

# *Race, Politics and the Frontier in American Literature, 1783-1837*

---

*ROWLAND WYN HUGHES*

*University College London*

*PhD Thesis, 2002*

---

‘The mind enlarges with the horizon. Place a man on top of a mountain, or, on a large plain, his ideas partake of the situation, and he thinks more nobly than he would under the ceiling of a room, or at a small country seat.’

Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry*

‘Life is short and romances long. Happy, thrice happy is he, and thrice times wise, who hath time and patience to read them all!’

James Kirke Paulding, *Westward Ho!*

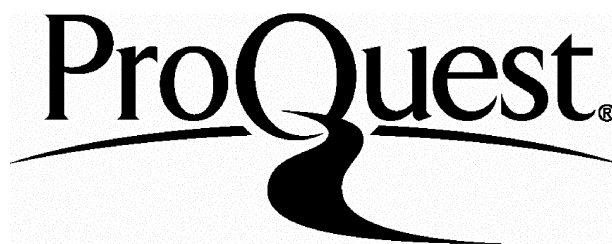
ProQuest Number: U643992

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest U643992

Published by ProQuest LLC(2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

## *Abstract*

---

### *Race, Politics and the Frontier in American Literature, 1783-1837*

Divided chronologically into two sections, this thesis examines how ways of conceptualising and writing about the American frontier, and the Native Americans who inhabit that frontier, reflect and participate in the emergent political and regional divisions of the early republic. Although ‘the West’ and ‘the Indian’ are pervasive images in early American literature, their meanings are indeterminate. During the Revolution, the frontier functions as a patriotic locus, the settlement of the wilderness providing a metaphor for the project of independence and nation-building. However, in the early republic, as conceptions of national destiny splinter along regional and political lines, the West and its inhabitants, white or native, take on conflicting meanings: independence and limitless potential on the one hand, savagery and degeneration on the other.

Part I spans the period from the end of the Revolution to the end of the War of 1812, beginning with a survey of the contemporaneous attitudes towards the West and the Indians, represented by influential public figures of the early republic, such as Jefferson and Washington. I then consider the literary representation of the frontier by John Filson, Ann Eliza Bleecker, the pseudonymous ‘Abraham Panther’, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and Charles Brockden Brown, demonstrating the ways in which their generically diverse work reflects and responds to the ideological debates about the frontier which characterise the period.

Part II focuses on the literature of Jacksonian America. Race and expansionism were still at the root of ideological divisions within the nation, the frontier was still perceived to be the most appropriate subject for national literature, and the historical romance had become the dominant literary form in America. I examine the work of three writers — James Kirke Paulding, William Gilmore Simms and Robert Montgomery Bird — each of whom historicizes the frontier, legitimising the contemporary ideologies articulated in their fiction by association with an earlier ‘golden age’ of American history.

# Contents

---

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
i. Writing the Frontier.....	10
ii. Literary Nationalism and the American Canon.....	15
iii. The Ideology of Frontier Literature .....	19
<b>PART I: THE EARLY REPUBLIC, 1783-1815 .....</b>	<b>26</b>
1. CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FRONTIER IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC .....	27
i. Defining the Virtuous Republic .....	27
ii. The Size of the Republic .....	31
iii. Land as Commodity .....	33
iv. The Threat of Western Secession.....	39
v. Thomas Jefferson, the West and the Indians .....	43
2. FROM REVOLUTION TO CONSTITUTION .....	52
i. Order out of Confusion: John Filson’s Providential Vision.....	52
ii. Ann Eliza Bleecker’s reversed prospect .....	58
iii. The ‘Panther Captivity’ and Shays’s Rebellion .....	70
3. HUGH HENRY BRACKENRIDGE AND THE COLLAPSE OF AGRARIAN IDEALISM.....	83
i. The Rising Glory .....	84
ii. Pearls Before Swains: Classics on the Frontier.....	87
iii. The Mississippi Question.....	93
iv. How to fight Indians and influence people .....	96
v. Land, Value and Meaning on the Frontier .....	107
4. ACCULTURATION IN THE FICTION OF CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN .....	115
i. The Evils of Party.....	117
ii. Landscape and Ideology in <i>Wieland</i> and ‘Memoirs of Carwin’ .....	120
iii. Representing ‘The Savage’ .....	129
iv. Order Through Language .....	133
v. Unity in Adversity .....	143
<b>PART II: THE JACKSONIAN ERA, 1815-1837.....</b>	<b>149</b>
5. ANDREW JACKSON, INDIAN REMOVAL, AND THE INTERIOR FRONTIER .....	150
i. Paternalism and Expansionism.....	150
ii. Old Hickory: The Jackson Legend.....	155
iii. Reasons and Justifications for Indian Removal .....	159

