how long? These were the sounds that issued from the wigwams of this country before Columbus was born; they have not yet died away; and, with remarkably few exceptions, the language of their forefathers is still copious enough for them. I felt that I stood, or rather lay, as near to the primitive man of America, that night, as any of its discoverers ever did. (696-7)

What makes the Indians distinct, and also real, for Thoreau is their "wholly unintelligible" language. Though contact with

whites has resulted in wholesale cultural change (which of course equals "deterioration"), the Abenaki language has endured unchanged for 400 years. (How Thoreau knows this, not understanding a word, is of course hard to say.) In this passage Thoreau records an epiphanic moment compelling him to reconsider his relationships not only to the Indian but to nature and America. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* the Indian did appear as "the invention of historians and poets": his only remaining traces were arrowheads, graves, and his pictographic signature on the "time-worn, weather-stained" records of land deeds. He seemed more "shadowy and unreal" than the Etruscans, and inhabited the landscape only in the half-forgotten names of rivers and mountains. All of those marks, though--the arrowhead in the dirt, the beaver on the town chronicles, the name of Musketaquid--Thoreau thought he could read. He could decipher, or invent if he liked, their meanings. Faced with the living speech of living Indians (the language and the men "have not yet died away"), the historian, the poet, the interpreter of Indianness for an over-civilized America finds himself superfluous.

Thoreau is outside not only this particular circle of conversation but also, due to the nature of Indian language, his own country and nature itself. No more able to understand the Abenakis than the chickarees, he does not speak what sounds to him like the "purely wild and primitive American" language. Displaced from nature and America, Thoreau is driven back into European history. "No truer American existed than Thoreau," said Emerson, but in this scene Thoreau

experiences himself as a foreigner, an interloper in his own country. He identifies not with his Native American companions but with Columbus.

The essential lesson for Thoreau of the Maine trips was the otherness of "the Indian," whom Thoreau had presumed to know through the conventions of nineteenth-century savagism. While these conventions continued to mediate his perceptions, he became less and less convinced that he was able to tell the whole story, that the language of historians and poets and the evidence unearthed by archaeology could substitute itself for the lives and languages of particular tribes. Although in one sense Indians became less "shadowy and unreal" through his direct contact with their lives and language, in another sense they became still more distant, more alien. Familiarity, in this case, breded contempt (as for the "washerwoman-looking Indian" or Joe Neptune) but also a respect that went beyond the intellectual "love" of the abstract "Indian" that Emerson recounted in his eulogy. This shift in perspective is especially evident in Thoreau's depiction of Joe Polis, the guide for the final trip in 1857. The first words spoken by Polis to Thoreau come out of "that strange remoteness in which the Indian ever dwells to the white man" (713). By now this phrase signifies more than the legendary reserve of the Indian; the question has become who is actually "remote"--who is "here" and who is somewhere else. As the previous passage suggests, Thoreau came to feel himself the other in America, even though the descendents of Polis would not become citizens of the nation until 1924. A new definition of the American

emerges in "The Allegash and East Branch" which implicitly discards the self-other model as Thoreau becomes fascinated by the process of acculturation.

First Thoreau learns that Polis's "strange remoteness" may be as much a coping response to "impertinent" whites as a natural, racial characteristic. On the stage trip from Bangor Thoreau is struck by Polis's "stolid expression of face" and "the peculiar vagueness of his replies when addressed in the stage, or at the taverns." A Maine man, who speaks to Polis "as if he were a child," is utterly ignored, but Thoreau notes that Polis's "eyes glisten a little." When a "tipsy Canadian" wants to borrow the Indian's pipe, Polis replies, with "vacant" face, "Me got no pipe." Thoreau, having seen Polis load his pocket with pipe and tobacco in the morning, begins to understand the social functionality of "Indian" reticence (717).

At their first camp, Polis's remoteness seems to disappear, and, as if conscious of his own role as novelty as well as guide, asks Thoreau if he had "ever heard 'Indian sing.'" Polis's version of an authentic Indian song turns out to be a Catholic hymn translated into his native tongue and delivered in the "somewhat nasal" tones peculiar to its phonetics. Far from being disappointed, however, Thoreau is touched and, as always when confronted by the Indian, transported in time.

His singing carried me back to the period of the discovery of America, to San Salvador and the Incas, when Europeans first encountered the simple faith of the Indian. There was, indeed, a beautiful simplicity about it; nothing of the dark and savage, only the mild and

infantile. The sentiments of humility and reverence chiefly were expressed. (730)

At first this scene appears to provide yet another opportunity to comment on the degeneration of the Indian race and the disastrous effects of European religion in substituting Christian hymns for traditional Indian songs. But here the historical reference does not stress change or deterioration but continuity: Polis has only adapted the "beautiful simplicity" of the original, prehistoric Indian faith to a newer form; the music has perhaps changed, but the "sentiments" remain the same. In this context the word "infantile" does not express censure or ridicule but instead questions the traditional distinction between "mild" and angelic--innocent--and "dark and savage"--guilty. The savage is no more childlike than the saint.

This sense that religions can interpenetrate one another without one necessarily being destroyed is reinforced later that night as Thoreau literally sees the light when he encounters foxfire near the camp. The glow of rotting wood in his hand opens Thoreau to the animistic piety of the Indian: "I exulted like 'a pagan suckled in a creed' that had never been worn at all, but was bran new, and adequate to the occasion. I let science slide, and rejoiced in that light as if it had been a fellow-creature" (731).

I believed that the woods were not tenantless, but choke-full of honest spirits as good as myself any day,--not an empty chamber, in which chemistry was left to work alone, but an inhabited house,--and for a few moments I enjoyed fellowship with them...It suggested, too, that the same experience always gives birth to the same sort of belief or religion. One revelation has been made to the Indian, another to the white man. I have much to

learn of the Indian, nothing of the missionary. I am not sure but all that would tempt me to teach the Indian my religion would be his promise to teach me *his*. (732)

Thoreau's powerful if momentary experience of nature as a house, under the one roof of which all creatures, animate and inanimate, reside as equally valued tenants, corresponds remarkably to descriptions of the general world view characteristic of Native American cultures. In her essay "The Sacred Hoop," Paula Gunn Allen contrasts the linear, hierarchical Chain of Being implicit in Enlightenment science as well as Christian religions with a vision affirming that "all things [are] of equal value in the scheme of things, denying the qualities of opposition, dualism, and isolationism (separatism) that characterize non-Indian thought in the world." Thoreau refuses a "chemical" way of knowing that requires a detached observer and a dead universe of inanimate matter and unchanging laws. Gunn Allen likens the Indian "scheme" to Einstein's revelation of matter as a temporarily differentiated special condition of energy; but she would add to Einstein that energy in all its various forms is not dumb--stupid and voiceless--but intelligent. Thoreau respects the light as one of the "honest spirits as good as myself" who people the woods.²⁸

Joe Polis embodies the reciprocal cultural exchange envisioned, and coveted, by Thoreau. Although he is "stricter than white men" in his adherence to Christian usages (742), he remains conscious of his unique heritage, his "red gifts" as Natty Bumppo would say. Thoreau asks him how he is able to find his way unerringly through the trackless woods, and

Polis's enigmatic "remoteness" reasserts itself. "'O, I can't tell *you*,' he replied. 'Great difference between me and white man'" (735). Polis is no purist when it comes to his profession, however. He utilizes the white man's rifle, "hard bread and pork," and even the stagecoach on his hunting expeditions. "Thus you have an Indian," Thoreau comments, "availing himself cunningly of the advantages of civilization, without losing any of his woodcraft, but proving himself the more successful hunter for it" (747). As a model of successful acculturation, Polis provides a counterimage to Joe Neptune and the juvenile archers who drove Thoreau to lament, "Alas for the Hunter Race!"

Polis had represented his tribe not only at the state capital in Augusta but in Washington, D.C., had visited Daniel Webster in Boston, and even fancies living in New York City (a desire which "surprise[s]" Thoreau).

But then, as if relenting a little, when he thought what a poor figure he would make there, he added, "I suppose, I live in New York, I be poorest hunter, I expect." He understood very well both his superiority and his inferiority to the whites. He criticised the people of the United States as compared with other nations, but the only distinct idea with which he labored was, that they were "very strong," but, like some individuals, "too fast." He must have the credit of saying this just before the general breaking down of railroads and banks. (744)

At one level Thoreau's account of this exchange lauds the savage wise enough, like Simms's Sanutee, to recognize his own limitations (and implicitly, his own inferiority), or, like Cooper, the noble savage who would rather stick to his gifts and be destroyed by the processes of history than compromise his racial identity. But Thoreau does not think much of a

"superior" ability to prosper in New York, nor of the superior strength and speed of white industrial and financial systems. Thus even Polis's weaknesses are strengths, and he is sage enough not to compete with whites on their own unstable ground. Furthermore, Polis possesses an accute, if primitive, talent for comparative cultural criticism. Unlike Cooper's Indian social critics, who tend to be embittered by hatred (Magua) or simply by time (Chingachgook in *The Pioneers*), Polis is as dispassionate in his simple evaluation as Thoreau himself, coolly balancing "superiority" and "inferiority."

However we may wish to characterize Polis--as a pragmatic survivor and effective advocate for his people, or as an Indian version of an Uncle Tom²⁹--it is clear that during the trip recounted in "The Allegash and East Branch" Thoreau came to respect and admire him as a complex man rather than a consistent idea of "the Indian." As Robert Sayre notes, Thoreau's Polis is "as intimate a portrait of another person as Thoreau ever wrote," and "he would not publish it in the *Atlantic* in 1858...because if Polis read it, 'I could not face him again.'"