iv. Indian Removal vs Indian Reform .....	162
v. The Implementation and Impact of Removal.....	169
6. HISTORY, RACE AND NATIONALISM: JAMES KIRKE PAULDING .....	173
i. 'A very useful man by his pen.' .....	174
ii. American Literary Autonomy and the West .....	177
iii. Racism and Nationalism .....	180
iv. Wrestling with the Romance .....	189
v. The Moderate Frontier.....	193
7. WILLIAM GILMORE SIMMS, THE OLD SOUTH AND THE NEW SOUTHWEST .....	204
i. Booming Off For the New Canaan .....	204
ii. Hierarchy and Heroism .....	209
iii. Dissident Voices in <i>The Yemassee</i> .....	215
iv. "Why do we thus seek to rob them of their lands?" .....	219
v. Snakes in the Grass.....	227
8. ROBERT MONTGOMERY BIRD AND THE POLITICS OF INDIAN-HATING .....	236
i. 'A Whig, a very good one' .....	238
ii. 'The Children of the Sunset, where are they?' .....	249
iv. <i>Nick of the Woods</i> .....	256
CONCLUSION: ROMANCE, REALISM, AND POPULAR FICTION.....	265
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CONSULTED.....	274

## *Acknowledgements*

---

This thesis has been made possible by the generous assistance of many people, in many ways. It gives me great pleasure to thank them here.

My supervisor, John Sutherland, has been patient and encouraging throughout, tolerating my taste for obscure American writers even when he suspected I was making them up. The staff and students of the English department at University College London have provided a stimulating and friendly environment in which to study and teach.

My research was made possible by a Postgraduate Research Studentship from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, who also funded an invaluable research trip to the USA. The staff of various libraries and archives have shown me great courtesy: the Clifton Waller Barrett Special Collections Library, at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville; the Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, at the University of Pennsylvania; and the British Library, where most of this thesis was written.

So many friends have helped to keep me sane and cheerful during this PhD that it would be impossible to name them all here; they know who they are, and I thank them. I would, however, explicitly like to thank the following people for their help, hospitality and advice: Matthew Birchwood, Nick Bradshaw, Michael Brett, Lucy Daniel, Daniel DiClerico, Marcus Nevitt, Omar Qureshi, Damian Roberts and Tom Rutter. Several chapters of the thesis benefited greatly from the insightful reading of Sarah Wood.

My interest in frontier literature grew from a book given to me by my brother, Jon Hughes. He consequently has a lot to answer for, but has always been an inspiration and remains my best friend.

My parents, Merle and Alwyn Hughes, have provided unstinting and unhesitating support, throughout my life and my seemingly interminable education. My grandparents, too, have always had faith in me. I hope this thesis, in some small way, repays them for their love, and for the confidence they have always placed in me.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to Tricia Parish, without whose unfailing love, understanding, and companionship it wouldn't exist.

## *Introduction*

---

This thesis examines how ways of conceptualising and writing about the American frontier, and the Native Americans who inhabit that frontier, reflect and participate in the emergent political and regional divisions of the early republic. In doing so, it places the productions of American writers during the fifty-four years after Independence in the context of a broader public discourse on the expansion of the United States, and the fate of its native population. The thesis argues for the interconnection of the literary and geopolitical spheres in this period, seeking to understand selected texts in the context of the national, sectional, and racial preconceptions of their authors. These authors may broadly be termed non-canonical, and their work is repositioned in the light of its engagement with the competing ideologies of the early republic and Jacksonian America, using their attitudes towards westward expansion and Indian relations as an index of political and regional affiliations.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the thesis demonstrates the extraordinary ubiquity of images of the West and the Indians in early American literature, whilst simultaneously suggesting that this pervasiveness does not indicate ideological homogeneity. I will argue that below the superficial similarity of the subject matter (pioneers, Indians, captivities, wilderness adventures) these texts display a surprising degree of heterogeneity, and that sensitivity to the regional and political concerns of the authors provides a key to recognising and understanding their diversity. By examining a wide variety of writers and works from a relatively broad chronological period, I hope to show the malleability of the frontier as a metaphor and ideological signifier, and the evolution of its use.