In this sensitivity, as also in the amount that Thoreau learned from Polis, he clearly honored him. In his funeral eulogy on Thoreau, Emerson ranked Polis, John Brown, and Walt Whitman as the three people who had had the greatest effect on Thoreau in the last years of his life. Probably no other American personally knew all three men; surely no other chose these original three as influences. We know a man by such a choice of friends; we must imagine Polis's influence by his inclusion in such company.³⁰

Polis showed Thoreau the difference as well as the indifferency of place and time. Instead of becoming a type or

a trophy, like Joe Neptune or one of Hannah Dustan's scalps, he becomes an "influence," a pressure on Thoreau's thought. Polis forced his portraitist to rethink his medium; the conventional frames and tints did not capture the object of the study.

Polis stood in something of the same relationship to Thoreau as Thoreau did to Emerson. Marvelling at Thoreau's intimate knowledge of the woods around Concord, Emerson succinctly characterizes the price and the payoff of accompanying him on a ramble through nature: "One must submit abjectly to such a guide, and the reward was great."³¹ As Thoreau's last guide in the Maine woods, Polis likewise shows Thoreau that there are more things in nature than are dreamt of in his philosophy. In a letter to H.G.O. Blake after returning from his trip with Polis, Thoreau describes the "reward" of encountering a "new world" with such a guide.

Having returned, I flatter myself that the world appears in some respects a little larger, and not, as usual, smaller and shallower, for having extended my range. I have made a short excursion into the new world which the Indian dwells in, or is. He begins where we leave off. It is worth the while to detect new faculties in man,--he is so much the more divine; and anything that fairly excites our admiration expands us. The Indian, who can find his way so wonderfully in the woods, possesses so much intelligence which the white man does not,--and it increases my own capacity, as well as faith, to observe it. I rejoice to find that intelligence flows in other channels than I knew. It redeems for me portions of what seemed brutish before.³²

Thoreau could say of Polis, as Emerson said of him, "It was a pleasure and a privelege to walk with him." Polis "redeems" the "brutish" aspects of Indianness, as Thoreau reinterprets cultural difference in terms of localized manifestations of

human "intelligence." His New Anglocentric theory of the "indifferency" of time and place to the essential life of man has given way to an appreciation of the diverse "channels" human creativity can forge and follow.

In the process of rethinking the Indian, Thoreau was forced to rethink history and language. Polis's happy accomodation of savage and civilized lifestyles violated the conventions of savagism, and Thoreau's investment in "the Indian" was great. Privy to "secrets undivulged" to whites, secrets unsung in "white man's poetry" and defiled in the conversion of pine-trees into board-feet, the Indian provided the basis for a series of oppositions which defined all that was right and wrong with New England (and by extension the world). In confounding those oppositions, Polis deprived Thoreau of a keen scalpknife with which he hoped, among other operations, to sever truth and history. Even in *A Week* Indianness disrupted the metaphysical presence posited by the reflective model of language and the mythic theory of history. In *The Maine Woods* the absent becomes present, as Polis embodies the history of white-Indian relations, but again the effect is to dislodge the assumptions with which Thoreau employs an Indian to study. In *A Week* the Indian highlights contradictions in aesthetic theory and practice, but Polis exhibits the material "contradictions" of a bicultural individual.

Paradoxically, though, Thoreau almost always refers to Polis as "the Indian"--as though Polis were not an individual at all but a racial type. Perhaps Thoreau simply utilizes

this convenient term to differentiate his guide from his other companion Hoar. But "the Indian," I would argue, is at this stage of Thoreau's life a term of respect for Polis's heritage and that certain "remoteness" out of which he had first spoken to his employer. Referred to Polis, "the Indian" clearly designates an individual and not an idea or collection of stereotypical characteristics. Thoreau seems to be acknowledging the historical process of acculturation. Civilization doesn't emasculate the Indian or whitewash him, relegate him to a debased "class." Polis rides the stage on hunting trips, visits Washington, D.C., and wants to live in New York, but remains recognizably "Indian." Thoreau's theories of language and culture mesh in a way they never had before, as the celebrator of "extra-vagance" shows that "the Indian" is a white construct which doesn't comprehend real Indians. Language is misnominal: proper nouns like "Indian" don't refer to a unified object but to a historical process of negotiation and arbitration. The Musketaquid is renamed, and "the historian" adjudicates the value of Hannah Dustan's scalps. If Indians are real enough, "the Indian" is indeed "the invention of historians and poets," as Thoreau had suspected--or, as Melville demonstrated in the same year as Thoreau's final trip to Maine, the invention of historians and confidence men.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

¹*Journals*, Vol. XII, p. 335.

²*The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968), p. 91.

³*A Week*, p. 137. All citations from *A Week*, *Walden*, and *The Maine Woods* are from *Henry David Thoreau* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1985).

⁴Quoted in the Introduction to *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1906), xxxiv.

⁵*Thoreau, A Naturalist's Liberty* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U. Press, 1983).

⁶*Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell U. Press, 1973), p. 207. Buell argues that what I call uncertainty is really an intentional randomness that accords with transcendental aesthetics in its breadth, ambition, and refusal of the finality of form.

⁷Robert F. Sayre, *Thoreau and the American Indians* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1977), p. xi.

⁸"Thoreau," in *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Stephen E. Whicher ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), p. 383, 389.

⁹Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David Allison (Evanston, 1973), p. 142. Quoted in Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 15.

¹⁰*The Confidence-Man*, p. 199.

¹¹Joan Burbick, *Thoreau's Alternative History: Changing Perspectives on Nature, Culture, and Language* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 16.

¹²Sayre, p. 30; *A Week*, p. 161.

¹³*The Maine Woods*, p. 700.

¹⁴Philip Gura, "Language and Meaning: An American Tradition," *American Literature*, March 1981, p. 10.

¹⁵See Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land* for an extended study of the contradictory images of "Virgin Land"

and "Mother Earth," and the violent metaphors that accompanied them, in writings on the process of expansion and settlement in America.

¹⁶Emerson, p. 393.

¹⁷Emerson, p. 393.

¹⁸See Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness: The Archaeology of an Idea" and "The Noble Savage Theme as Fetish" in *The Tropics of Discourse*.

¹⁹Emerson, p. 387. "I think [Thoreau's] fancy for referring everything to the meridian of Concord did not grow out of any ignorance or depreciation of other longitudes or latitudes, but was rather a playful expression of his conviction of the indifference of all places, and that the best place for each is where he stands."

²⁰Richard Bridgman, *Dark Thoreau* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. xiv.

²¹Emerson, *Selections*, p. 389.

²²See Lee Clark Mitchell, *Witnesses to a Vanishing America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), for a detailed examination of "Indians and 'Image Catchers'" in the nineteenth century. Mitchell's book traces a strong cultural countercurrent to the optimism of Manifest Destiny. "The West specifically, and the Indian in particular, emblemized all that was changing. In the many documentary photographs made through the course of the century, a 'vision of loss' confronts the viewer" (149).

²³Sayre, *Thoreau and the American Indian*, pp. 155-193.

²⁴Halden, pp. 329, 354.

²⁵The interdependency of hunter and hunted, human and animal, even animate and inanimate, is central to virtually all Native American mythological systems. For relevance to "Marxist anthropology": Calvin Martin, "Introduction" to *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1987). For a brilliant portrayal of the elaborate etiquette maintained between hunter and prey, see the final chapter of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1966).

²⁶Sayre, pp. 195-202.

²⁷A fascinating criticism of Thoreau's portrait of Aitteon is provided by Fannie Hardy Eckstorm in *The Penobscot Man* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1904), pp. 67-68. "If ever Henry David Thoreau showed himself lacking in penetration, it was when he failed to get the

measure of Joseph Attien [sic]...Thoreau hired an Indian to be aboriginal. One who said 'By George!' and made remarks with a Yankee flavor was contrary to his hypothesis of what a barbarian ought to be. It did not matter that this was the sort of man who gave up his inside seat and rode sixty miles on the top of the stage in the rain that a woman might be sheltered;--all the cardinal virtues without aboriginality would not have sufficed Mr. Thoreau for a text." While there is some justice to this complaint, it clearly simplifies Thoreau's relationship to Aitteon and his characterization of him in "Chesuncook." Eckstorm's "Penobscot men" are not Indians of that tribe but whites and Indians who earned their livelihood on the river of that name. Her book reads like a localized celebration of Theodore Roosevelt's "strenuous life." Thoreau, the dilettantish tourist, pales before the image of the chivalrous man of might and Maine.

²⁸Paula Gunn Allen, "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Indian Perspective on American Indian Literature," in *The Remembered Earth*, ed. Geary Hobson (Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1979), pp. 223-225. To speak of a single Native American world view common to all the tribes of North America is at least as misleading as positing a unified "Western tradition" (or "wisdom of the East"). On the other hand, cultural correspondences and commonalities, even between tribes widely separated geographically, would be surprising only to those operating under the savagist assumptions that Indians lived in strictly isolated bands, that their only intertribal commerce was warfare, that they were slavishly and superstitiously tied to the neighborhoods of their ancestors, and that they never explored as individuals or migrated as groups.

²⁹We might object, for instance, that Polis's use of white technology makes him "the more successful hunter" only in the quantitative terms of the marketplace. The fur trade had long since altered the relationship of the northeastern tribes to their traditional game, from a spiritual contract between equal parties to a purely economic one between "producer" and commodity. See Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978).

³⁰Sayre, p. 184.

³¹Emerson, p. 387.

³²*The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York: New York University Press, 1958), p. 491. Quoted in Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 108-109.

MELVILLE: THE DISCOURSE OF INDIAN-HATING

Yes, sir, whenever we approached them in the language of friendship and kindness, we touched the chord that won their confidence; and now, when they have nothing left with which to satisfy our cravings, we propose to annul every treaty--to gainsay our word...

--Theodore Frelinghuysen, New Jersey Senator, during Congressional Debates on Indian Removal Act, 4/9/1830¹

Trust is the coin of the realm.

--George Schultz, Secretary of State, during Iran-contra hearings, 7/23/1987

All talk is lying.

--Jerry Garcia

I. Two Swindler's Stories

In his essay "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," Clifford Geertz warns of the dangers of a structural or "hermetical" approach to cultural description. In abstracting formal systems from the "flow of behavior," the concrete "social action" of individuals, the analyst runs the risk of missing the "drama" played out within (and against) these forms. What the analyst gains by such a procedure is coherence, a patterned, "impeccable" description that smacks of the scientific. "But there is nothing so coherent," Geertz wryly observes, "as a paranoid's delusion or a swindler's story."² Geertz is criticizing structural anthropology on much the same grounds as M. M. Bakhtin criticized formal linguistics and stylistics. These latter disciplines were based, Bakhtin argued, on two fallacious presuppositions: the "unity of language" (in the Saussurean sense of *langue*, a

closed system in which meaning is a function of phonetic and semantic difference) and "the unity of an individual person realizing himself in this language."³³ Geertz and Bakhtin are responding to a kind of "scientific" fallacy in their respective disciplines: that the uncovering of laws, systems, and forms exhausts the potential for description of cultural activity. Since culture is an "acted document," says Geertz, and the life of language is the dialogic "utterance," as Bakhtin would say, focusing on the formal properties of the "document" or the language is to dehistoricize it, to lift it out of the social context which is the source of its meaning and effect.

This is, of course, to greatly simplify (and perhaps to unjustifiably conflate) two complex arguments, ones to which I will return later. For now I only mean to suggest some of the problems raised by, and enacted in, Melville's novel *The Confidence-Man* (1857), as well as some of the tools I will apply in addressing them. This "swindler's story" is a brutal if playful attack on the twin unities denied by Bakhtin, those of language and of personality. The extravagant variety of costumes and roles assumed by the confidence man in "His Masquerade" (as the book is subtitled) calls into question the unity of his own personality (and, indeed, of his person). Furthermore, the confidence games he perpetrates show that the coherent, unified personalities of his victims are the necessary fictions of a marketplace which demands reliability and dependability but in fact compels the violent separation of emotion and reason, friendship and business. And the

American languages of religion and philosophy, philanthropy and business, are shown to be not only internally contradictory but susceptible to radical disjunctions between their import (within their respective formal systems) and their effect (within the confidence game). When the confidence man says to the "charitable lady" from whom he has just milked twenty dollars, "Yea, you can say to me as the apostle said to the Corinthians, 'I rejoice that I have confidence in you in all things,'" the difference between a document (the New Testament) and an "acted document" could not be more clear.⁴

A pivotal episode in *The Confidence-Man* concerns the story of Colonel John Moredock, the "Indian-hater." In this episode the Confidence-Man's final avatar, Frank Goodman, "the cosmopolitan," meets Charlie Noble, himself a "Mississippi operator," who demonstrates through "metaphysical" argument and anecdotal evidence the justice as well as the inevitability of Indian-hating. A close examination of this section will serve as an appropriate conclusion to this study, for the Moredock tale brings together all of the discursive threads we have seen constructing "Indianness" throughout American history, while highlighting and ironizing them through parody. Melville demonstrates the incoherence of this tropic profusion that is meant to explain racial difference and explain away racist violence. While it is true that Melville's account of Indian-hating is not fully dialogized, in the sense that Indians never speak for themselves, those who do speak, who give the white man's "testimony," are so

thoroughly discredited by their own language that their arguments cannot but be thrown out of court. In the context of a novel in which the dominant discursive mode is testimonial, the Indian wins his case, as the defense (Moredock is really the one "on trial") impugns its own witnesses. The legal paradigm which pervades the verbal transactions aboard the riverboat *Fidele*, seemingly so consistent in its procedures, reasonable in its conclusions, and impartial in its judgments, is part of a cultural con game in which Indians are swindled while being convicted as swindlers themselves.

While many critics, both literary and cultural, have produced perceptive readings of the Moredock tale and its "philosophical" preface, "The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating," these analyses tend to be insufficiently contextualized in one of two ways. Literary critics like Joyce Sparer Adler and Tom Quirk will demonstrate the continuity of the episode within the formal and rhetorical structures of the novel, but the history of Indian-hating--how its ideas and rhetoric had attained such currency as to become part of a confidence game--falls outside their scope. Conversely, historical studies like those undertaken by Roy Harvey Pearce and Emile Zolla examine Melville's version of Moredock as part of a cultural tradition, but do not consider the role of the tale within the novel itself (or, in Pearce's case, consider it only briefly) or within the confidence game. While both of these approaches are adequate to their respective purposes, uniting them allows us to see how Melville masterfully fulfills the radical

potential of the novel, as Bakhtin saw it, to subvert dominant ideologies by parodying their official languages. When the ideology of savagism intersects with the legal language of the testimonial and the historical language of Manifest Destiny, all in the mouth of a confidence man, "the metaphysics of Indian-hating" is thoroughly dialogized and historicized.⁵

III. The Indian as Confidence Man

To allude once more to Geertz's suggestive remark about coherence, we could say that by the nineteenth century savagism had evolved from a paranoid's delusion to a swindler's story. As we saw in the first chapter, the Puritans' twin fears of Indians and "Indianizing" were not without some justification, but issued in sadistic (and masochistic) violence and even contributed to the hysteria of the witch trials. By the era of Indian Removal, however, Euro-American hegemony in the United States was complete, and savagism came to accommodate "humanitarian" arguments for banishing the Indian from his homeland in the republic. One version of the new savagism is exemplified in the amoral apologetics, based on a reified vision of History, of William Gilmore Simms: it is not Governor Craven (or Simms himself) who is racist, but natural history itself. Another version shows itself in the paternalistic rhetoric of Andrew Jackson and other proponents of the "benevolent" argument for Removal: like the child whose neglectful parents allow him to hang around pool halls, the Indian east of the Mississippi is prey to sharks and sharpers.⁶

By this point policy-makers were less afraid of Indians than of national and international criticism of the kind delivered by Senator Frelinghuysen in the epigraph to this chapter. But they needn't have worried; despite sporadic objections, savagism had achieved the status of a "metaphysical" truth. A saddened and bewildered Alexis de Tocqueville testified to the persuasiveness of this ideology when he contrasted his first-hand observation of the brutal and "solemn spectacle" of a Choctaw removal march in 1831 with the apathetic nonreaction of the world at large to the American policy. Apparently American progress could shove Indians aside, or plough them under, "with singular felicity, tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world." (While it is true that President Jackson came under intense criticism for his policy of Removal, mainly from Northern Whigs, his countercharge of moral hypocrisy in the service of political ends was largely justified.)

Tocqueville's juxtaposition of concrete images of sick and freezing children and old people with abstract "principle[s] of morality" points out the fundamental incoherency of Indian policy and the ideology upon which it was based. At a more rarefied level, this incoherency shows itself in the contradictory images of the Indian as, on the one hand, naive, simple, childlike, and on the other as lying, treacherous devils. While both images had coexisted uneasily throughout the history of European-Indian interaction, in the

nineteenth century they polarized into regional truisms: in the East a vulnerable child, in the West the Indian was the master of misrepresentation, the consummate con man.⁶³ It is the latter image of the Indian which makes him useful in the confidence game framing the Moredock tale, so to the history of this image we must briefly turn.

Aside from his violent nature, perhaps the one characteristic most consistently ascribed to the Indian throughout American history is his treachery. At the root of this characterization is the Puritan equation of the Indian and the Satanic. We will recall that Mary Rowlandson likened "these barbarous creatures to him who was a liar from the beginning." Cotton Mather concurred, indicting them as "most impudent *Lyars*, [who] will invent Reports and Stories at a strange and monstrous rate." Natty Bumppo picked up the echoes from Genesis when he regularly compared "Mingos" to snakes. In his own deceptively relativistic way, Simms declared that "deception with [Indians] is the legitimate morality of a true warrior." Francis Parkman, recounting *the History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851), commented that Pontiac's "blackest treachery" should hardly be surprising given that for Indians (and savages in general) "deep dissimulation...seems native to their blood."⁶⁴ This unanimity among writers from vastly different historical and social contexts would seem to establish the transhistorical, "metaphysical" validity of white perception of Indian deception. Instead, however, it illustrates the ease with which these writers could deceive themselves by trying to

adopt a perspective outside history, and by denying their own complicity in the treachery they help to produce. Rowlandson could not acknowledge Indian kindness and integrity, even as she presented dozens of examples of them. Parkman's history, by denying the violence and treachery of its white heroes (and their ancestors), thus presents Indian violence and treachery as "native," a product of inherited blood rather than the blood shed in battles for their homelands. The image of the lying Indian not only had a long history, but was largely the product of an unacknowledged white history of misunderstanding and aggression.

When Charlie Noble invokes this language, then, he is drawing on well-established cultural currency, pure coin of the realm. Noble uses the Indian as deceptive Other in part to establish his claim, as a white man, to dependability. But Melville shows that if dissimulation is "native" to anyone's blood, it is the white man's. The real issue, though, is not human "nature" but the effects of the free market society represented by the *Fidèle*, in which misrepresentation is endemic. If "confidence is the indispensable basis of all sorts of business transactions" (138), then subverting the cultural self-definition provided by Indian-hating is as much as to undermine money itself. As Gary Saul Morson notes, "One only discredits what others might credit, one only reveals as counterfeit what others might take for true coin. Parody implies currency."¹⁰ Melville's parodic "Metaphysics of Indian-Hating" reveals as counterfeit not only the discourse constructing a hateful Indian, but the reifying,

metaphysicalizing tendency of free-market ideology in general.