I have chosen to concentrate on the first fifty-four years of the United States, which I have divided into two consecutive periods, the precise dates of which require brief explanation. Part I begins in 1783, with the formal recognition of American Independence. I have selected the end of the Revolution rather than the beginning because, as many of the Revolutionary leaders themselves acknowledged, the war with Britain imposed a degree of

unity between the various states and regions of the future United States that quickly began to dissolve in peacetime. Since this thesis is partly concerned with tracing the impact of these regional and ideological fault-lines on early American literature, it makes sense to begin at the point when this unifying factor was removed.

During the Revolution, the frontier had functioned as a patriotic locus, the settlement of the wilderness providing a metaphor for the project of independence and nation-building. However, in the early republic, as conceptions of national destiny splintered along regional and political lines, the West and its inhabitants, white or native, once again acquired the dichotomous meanings they had borne since the earliest European contact with America: independence and limitless potential on the one hand, savagery and degeneration on the other. My discussion of literary texts in Part I emerges from a survey of the contemporaneous attitudes towards the West and the Indians, represented by influential public figures of the early republic, such as Jefferson, Washington, Madison, and Hamilton. Within this context, I consider the work of John Filson, Ann Eliza Bleecker, the pseudonymous 'Abraham Panther', Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and Charles Brockden Brown, demonstrating how their generically diverse work — encompassing poetry, satire, travel narrative, topographical description, and fiction — reflects and responds to the ideological debates about the frontier which characterise the period.

The thesis pivots structurally around the year 1815, which functions as both an end and a beginning. The latest text addressed in Part I — the final volume of Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* — appeared in this year, and in this sense, 1815 brings this first 'movement' of American frontier literature to an end. It is also, however, an important beginning. In 1814, Walter Scott had published *Waverley* in Edinburgh to enormous acclaim, effectively giving birth to the historical novel. With the end of the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States (news of which reached America early in 1815, shortly after General Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans), transatlantic trade resumed after a hiatus of three years, and Scott's novel took the New World by storm, much as it had the Old. The generic diversity of the authors in Part I reflects their perceived need to synthesise familiar European genres and forms



with the American experience, to find an adequate vehicle for native expression. Scott's novel arrived at a point when the somewhat inglorious recent war generated nostalgia for the Revolution, now sufficiently distant in time to qualify as venerable history rather than current affairs. The search for a suitable American genre was effectively over, the historical novel becoming the dominant literary form in America for the next thirty years.

Part II, therefore, focuses on the use of the frontier in the literature of what may broadly be termed Jacksonian America. Race and expansionism were still at the root of political divisions within the nation, and the frontier was still perceived to be the most appropriate subject for national literature; only now, in the wake of the popularity of Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, it was an historical rather than a contemporary frontier that was being written about. Each of the writers discussed in this section — James Kirke Paulding, William Gilmore Simms and Robert Montgomery Bird — historicizes the frontier, legitimising the contemporary ideologies articulated in their fiction by associating them with an earlier 'golden age' of American history. There is no longer a direct correlation between the frontier they are writing about and the frontier that actually exists. Its use as a literary device has shifted. The writers are no longer projecting a vision of what they wished the nation to become; rather, the manner in which they reconstruct the history of the country reflects their sense of what the nation *is* and *ought* to have become. Earlier writers, effectively, construct an idea of America by looking to the future — the frontier providing a useful symbol because it is the barrier which must be pushed backwards or which restricts growth, depending on ideological preference — whereas their literary inheritors try to define national identity by looking back, fictionalising a continuum between the Revolutionary generation and the present.

The significance of 1837, the closing date of the thesis, is perhaps not immediately clear, but it provides an appropriate bookend for several reasons. Most obviously, it is the date of publication of the latest book that I discuss in detail — Bird's *Nick of the Woods*. But 1837 also marked an important watershed in American history, and American literary history, which makes it yet more of a natural break. In January 1837, Martin Van Buren was inaugurated as President of the United States, and Andrew Jackson retired

from public life. As I will argue in Part II of the thesis, Jackson — his personality, his policies, his legendary status — played a crucial part in the formation of frontier literature in the 1820s and 1830s. Although Van Buren was Old Hickory's chosen successor, and although the ramifications of Jackson's administration would be felt for many years to come, the departure of Jackson from the White House marks the end of the Jacksonian era proper.

Finally, 1837 witnessed the 'Panic', an economic crash that opponents of Jackson had been predicting for much of the previous decade. Its impact was felt in all walks of American life, and the authors of fiction were no exception. Paulding, Simms, and Bird were all adversely affected by the recession, which badly hit the sale of novels, reducing demand for new work. They were, in Simms's words, 'sad days for authorship', and all three were forced to reduce their output of long fiction.<sup>1</sup> By the time the recession was over — and that was not until 1848 — the critical vogue for historical romances was coming to an end; despite continued popular interest, the form was increasingly being dismissed as 'sub-literary' by the literary establishment. Although Cooper, the emblematic leader of American historical romancers, kept producing novels throughout the 1840s, Simms stopped altogether between 1842 and 1850, focusing his considerable literary energies on history, poetry, criticism and the editorship of several southern literary magazines. Bird's fortunes also declined calamitously, and Paulding produced only one more novel, *The Puritan and His Daughter*, which was virtually ignored by critics and reading public alike. Cooper and Bird were dead by 1854, Paulding did not live to see the Civil War, and Simms, although he wrote what many critics today consider to be his best work in the 1850s, received mostly opprobrium from the northern critics who controlled the literary establishment, hostile to his southern pro-secession views. 1837, then, can be seen as the moment of final flowering for the historical romance in nineteenth-century America, in terms of its dominance of the literary marketplace. In the hands of Nathaniel Hawthorne, of course, it continued to evolve after this date. My subject here, however, is the frontier romance, a subgenre which generally follows a more stereotypical pattern of wilderness adventure, and which achieved its greatest popularity in the 1820s and 1830s. As C. Hugh Holman, noting the movement

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mary Ann Wimsatt, *The Major Fiction of William Gilmore Simms: Cultural Traditions and Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 5.

from romanticism to realism that began in the 1840s, observed, ‘seldom has a historical event divided literary movements with as much precision as that interruption in the publication of novels’, caused by the Panic of 1837.<sup>2</sup>

## I. WRITING THE FRONTIER

In the history of American thought and culture, the frontier has always been an imaginative construct, shaped by the cultural preconceptions — commercial, political, religious — of Europeans or white Anglo-Americans. Moreover, these preconceptions are both created and transmitted by texts. Columbus thought the West was the East, insisting that the indigenous peoples he encountered were the outposts of a great civilization, a misperception commemorated by the continued use of the term ‘Indians’. His error reflects a recurring tension in American culture and writings. Again and again, American writers — often within single works — offer their readers a strikingly dualistic vision of the land and the people who originally possessed it. On the one hand, the frontier is the location of future Empire and civilization, the cradle of arts and sciences, a paradisaal garden of unlimited fertility and abundance. The Indians are envisaged as man in his original, innocent form, uncorrupted by the venality of civilization. On the other hand, the West can appear to be the ‘howling wilderness’ described by William Bradford, a dangerous zone of savagery threatening to drag mankind backwards from civil society, into a state of anarchy. Within this scheme, the Indians and their primitive way of life become symbolic incarnations of the potential chaos and degeneration that awaits Americans if they cut themselves adrift from their civilized, European roots. This dichotomy between ‘savagery’ and ‘civility’, in various degrees of refinement, lies at the heart of the ideological debates over westward expansion with which this project is concerned. As Edwin Fussell has noted, these alternative constructions indicate that

at the heart of the American language, radically divergent conceptions of the national destiny were impounded in conflicting notions of “back” (“backwoodsman”) and “front” (“frontiersman”), which reflected the