III. "Judge Hall": Historicizing the Historian

The context of the Moredock tale is its role in the attempt of its transmitter, the artful but inferior confidence man Charlie Noble, to strike some chord of fellowship in his mark, the cosmopolitan himself. Noble presents himself as the consummate Western democrat: gruffly friendly and plain-spoken, scornful of aristocracy, "with the air somehow of one whose fortunes had been of his own making" (152). In proferring the story of Colonel Moredock, who hated Indians "like snakes," Noble speaks from something like experience; as a child, he says, he had himself gone westward on "a long journey through the wilderness" with his father (153), so presumably he knows something at first hand of the pioneer ethos he will embody in Moredock. But as a good con man should, Noble delegates the responsibility and authority for his tale to Judge James Hall, author of Melville's source, *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the West* (1834-35). In this way he preserves what has lately been called plausible deniability. Based on his reading of the audience's response to the story, Noble can either fully endorse Hall's justification of Indian-hating or dissociate himself from it. Though Noble portrays himself as the self-made democrat, he defers to his social superior, the Judge, and quotes him "almost word for word." Hall's authority, in turn, proceeds less from his rank than his oratorical skills. He had the impressive knack of intoning the Moredock tale for all time,

as if "to an invisible amanuensis" or a gathering of the press (154). With an ear to history, Hall dehistoricizes Indian-hating by elevating it to the level of a "metaphysical" principle. In the absolute terms of the legal case, the Indian is guilty, and his sentence, extinction. For, as Noble comments (presumably paraphrasing the Judge), "Indian-hating still exists; and, no doubt, will continue to exist, so long as Indians do" (155).

First we will look at Hall's rhetoric, as parroted by Noble, then examine its role in Noble's con game. Basically Hall's strategy is to ascribe Indian violence and perfidy to his "nature," his racial essence, while justifying the violence of the backwoodsmen by their experience and socialization. "Indian-hating was no monopoly of Colonel Moredock's," we are told, "but a passion...largely shared among the class to which he belonged" (155). As an early indication of the double-talk pervading Hall's argument, however, we immediately learn that the fundamental characteristic of "the backwoodsman's" social "class" is its rejection of society. He is "unsophisticated," "unprincipled" (in a nonpejorative sense), "self-willed," an exemplar of "self-reliance" and the efficacy of "untutored sagacity," one with whom "instincts prevail...over precepts" (156). In all this he is identical to the Indian, with whom he is supposed to be metaphysically at odds. However, as the mediator--geographically, temporally, and symbolically--between savagery and civilization, the seemingly asocial backwoodsman's very identity is constructed in terms of a specific historical and

social conflict. The "class" of backwoodsmen is not the agent or product of History as a metaphysical principle, but of historians like the Judge.

This point can be underlined by comparing this section with the real Hall's *Sketches*. Hall never refers to backwoodsmen as a "class"; instead they constitute "a peculiar race."¹¹ By altering Hall's term, Melville foregrounds the social origin of Hall's categorization as well as the social function of the category. Melville's strategy throughout is to deflate Hall's claims to eternal truth by demonstrating that they are contingent, historically-determined arguments serving particular class interests. His related strategy is to parody the rhetoric which serves as the vehicle of this ideology and glosses over its contradictions. As Gary Saul Morson says, "Parody historicizes, and in so doing, it exposes the conditions that engendered claims of unconditionality."¹² Here is "Judge Hall" waxing eloquent on the natural "tide" of "conquering civilization":

"'Though held in a sort a barbarian, the backwoodsman would seem to America what Alexander was to Asia--captain in the vanguard of conquering civilization. Whatever the nation's growing opulence or power, does it not lackey his heels? Pathfinder, provider of security to those who come after him, for himself he asks nothing but hardship. Worthy to be compared with Moses in the Exodus, or the Emperor Julian in Gaul, who on foot, and bare-browed, at the head of covered or mounted legions, marched so through the elements, day after day. The tide of emigration, let it roll as it will, never overwhelms the backwoodsman into itself; he rides upon advance, as the Polynesian upon the comb of the surf.'" (157)

The last sentence brilliantly enacts Melville's parodic strategy: to reproduce Hall's text "almost word for word," but deconstructing its logic by pressuring its metaphors. In the

Indian-hating chapter of *Sketches*, Hall uses the phrase "tide of emigration" three times, as in this sentence, the target of Melville's: "The great tide of emigration, as it rolls forward, beats upon [the pioneers] and rolls them onward, without either swallowing them up in its mass, or mingling its elements with theirs."¹³ The Polynesian surfer is not only the perfect image of this wave-rider who keeps out of the water, but converts the grim savage-killer into a fun-loving savage.

In its general outline this description of American expansion is the familiar one of Crèvecoeur and Cooper, Simms and Bird. In the progress of the "tide" of History, the Indians are superceded by the frontiersmen, who pave the way for their own displacement by settlers and eventually full-fledged "civilization." But in Melville's satirical version, "Pathfinder" is not only not "vicious," one of "our bad people" as Crèvecoeur had insisted, but takes his place in a galaxy of the great and saintly. The neotypological history of a Simms, who saw in the "epic" progress of America a veritable Olympus of "brave fathers," is ridiculed by making the backwoodsman at once an enslaver (like Alexander and Julian) and a liberator from slavery (Moses). In a further ironic inversion, the backwoodsman of Hall's rhetoric is master and civilization his lackey, when in fact Melville shows that Moredock and his class are the slaves of the Judge Halls and Charlie Nobles. Moredock does the dirty work of Indian extermination, clearing the land for westward expansion, while the judge, the historian, and the confidence

man move in to sing his praises and reap the rewards of his activity. For, as the narrator warns us early on, "in new countries, where the wolves are killed off, the foxes increase" (2). "Progress" consists of the wolves--Indian-haters as well as Indians--giving way to a new species of predator.

As Joyce Sparer Adler points out, one of the fundamental processes under attack in *The Confidence-Man* is "sinning by deputy," and this idea links the Moredock section to several others in the book. It is first embodied in the "gentleman with gold sleeve-buttons" and spotless hands who keeps a black servant "having to do with dirt on his account." He is a man who, "like the Hebrew governor, knew how to keep his hands clean"(37)--a Pontius Pilate who maintains to the world at large the same relation as the Emersonian "mystic" Mark Winsome does to his love of wine and kindness: "in the lasting condition of an untried abstraction" (209). Delegating dirt to a slave is one thing.

But if, with the same undefiledness of consequences to himself, a gentleman could also sin by deputy, how shocking would that be! But it is not permitted to be; and even if it were, no judicious moralist would make proclamation of it. (37)

The "judicious moralist" Judge Hall acknowledges the backwoodsman as his "deputy," "captain in the vanguard of conquering civilization," but does not account the implacable Indian-hating characteristic of that "class" a sin. Even if it were, the stain would not spread to Hall and his audience; the backwoodsman is like the servant who handles the dirty things of the world for his gentleman-master. As Adler puts

it, "In the Moredock section...it is not an individual but a society which sins by deputy."¹⁴

The Jacksonian citizen does not have to endorse the behavior of the backwoodsman, let alone engage in it, but should recognize it as natural, inevitable. Its first cause, the Original Sin of the west as it were, is rooted in "the Indian nature," which is the central subject of "backwoods' education." Hall scarcely considers it necessary to enumerate the tenets of this curriculum: "as for what manner of man the Indian is, many know, either from history or experience" (156). Like the confidence man, Hall encourages a complacent acceptance rather than a critical questioning of received ideas; he prefers a static ideological configuration within which he can "operate." Still, he provides a refresher course. The Indian is "an assassin like a New York rowdy," "a judicial murderer and Jeffries," "a Jew with hospitable speeches cozening some fainting stranger into ambush" (158). Adler points out that all the antitypes of "Indian" evil are white, undermining the idea of a depraved racial character. Even the treacherous Mocmohoc, the judge's only "historical" example of Indian evil besides the renegades who killed Moredock's family, is merely "a savage *almost* perfidious as Caesar Borgia" (160; italics added).¹⁵ None of these analogies has anything remotely resembling a source in Hall's *Sketches*. Melville uses them to make a more general point about racial typing of the Indian in American history. The evil, lying Indian of the Puritans was a projection of anxiety about imposters within the community of saints. The

violent, treacherous Indian of nineteenth-century histories, Melville suggests, was also an image seen in a mirror rather than through some objective historical window.

In Judge Hall's "metaphysics," the ideology of savagism provides what Bakhtin would call the "centripetal" force of the discourse, the "verbal-ideological" content working to centralize and unify potentially antagonistic ideas and languages within the structure of a single "official" language. Any "concrete utterance," however, whether "ordinary" or literary, is composed of "a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language." The "centrifugal" counterforce to the "normative-centralizing system of a unitary language" is the heteroglossic tendency to stratify into "languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth."¹⁶ These sublanguages are potentially subversive because they threaten to reveal all language, including that of the normative verbal-ideological system, as "ideologically saturated," as expressing "a world view" and not the world. In certain social settings, as "on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles" (or on a ship of fools like the *Fidèle*?), this centrifugal tendency of language is exploited for political as well as entertainment purposes. The medieval clown decentered the ideological world by engaging in "a lively play with the 'languages' of poets, scholars, monks, knights and others, where all 'languages' were masks and where no language could claim to be an authentic, incontestable

face." The literary equivalent of such play is parody, which is "aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time." It is "heteroglossia that [has] become dialogized."¹⁷

Bakhtin's concept of the carnival does not quite apply to the *Fidèle*. Rather than an authorized transgression or inversion of official norms which in fact reinscribes authority at the end of a definite time period, Melville's riverboat represents transgression and inversion (especially of Christianity) as the norm. But if, in the world of *The Confidence-Man*, the masks never come off, this only illustrates the more clearly that "no language could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face," for the faces themselves are inauthentic. Melville exaggerates Hall's rhetoric not just to make fun of Hall, but to subvert the claims of his highly conventional verbal-ideological production to "metaphysical" validity. Indian-hating makes sense within the formal structures of savagism, and within those of the Christian allegory overlaying it. But these structures are composed, Melville demonstrates, of an explosive mix of contradictory languages constructing the Indian-hater as well as the Indian.

Indian-hating is a genetic trait and an acquired tendency, an instinct and a conscious religious commitment. The Indian has a "chemical" tendency towards violence; the Indian-hater drinks in his defining characteristic "with his mother's milk" (162). In language recalling Jefferson's assumption that there must be distinct species of men as well

as animals, Hall asks whether it is surprising "that one should hate a race which he believes to be red from a cause akin to that which makes some tribes of garden insects green?" Overlaying this "natural" animosity is the religious commitment of the Indian-hater, who devotes himself to "the ascetic trail" with "the solemnity of a Spaniard turned monk" (162-63). An exterminator of whole "tribes of garden insects" and an entire race of "snakes," the Indian-hater is the American Saint Patrick.

Melville ridicules not only the rhetoric of Hall's "history," which constructs the Indian by projecting onto him the criminality of the white man, but its logic. In those rare cases when an Indian becomes a sincere convert to Christianity, he will admit "that his race's portion by nature is total depravity; and, in that way, as much as admits that the backwoodsman's worst idea of it is not very far from true" (159). Of course, in the Christian view, depravity is not one "race's portion"; on the contrary, all races are tainted, and united, by Original Sin. And, should Hall's listener be inclined to lend a sympathetic ear to the Indian side of the story, he should know that "when a tomahawking red man advances the notion of the benignity of the red race, it is but part and parcel with that subtle strategy which he finds so useful in war, in hunting, and the general conduct of life" (159). To confront the Indian is to confront the logical (or illogical) dilemma of the person who declares, "Everything I say is a lie."

The essence of the Indian, finally, is his

inscrutability. The only thing one can rely on in dealing with him is the unreliability of the appearance he presents. He is literally a pathological liar; deception is a genetically-transmitted biochemical condition in him. The backwoodsman does well to ask himself this question about his foe:

...how know I what involuntary preparations may be going on in him for things as unbeknown in present time to him as me--a sort of chemical preparation in the soul for malice, as chemical preparation in the body for malady.
(162)

Constructing Indian "nature" in this way makes it easy to justify the killing of Indians, but furthermore it makes their demise seem natural, the product of an inner defect rather than a historical imperialistic process. Civilization can never assimilate the Indian, for market society is based on a certain amount of mutual trust--in money, in contracts, in products, in ideologies--and the very nature of the Indian is his untrustworthiness. "Confidence is the indispensable basis of all sorts of business transactions"; "trust is the coin of the realm," and the Indian's money is no good.

The Indian functions as the perfect figure against which both the Judge (as representative of the seeming security of consistent law and order) and Noble (the confidence man as plain-spoken democrat) can define themselves. But in Melville's ironic version of westward expansion and "progress," the Indian gives way to the Indian-hater, who is superceded by the Judge, while both make the world safe for the confidence man, the truly "Indian-like" master of deception. In trying to define itself in opposition to a

hated enemy it itself produces, Melville's society has become the very thing it sought to exclude. David Brion Davis's analysis of the fluid Jacksonian society calls attention both to the prevalence of confidence men and a fundamental problem they faced.

Individual success depended, in large measure, on effective presentations of self...[R]apid mobility often makes men self-consciously aware of aspects of role-playing which are taken for granted in tradition oriented societies...Both on the popular and literary levels of culture, we find a virtual obsession with hoaxes, impostors, frauds, confidence men, and double identities.¹⁶³

As the master of self-presentation, the confidence man would seem to be in his element in such a society. But as we see aboard the *Fidèle*, insofar as people become "self-consciously aware" of the pervasiveness of role-playing, they may be protected from confidence men or even become one. (The best way to protect oneself from Indians or confidence men is to become like them, only better.)

Noble's strategy, then, is to deflect the anxiety of appearance away from himself onto the Indian. Noble expects the cosmopolitan to be horrified at the savage's fiendish deceptions (not to mention his violence). Goodman should be glad of his white company, thankful for the capacity of civilization to make man's natural trust in his fellow man practicable. Noble can count on one of two reactions from his mark, either of which suits his purpose. If the listener agrees that Indians are evil, then Moredock's war is our war. We agree on savagism; perhaps we can agree on the likelihood of a civilized good-fellow repaying a loan. If the listener

protests that the Indian is not evil, then Moredock can be marginalized, relegated to a distinct "class": his war is his own. We are lucky enough, humanitarian enough, confident enough not to forsake society for monomaniacal misanthropy. Either interpretation bonds Noble and his mark, provided that the listener accepts the story as "history," the "authentic face" of the facts rather than a "mask."

Noble tries to exploit the centripetal tendency of history as a "verbal-ideological" form. His goal is to forge a feeling of fellowship with his intended victim, and the function of ideology is precisely to give one a sense of "belonging" to a common culture and common set of assumptions. To perceive Noble's history as an "utterance," on the other hand, might deflect attention from the shared formal structures of the language to its occasion, its *role*--to see it as a mask and not a face. To shift the terms from Bakhtin's to Geertz's, perceiving Noble's history not as a transcript of reality, a document, but as an "acted document," would be to question what specific social act it was performing in this context. A "self-conscious awareness of...role-playing" is the confidence man's weapon--and his victim's defense.

IV. History and Literature, Law and Literary Criticism

The monolanguage of the *fidele*, pervading all linguistic transactions, is the language of law. In contract societies it is almost inevitable that legal discourse becomes the

normative standard for linguistic authenticity. Indeed, the function of law and its language is to establish the authenticity of assertions or claims--of property, of principle, even of identity. On the *Fidèle*, the dominant discursive mode is the testimonial: everything needs to be proven, and proof is established by convincing testimony from respectable witnesses. Even supposedly incontrovertible physical facts, like Guinea's race, must be verified by consulting his character references--who in fact comprise a roster of confidence men. Endorsements, recommendations, advertisements, printed vouchers, certified statements--everyone wants proof, but the evidence always seems to come down to someone's word. Even the interpolated narratives, like Moredock's or China Aster's, function as affidavits: attributed to some other author or "witness," they are supposed to provide evidence in the disputes of other parties.

Law protects people from the confidence man by establishing identity and insisting that testimony be reliable. In a society anxious about appearances, citizens will tend to talk and reason like lawyers. But the language of law is also the confidence man's milieu. Operating within a limited formal system of rules and procedures, he is able to manipulate the "evidence" so as to compel the verdict--his innocence. The reader, too, is meant to judge: is Frank frank, is Noble noble, is Hall reliable, is Moredock innocent or guilty? But as many critics have noted, to judge in this way is to fall victim to Melville's narrative con game, which endlessly qualifies the "facts" of the cases. As John G.

Blair says, "In no case does the narrator supply sufficient evidence for the reader to decide whether the varying judgments of these characters are accurate or not. The narration remains closed in on itself, to be resolved only when a reader or a critic goes beyond the evidence presented." William M. Ramsey, having cited this passage from Blair, concludes in his article "The Moot Points of Melville's Indian-Hating": "As the reader goes beyond the 'evidence' offered, deciding for or against Indian-hating on the basis of where he locates positive evil, the "juror" locates evil--surprisingly--in his own heart."¹⁷

In his reference to "positive evil," Ramsey is alluding to the history of critical commentary on the Moredock section, which for years polarized around the issue of whether or not Moredock is a hero or a murderer, guilty or innocent. John W. Shroeder and Roy Harvey Pearce filed the initial briefs in the case in 1951-52. Shroeder's close reading of the symbolic system of *The Confidence-Man* reveals "a running system of Indian-images related to concepts, situations, and persons connected with the theological doctrines of human guilt and damnation. It is interesting to note that the Puritans could account for the Indian only by supposing him to be a descendent of Satan." (It is also interesting to note that Shroeder allows this characterization to pass with absolutely no comment, since it fits his scheme.) Furthermore, we know that Moredock "hated Indians like snakes" (152), and "hatred of the snake amounts to positive virtue in the cosmos of the *fiable*." In short, the Indian-hater's "individualism and

isolation for the achievement of spiritual vision" makes him "the only man in Melville's universe who has a sporting chance against snakes, Indians, and confidence-men." Moredock is another Ahab, but unlike that more demented monomaniac, "the Indian-hater has succeeded in locating Evil in its real home; there is no distortion in his vision of spiritual reality."²⁰

Pearce's response to Shroeder argues, by contrast, "that there is nothing but distortion in the Indian-hater's vision of spiritual reality." Pearce calls attention to "Melville's generally realistic primitivism" as exemplified in his review of Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* in 1849.²¹ The true model for Melville's narrative is not *Pilgrim's Progress*, as Shroeder had suggested, but James Hall's *Sketches*, as well as "the traditional story of the Indian-hater" in general. By comparing passages from Hall and Melville, Pearce shows that Melville highlights the violence, loneliness, and "terror" of Moredock. "If one takes to the story, as Melville must have assumed his readers would, a minimal awareness of tradition, one can see that Melville has no more praise for Indian-hating than he does for confidence. Both are false, blind, unreasoning." By calling attention to the narrative "tradition" of Indian-hating and Melville's critical variations of it, Pearce shifts the terms from Christian allegory to historiographical parody. But he too remains trapped in the either-or, guilty or innocent, paradigm of Shroeder and his Puritans. Since we must either hate Indians or love confidence, Melville's "corrosive pessimism" wins the day: "The blackness is complete."²²

Hershel Parker updates the case in 1963 by testifying for the allegorists. Parker's twist is to read the story not as a triumph for the Christian Moredock but as "a tragic study of the impracticability of Christianity." Shroeder "accurately formulat[ed] the terms of the allegory": "if the Confidence Man is associated with snakes and is the Devil, while Indians are associated with snakes and at least one Indian [Mocmohoc] is 'a type of the Confidence Man,' then in Melville's allegorical geometry the Indians are Devils also." But Shroeder has missed the point that the good Christian is a good Devil-hater, so that "the outrageous irony...is that it is when Moredock is murdering Indians that he is Christian and when he is enjoying the comforts of domestic life that he is apostatizing."

With the basic allegory of Indian Devils and Devil-hating Christians established, the story can be interpreted coherently. We are spared Pearce's revulsion at the literal story and can appreciate the grisly humor in Melville's outrageous distortion of our habitual way of thinking of Christianity...The "moral indignation" of the Indians who claim to be maligned is wryly comic, especially since the "Supreme Court" to which is left the question of whether Indians should be permitted to testify for themselves is, within the allegory, the Last Judgment.²³

For Shroeder and Parker it is imperative that we stay "within the allegory" so that "the story can be interpreted coherently." In Shroeder's formalist reading the trial has a verdict. For Ramsey, however, the indeterminacy of the evidence renders the whole proceeding "moot." His poststructuralist sensitivity to Melville's subversions of the legal paradigm and narrative conventions leads him to see a different kind of humor than Parker: the joke is on the juror

for even presuming to judge. Judging would require one to go "beyond the 'evidence' offered"--that is, outside the text. Despite his demonstration that Melville does not allow for a rigorous "legal" evaluation of facts, Ramsey limits himself to just such a procedure. On the basis of the transcript, *The Confidence-Man*, in the absence of other testimony, all judgments are "moot." But going "beyond the 'evidence'" may allow us to escape the legal paradigm which requires us to locate "positive evil" in the Indian or the Indian-hater (or ourselves, the jury).

Pearce pointed the way by intruding history, the "tradition" of Indian-hating narratives, into the closed textual logic. In a fundamental sense, history is always at odds with law, overturning its precedents, continually calling into question its definitions, distinctions, and judgments. Law is synchronic, a structure of rules and procedures designed to maintain the philosophical ideal of equity. History is diachronic, a process of dissolving and reshaping philosophical ideals and the structures founded upon them. But historiography, as we have seen, can also function ideologically to perpetuate social relations and cement "legal" claims. The Yamasee War, in the hands of a William Gilmore Simms, justifies not only the continuance of Indian expropriation but of slavery. Since "history" happened, it often appears inevitable in retrospect. Thus it can be used to establish "laws" of human behavior and social development. When history becomes the "testimony" or evidence brought to bear against the Indian within the formal structures of a legal proceeding, the most formidable ideological vehicle of a

contract society joins forces with its most formidable institutional control mechanism. The result is a truly "metaphysical" attack: bloodless, because conducted with words and ideas, and disembodied because it enlists Moredocks to carry out its sentence. While white-gloved gentlemen contribute to the "Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum," they are "sinning by deputy."

Like Adler after him, Pearce assigns some "positive evil" to the kind of "history" perpetrated by historians such as Hall.²⁴ These critics rightly insist that the Indian-hating of *The Confidence-Man* cannot be understood as a closed system of intratextual relations, but must include a cultural critique of Jacksonian historiography. But Melville's satirical targets are not only ideas but concrete power relations ratified and perpetuated by institutions like the Supreme Court. Ramsey, by contrast, demonstrates Melville's parodic legalism, but by refusing to go "beyond the 'evidence' presented" he finally endorses what Melville criticizes. If the terms of Melville's trial of Indian-hating render our judgment "moot" in this case, the validity of imposing the legal paradigm on, and using legal power to enforce, class-interested interpretations of history is still very much at issue.

Melville has the historian Judge Hall as much as admit that his trial is rigged and the "history" which provides its testimony is hopelessly Anglocentric. Having rendered the "facts" so defamatory to Indian character, Hall provides an

apparently judicious caveat.

Still, all this is less advanced as truths of the Indians than as examples of the backwoodsman's impression of them--in which the charitable may think he does them some injustice. Certain it is, the Indians themselves think so; quite unanimously, too...But whether on this or any point, the Indians should be permitted to testify for themselves, to the exclusion of other testimony, is a question that may be left to the Supreme Court. (159)

Of course, as Joyce Sparer Adler points out, it is the white backwoodsman's "impression" which is accepted as "fact," to the exclusion of other--that is Indian--testimony. "In the judge's story the Indian-hater wants to exterminate the Indian; in Melville's undercover account, the Indian-hater's 'historian' wants to erase the Indian's true history."²⁵ But Hall is also a judge, and Melville is implicating the legal system charged with enforcing the power relations dictated by the historian's ideology. The real Hall never refers to the Supreme Court; indeed, he never raises the issue of Indians' legal status at all. To locate a referent for Melville's allusion we are forced outside the novel's parody of Hall. Shroeder's solution--"Supreme Court" equals "Last Judgment" in the Christian allegory of Indian-hating--may have some validity, but Melville may have been less obsessed than Shroeder with formal coherence and more interested in the actual institutions of his time. Melville's close personal association with agents of the law--"Lawyers, judges, and prison-keepers were everywhere in Melville's family"²⁶--and his lifelong concern with the dehumanizing effects of the legal system²⁷ suggest an intense interest in the activities of American courts. Furthermore, it would be entirely

consistent with Melville's fictional method to make his allusion signify in both theological and ideological contexts so as to point out the disjunction between judgments celestial and terrestrial.

The Supreme Court had in fact considered the question of whether to hear Indian testimony. In 1830, when the state of Georgia extended its laws over the Cherokee Nation, formerly an independent political entity, the latter perceived this move quite rightly as an attempt to destroy their sovereignty and seize their lands. (Appropriately enough, in the context of "Judge Hall's" repudiation of Indian "testimony," these laws stipulated that Indians would not be allowed to testify in cases concerning whites.²²⁸) In 1831 their suit against the state of Georgia was considered by the Supreme Court. The Court denied the suit on the grounds that it lacked jurisdiction. The Cherokees, of course, were not American citizens; neither were they a "foreign nation," which the Constitution empowers to bring suit in federal courts against American citizens or institutions. Instead, as John Marshall declared in the majority opinion to the case, Indian tribes were to be considered "domestic dependent nations," "in a state of pupilage." "Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian." Thus Indians would not "be permitted to testify for themselves" at all, let alone "to the exclusion of other testimony."²²⁹

Chief Justice Marshall's opinion deserves further scrutiny, because it illustrates a fundamental feature of Jacksonian society dramatized by *The Confidence-Man*: the

separation of reason and emotion, business and sentiment. Egbert, "a practical poet in the West India trade" (217), tries to teach the cosmopolitan the propriety of never helping a friend. Since need expressed, and assistance rendered, implies for Egbert a relationship of creditor and debtor, the lending of aid (or money; the two are quickly conflated in the discourse of "the hypothetical friends") degrades a "friend celestial" into a "friend terrestrial." Such a relationship would make it impossible to "preserv[e] inviolate the delicacy of the connection" of friendship. In the "market" of friendship, the human commodity must not misrepresent itself in packaging (dressing beyond one's means) or advertising (making unsubstantiated claims for one's "parents' rank and repute of wealth"). In shopping for friends, says Egbert, "I went into the market and chose me my mutton, not for its leanness, but its fatness" (222-24). To illustrate his point, Egbert tells the sad story of the candle-maker China Aster, whose ruin is traceable to borrowing from a friend. The friend is "a shoemaker; one whose calling it is to defend the understandings of men from naked contact with the substance of things" (227). In the world of *The Confidence-Man*, inevitably the maker of light will fail, while the man who undermines "understanding" will succeed wildly.

Marshall's opinion in the case of the Cherokee Nation v. Georgia represents a kind of judicial shoe protecting America from "naked contact with the substance" of its racial problem. By refusing to accept jurisdiction in the case, the Court is able to beg the question altogether. Marshall implies

sympathy with "the merits of the [Cherokee] case," but like Captain Vere in Melville's "Billy Budd" he is constrained by the "forms, measured forms" of a social system reified into a metaphysical design. As in Judge Hall's account of Indian-hating, the tragic historical plotment provided by the ideology of savagism and the absolutist legal paradigm work together to render sympathy useless, and indeed illegal.

If Courts were permitted to indulge their sympathies, a case better calculated to excite them can scarcely be imagined. A people once numerous, powerful, and truly independent, found by our ancestors in the quiet and uncontrolled possession of an ample domain, gradually sinking beneath our superior policy, our arts and our arms, have yielded their lands by successive treaties, each of which contains a solemn guarantee of the residue, until they retain no more of their formerly extensive territory than is deemed necessary to their comfortable subsistence. To preserve this remnant, the present application is made.³⁰

But this "application" cannot even be considered. As in the cosmopolitan's hypothetical appeal to his "friend" Egbert, sympathies must be set aside and the contract scrutinized.

The contract binding Marshall and the Cherokee nation is the Constitution. (Never mind the fact that no Cherokee delegates were included in the Constitutional Convention.) Article III, Section VIII provides that Congress may "regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes." Ironically, the acknowledgement of Indians as a separate people in 1789 allows the Court to dismiss them in 1831.

In this clause they are as clearly contradistinguished by a name appropriate to themselves, from foreign nations, as from the several states composing the union. They are designated by a distinct appellation; and as this appellation can be applied to neither of the others, neither can the appellation distinguishing either of the

others be in fair construction applied to them.³¹

This tenaciously literal reading of the Constitution does more than simply justify the Court's refusal to "indulge their sympathies." By displacing the authority for his decision onto the Founding Fathers, Marshall avoids "construction," "fair" or otherwise, altogether: his decision is found, not made. Like the human amanuensis Judge Hall, who does not make history but merely records histories, or like Noble, who quotes Hall "almost word for word," Marshall denies his complicity in Indian-hating.³²

But this literal, ahistorical reading which hypostatizes the categories established in one sentence of the Constitution coexists paradoxically with an appeal to the historical conditions of 1789.

In considering this subject, the habits and usages of the Indians, in their intercourse with their white neighbours, ought not to be entirely disregarded. At the time the constitution was framed, the idea of appealing to an American Court of justice for an assertion of right or a redress of wrong, had perhaps never entered the mind of an Indian or of his tribe. Their appeal was to the tomahawk, or to the government.³³

As we have seen so often, history is antihistorical: Indian "habits and usages" are fast-frozen in time; their collective "mind" is not allowed to change. "These were once a powerful tribe," Thoreau lamented, but "Politics are all the rage with them now." Just as Thoreau dismissed the political Indian as a contradiction in terms (until he met an Indian politician in the person of Joe Polis), Marshall refuses to acknowledge the litigious Indian. Jurisdiction is refused; the Indian's "appeal" is to the tomahawk, not a higher court. Like Hall's

inflammatory "history," Marshall's judgment presents itself as "metaphysical." Both are based on the unchanging essence of Indianness, which remains static even as physical, historical Indians change. Neither judge interprets the law; they merely call attention to the correct statutes. Perhaps the most grievous form of "sinning by deputy" is sinning in the name of Law.

Whether or not Melville had Justice Marshall in mind when he had "Judge Hall" refer to the Supreme Court the question of "whether...the Indians should be permitted to testify for themselves," Marshall's opinion raises issues intimately related to those of *The Confidence-Man*. The illusory retreats from history and personal "sympathies" mask for both judges the indulgence of historically-conditioned sympathies--or rather antipathies. Hall tries to conceal his own mediation of backwoods experience; he presents himself not only to but as "an invisible amanuensis." "Not that the backwoodsman ever used those words, you see," comments Noble after quoting a particularly extravagant figure of speech, "but the judge found him expression for his meaning" (162). Just as the Indian-hater "found" the violent and deceptive nature of the Indian in the woods--rather than helping to produce that "nature" through his own acts of violence and deception--Hall simply "found" the "meaning" of this historical conflict. Marshall's abdication of his responsibility to interpret the Constitution in light of changing historical circumstances, similarly, allows him to act without seeming to act. He presents the legal system, the structure of power relations

over which he presides, as a document and not an "acted document." In his reading of white-Indian conflict, which like Hall's claims transparency ("sympathies" are bracketed), the structures of language and power intersect in particularly clear ways. The Cherokees are denied access to the legal system because of the syntactical differentiation between "foreign nations" and "Indian tribes" in the formal structure of a clause in a document. Marshall obtains a systematic, "objective" coherence through this "hermetical" approach to cultural description, as Geertz would say. The cost of preserving his formal linguistic and legal structures was the destruction of the Cherokee social system.

This is not to say that the final appeal against the policy of Removal was a casualty of structuralism. Marshall's decision was the product of a complex process of mediation among legal, political, and moral considerations. His sympathy for the Cherokee cause was genuine, and he wanted dearly to assert the authority of the Court against the open defiance of Georgia, which did not even deign to present counsel in its behalf and publicly declared that it would ignore an unsatisfactory ruling. Perhaps his decision reflects a scrupulous commitment to Constitutional law overriding personal and political considerations, as Joseph C. Burke argues.³⁴ Perhaps Marshall simply despaired of having a decree favorable to the Cherokees enforced by President Jackson. In any event, the case demonstrates that the "metaphysical" quality of legal language, its apparently judicious detachment from personal and historical prejudices,

is an illusion. A retreat into the formal structures of language does not, as Ramsey implies, relieve us of the responsibility of judging. Marshall's dilemma illustrates the split between legal and moral "propriety" inherent in the designation of Indians as "wards" of the state: as children they should be nurtured; as property they can be transferred, or liquidated, at the owner's discretion. Ironically, Marshall's scrupulous noninterpretation of the Constitution compels him to adopt the paternalistic rhetoric of his arch-nemesis, Jackson. In a final irony, a bitter one for the Cherokees, the nullification controversy of 1832-33 united Jackson, the Court, and the state of Georgia against South Carolina, making the Cherokees a political "embarrassment."³⁵

Neither Hall nor Marshall, of course, is an amanuensis; they are making as well as recording history, as both are aware despite their claims. But there is a sense in which both are largely conduits, *made by* history. They are not above it, judging impartially--witness Marshall's series of savagist cliches. In "The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating" Melville derides not only judicial pretensions of rising above history, but also the elaborate fictional constructs resulting from the attempt. As Adler points out, "The other narratives told in the course of *The Confidence-Man* are all referred to as *stories*, but the biography of Moredock is introduced and then quickly underlined as a *history*..."³⁶ Melville subverts this time-honored distinction in part to make the point that "postmodern" historians are now admitting: that their

discipline is as much an art as a social "science," or rather that these categories are more mystifying than useful, themselves the products of historical processes. Even a contemporary historian like Joseph L. Esposito, who, in response to pressures from literary theory, wants to reclaim the disciplinary integrity of history, tends to deconstruct his own argument.

[T]he distinction between an aesthetic and historical imagination is a clear one, and for this reason, if for no other, the account of history as myth cannot stand. History may, indeed, in its social dynamic serve as myth, but such a view would have to be established as part of a psycho-social theory of the *uses* of history. It would not stand as a genetic account of the very idea or origin of history itself.

But there are several problems here, not least of which is Esposito's own formulation of the "clear" distinction he draws: "where history ultimately differs from myth is in its endeavor to supply standards of imaginative authenticity, standards against which all other imaginative forms must be measured."³⁷ While this seems to me an excellent description of the historiographical project, its appeal to "imaginative authenticity" hardly establishes the difference between the aesthetic and the historical in any clear way. Esposito's distinction between "the *uses* of history" and its "very idea or origin" is even more problematic. Walter Sussman, for example, argues that the "idea" of history was born precisely at the historical moment when it became useful. Sussman also distinguishes myth from history, but not in terms of their fundamental uses as the bases of social order and shared world views. In relatively stable, preindustrial societies, myth is

the province of a special class (generally the priesthood) charged with maintaining continuity. "History" emerges only with "contract societies" in which the social order is changing dramatically, and new institutions and values are constantly emerging. These changes need to be explained and justified in ways that have a simplified mass appeal. In short, the "use" of history is its origin and its very definition: "History thus operates ideologically."³⁸

Finally, Esposito's equation of "aesthetics" and "myth-making" ignores the kind of "imaginative authenticity" demonstrated by *The Confidence-Man*. The epic monolanguage essayed by Simms in *The Yemassee*, in which even the Indian chieftain Sanutee speaks through the conventional white discourse of manifest destiny, does willfully abdicate historical authenticity by enlisting imagination in the service of normative "myths" of "the mighty fathers." The "aesthetics" of the early Thoreau, based on a reflective model of the twin economies of nature and a "universal language," also amount to "myth-making." Melville's novel, by contrast, highlights the essential heteroglossia, the discursive "stratification," of his society, undermining its claims to mythic coherence and confidence. In his sophisticated parody of the "metaphysics" underlying Hall's history he constructs a discourse of metahistory, as Esposito himself describes it: "the emerging story of the psychic distance that is taken up by each generation in its effort to adopt its own historical point of view."³⁹ What is more, Melville shows that the "psychic distance" of the historian (or the judge) from his

subject is itself a cultural myth. Both Hall and Marshall speak the language of savagism, and neither is the dispassionate adjudicator of "facts," the Jacksonian free agent posited by the law and the market. Melville's "imaginative authenticity" lies not in asserting new and truer "facts," not in providing more reliable testimony, but in pointing out the racism in the historical and legal bases of establishing reliability itself. In doing so, Melville does not leave us in epistemological limbo, where all judgments are "moot," but forces us to a consideration of the ways in which social forces, both institutional and ideological, restrict the kind of evidence that is considered admissible.

The erasure of Indian testimony from the courts and histories enables the systematic coherence of a swindler's story masquerading as a cultural metaphysics. By historicizing "Judge Hall," Melville not only implicates him in this confidence game, but suggests the *physical* ramifications of his class-interested interpretation of history, as the legal system he represents endorses and enforces the power relations he asserts as "natural." Moredock and Andrew Jackson can "remove" Indians, while Judges Hall and Marshall "sin by deputy." In *Typee* (1846) Melville had pointed out how South Sea "Indians," as he called them, were "evangelized into beasts of burden," but he stopped short of criticizing the missionary project in general. Conversion of the savages was a "legitimate object"; "missions in the abstract" could hardly be faulted. The cause of the native islanders' misery lay in "abuses" of the mission by individual

whites.⁴⁰ In *The Confidence-Man* Melville levels the kind of institutional criticism from which he backed off in 1846. Moredock's abuses are terrible enough, but the abuses of the judges are more terrible because more pervasive, insidious, and enduring. "Indian-hating... will continue to exist" not because Moredock will, but because it has become institutionalized.

V. Epilogue: "Something further may follow of this Masquerade"

The structures of Cotton Mather's sermon on "Humiliation" and Judge Hall's "Metaphysics of Indian-Hating" are remarkably similar. Each begins with a lengthy explication of general principles of Indianness and Christianity, savagery and civilization, followed by a relatively short narrative meant to illustrate those principles in an effective and affective manner. Both authors mean to set up closed systems of signification compelling their own interpretations of the events to be recounted. And they do—but stories have a way of disrupting the metaphysical presence of systems: Moredock is no "Indian-hater *par excellence*," and Duxton strains Mather's theological and ideological limits. Later storytellers like Thoreau and Melville assert their "psychic distance" from such systems by appropriating the tales but radically changing their meanings.

It appears, however, that historical distance does not necessarily entail psychic distance. The cold war allegorists Shroeder and Parker, for whom the Moredock episode represents a cosmic conflict between Reds and Christians, in effect read

through Melville back to Mather. Ramsey, the structuralist, reads the Indian as a neutral sign in the given structure of *The Confidence-Man*; we should not go "beyond the 'evidence'" or outside the system in making our determinations and evaluations of significance. In all these schemes "the Indian" denominates a static essence and not a historical focus of struggle and contradiction. In the tidy "cosmos of the *Fidèle*," within "Melville's allegorical geometry," real Indians are beside the point. Jurisdiction is refused.

These literary critics are representative of an America still ideologically committed to a legalistic self-or-other, guilty-or-innocent model of human interaction, and emotionally bound to the Manichean cowboy-Indian paradigm of the Western. Asked to explain the widespread practice of cutting the ears from dead Vietcong, a Vietnam veteran explained that "it was like taking scalps, like from Indians. Some guys were on an Indian trip over there." Indian-hating still exists, even where there are no Indians. "The Indian" remains a sliding signifier, capable of attaching its potent animus to "gooks" as it once did to Puritan backsliders.

Where open hostility has gone, the perplexity engendered by the history of Indian indifference to mainstream American life remains. The "Fund for the Republic" issues a report with the ominous title *The Indian: America's Unfinished Business*. *The Wall Street Journal* reaffirms the natural, even "bodily," inadequacy of the Indian to the business of America as it chronicles the miserable fate of the \$1 billion Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: "the corporate model is a graft

that's being rejected by the [native] body." President Reagan tells Soviet students at Moscow University that the United States should not have "humored" the Indian desire to retain their "primitive lifestyle" on the Indian "preservations" [sic].⁴¹

In despair, one might almost concede Judge Hall's claim for a "metaphysical" principle of Indian-hating. But there is hope in the fact that the Indian testimony he and Marshall ruled inadmissible is now being heard as never before. The "Native American Renaissance" of the late 1960s and 1970s established a distinctive literature as well as a multiplicity of voices which cannot be easily categorized, "ethnicized," and marginalized. Social critics of all races are calling for a respectful rather than exploitative relationship of man to nature, one closer to Native American mythology than Euro-American ideology, one recognizing, in Paula Gunn Allen's words, that "all things [are] of equal value in the scheme of things, denying the qualities of opposition, dualism, and isolationism (separatism) that characterize non-Indian thought in the world."⁴² It is an irony which Cotton Mather must appreciate from his vantage-point in heaven: the Jeremiahs of this generation are calling for "Indianization" before chemical and nuclear "irradiation" converts civilization into "an howling wilderness."

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

¹Prucha, *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, p. 51.

²*The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp.17-18.

³M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 264.

⁴*The Confidence-Man* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 47. Subsequent citations from this edition.

⁵Adler, "Melville on the White Man's War Against the American Indian," *Science and Society*, XXXVI (Winter 1972), pp. 417-442; Quirk, *Melville's Confidence Man: From Knave to Knight* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1982), pp. 40, 119-120; Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization*, pp. 244-251; Zolla, *The Writer and the Shaman*.

⁶For instance, here is Jackson explaining the Removal policy in his annual message to Congress in December 1835: "A barrier has thus been raised for their protection against the encroachment of our citizens, and guarding the Indians as far as possible from those evils which have brought them to their present condition...Halfway measures will answer no purpose. These can not successfully contend against the cupidity of the seller and the overpowering appetite of the buyer. And the destructive effects of the traffic are marked in every page of the history of our Indian intercourse." Prucha, p. 72.

⁷*Democracy in America*. Quoted in Takaki, p. 81.

⁸This sectional split in attitudes toward Indians is only one more instance of an almost geometrical axiom in early American Indian relations: sympathy for the Indian varies in inverse proportion to the Indian population of the region. In the final vote on the Removal Bill, for instance, Southern congressman approved it 60-15, while Northerners rejected it 79-42.

⁹Francis Parkman, *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac*, Fourth Edition (Boston, 1868), pp. 202, 210. Quoted in Robert Shulman, "Parkman's Indians and American Violence."

¹⁰"Parody, History, and Metaparody." From Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989). p. 73.

¹¹James B. Hall, *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners*.

in *the West*, Vol II (Philadelphia, 1835), p. 74. Chapter VI, "Indian hating--Some of the sources of this animosity--Brief Account of Col. Moredock," is reprinted in *The Confidence-Man*, ed. Harrison Hayford et. al. (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1984), pp. 502-510.

¹²Morson, "Parody, History, and Metaparody." *Rethinking Bakhtin*, p. 78.

¹³Hall, p. 75.

¹⁴Adler, p. 421, 426.

¹⁵Adler, p. 429.

¹⁶"Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 270-272.

¹⁷*The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 273.

¹⁸David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge, La., 1970). pp. 26-29.

¹⁹John G. Blair, "Puns and Equivocations in Melville's *The Confidence-Man*," *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 22 (1974), 92. William M. Ramsey, "The Moot Points of Melville's Indian-Hating," *American Literature* 52 (1980), 235.

²⁰John W. Shroeder, "Sources and Symbols for Melville's *Confidence-Man*," *PMLA*, 66 (1951), 376-379. Shroeder's reading is representative of what we might call the "tough love" school of Moredock criticism. William Ellery Sedgwick argues that Moredock is both "loving" and "truthful." Paradoxically, "the reality of hate is of love," since "love is the primordial reality"; so "the angry satirist" is closer to truth than "the man who blandly dismisses him." Oddly, Richard Chase, who wants to wean liberalism of its "pious" sentimentality, argues to much the same effect: the cosmopolitan's horror at the Moredock story shows he has "no resources in his character which would allow him to accept such willed intransigence as a possible human reality." Better the "intransigence" of Moredock than the wimpy confidence of the cosmopolitan. Sedgwick, *Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1944), 190-193; Chase, *Herman Melville: A Critical Study* (New York: MacMillan, 1949), 199. See also Nathalia Wright, *Melville's Use of the Bible* (Durham, 1949), 56. It would seem that, in the words of Melville's title to the Moredock chapter, Dr. Johnson was not the only "eminent English [or American] moralist who said he liked a good hater."

²¹*Literary World*, IV (1849), 291.

²²Pearce, "Melville's Indian-Hater: A Note on a Meaning

of *The Confidence-Man*," PMLA 67 (1952), 942-948.

²³"The Metaphysics of Indian-hating," *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 18 (Sept. 1963), 165-173.

²⁴To coopt Melvillean phraseology, the charitable will think that both Melville and I do some injustice to James Hall. And in a sense they will be right. Hall does criticize, even while he explains, Manifest Destiny. "America was settled in an age when certain rights, called those of *discovery* and *conquest*, were universally acknowledged; and when the possession of a country was readily conceded to the strongest. When more accurate notions of moral right began, with the spread of knowledge, and the dissemination of religious truth, to prevail in public opinion, and regulate the public acts of our government, the pioneers were but slightly affected by the wholesome contagion of such opinions." *Sketches*, p. 75. But those more inclined to be charitable to Melville than to Hall will note that both "religion" and "knowledge" (for instance "the known principles of human nature," in Hall's words [77]) had always provided means of justifying rather than criticizing Indian-hating, and the modern commentaries of Shroeder and Parker suggest that they still do.

²⁵Adler, p. 430.

²⁶Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1979), p. 200.

²⁷In *Bartleby the Scrivener* Melville depicts the moral and epistemological equivocations of the attorney-narrator as his employee trespasses on his "premises"--both the physical and intellectual premises defined and protected by law (the law-office itself and the distinction between public and private responsibilities). In *Billy Budd*, Captain Vere sacrifices his personal sympathies and "abandons" Budd to a legal system that he alternately and paradoxically perceives as grounded in universal principles of Justice and the pragmatic necessities of wartime.

²⁸Joseph C. Burke, "The Cherokee Case: A Study in Law, Politics, and Morality," 21 *Stanford Law Review* (1969), p. 503.

²⁹Prucha, p. 59.

³⁰Prucha, p. 58.

³¹Prucha, pp. 59-60.

³²In rising above his "sympathies," Marshall claims a rigorous consistency which his ruling in this case actually calls into question. Marshall was no strict "reader" of the letter of the Constitution; on the contrary, he was

instrumental in establishing broad interpretive powers for the Court. Whereas Jefferson and Madison had insisted that the federal government could only do what the Constitution explicitly said it could, in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819) Marshall ruled, in essence, that governments could do whatever the Constitution did not expressly forbid. Thus there was no reason the Court could not accept jurisdiction in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, since the Constitution does not forbid Indians from bringing suit. Marshall's appeal to the letter of the law, in this case, was more revisionist than conservative.

Furthermore, while the Cherokee case was a victory for freedom of legislation, Marshall is most famous for limiting that freedom. In *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) he established that laws could be declared unconstitutional and abolished. Although he never actually struck down another law, he took every opportunity to remind the states that he could. Georgia's assertion of authority over the Indian "wards" of the United States would seem a particularly grievous usurpation of federal power and responsibility. In short, Marshall's decision was justified neither by the methods nor the precedents he himself established.

³³Prucha, p. 59.

³⁴Burke, p. 530-31. In January of 1831 Georgia had executed George Tassel, "a Cherokee convicted by a Georgia court for murder committed in Indian territory," in defiance of a writ of error issued by Marshall himself. Burke, p. 512.

³⁵Burke, p. 530.

³⁶Adler, p. 425.

³⁷Joseph L. Esposito, *The Transcendence of History* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1984), p. 49, 161.

³⁸Walter Sussman, *Culture as History* (New York: Random House, 1973), pp. 6-8.

³⁹Esposito, p. 168.

⁴⁰*Typee* (New York: Bantam Books, 1958), pp. 212-14.

⁴¹Carl Degler, "Indians and Other Americans," *Commentary* 54:5 (Nov. 1972), p. 72; *Wall Street Journal* (Dec. 8, 1987); *Seattle Times* (May 31, 1988).

⁴²"The Sacred Hoop," in *The Remembered Earth*, ed. Geary Hobson (Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1979), p. 223-24.

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