---

<sup>2</sup> C. Hugh Holman, ‘William Gilmore Simms and the “American Renaissance,”’ in *The Roots of Southern Writing* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 79.

antithetical regressive and progressive readings of the Westward Movement. [...] The frontier was the meeting point between these readings.<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising that what the frontier *represents* has been so contested, when one considers the difficulty of even defining what it *is*. Most modern definitions of the term derive, either positively or negatively, from the work of historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner's basic hypothesis, first expressed in his famous paper on 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' in 1893, was that 'the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development'.<sup>4</sup> He argued, essentially, that the western frontier was the most significant factor in the development of a distinctive American character, in that the seemingly limitless availability of land and the prospect of starting again in the West gave Americans a restless and individualistic nature; while the absence of established institutions of social authority in remote frontier settlements was conducive to the growth of a democratic spirit. Historians have debated the accuracy of Turner's theory ever since, qualifying, clarifying or rejecting his various propositions. However, his definition of what constitutes 'the frontier' remains a useful starting point for a discussion of the term.

According to Turner, 'the frontier is the outer edge of the wave — the meeting point between savagery and civilization'. He draws a careful distinction between the meaning of the term in a European context — 'a fortified boundary line running through dense populations' — and its American usage: 'The most significant thing about the American frontier is, that it lies at the hither edge of free land'. He further makes the point that 'the frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization':

Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American. As successive terminal moraines result from successive glaciations, so each frontier leaves its traces behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the region still partakes of the frontier characteristics. Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines. (3-4)

---

<sup>3</sup> Edwin Fussell, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), 1.

So for Turner, the frontier is both a line and a process, acted out again and again as the line advances westward. The first American frontier was the Atlantic coast, which provided a paradigm for frontier conditions and behaviour in each successive location:

We have the complex European life sharply precipitated by the wilderness into the simplicity of primitive conditions. The first frontier had to meet its Indian question, its question of the disposition of the public domain, of the means of intercourse with older settlements, of the extension of political organization, of religious and educational activity. And the settlement of these and similar questions for one frontier served as a guide for the next. (9-10)

Turner's notion of the frontier as both a continually retreating line and a sequential process of social evolution remains attractive for its narrative clarity. But this clarity, unsurprisingly, results from simplification and erasure. Notably absent from Turner's definition of the frontier are, of course, Native Americans. The unique potential of the United States, he claims, derives from the fact that, unlike all other 'civilized' nations, it can expand without the necessity of conquering other 'growing peoples'. From this we must conclude that the Indians are diminishing; their removal and extermination is not even regarded as a 'conquest', more as a historically inevitable *fait accompli*. The very notion that the frontier was a line demarcating 'free land' signifies this cultural blind spot. Of course the land was not 'free'; it had inhabitants, owners, who did not wish to leave, and despite Turner's retrospective act of erasure, could not be ignored by the policy-makers controlling American expansion in the early years of the republic, for whom the resolution of the 'Indian question' (so fleetingly and vaguely alluded to by Turner) was a perpetual and unavoidable concern.

In many ways, however, Turner's ethnographic failings link him to the period he is describing. Although, as I have suggested, late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American politicians, writers, and settlers could not, like the late nineteenth-century historian, casually make the displacement of the Indian population seem painless, they shared his sense that such an end was inevitable, as this thesis will repeatedly demonstrate. The germs of Turner's ideas can be found in much earlier writers. For instance, Turner expands on the 'frontier as line' theory by suggesting that there were several

simultaneous ‘frontiers’, differing in their rate of advance, and characterised by the occupations of the settlers inhabiting them — a ‘trader’s frontier’, ‘rancher’s frontier’, ‘miner’s frontier’, and ‘farmer’s frontier’. This notion that the frontier extended some distance back towards ‘civilization’ from the point of first contact between the white man and ‘the wilderness’, had been articulated in very similar terms by both J. Hector St John de Crèvecoeur and Benjamin Rush over a century earlier.<sup>5</sup>

Simply by reading Turner, then, we are confronted with a variety of ways of conceptualising the frontier: as a line marking the furthest extent of civilization; as an ongoing process of migration and settlement; or as a related series of zones extending from the primeval wilderness back towards civilization, and symbolising the evolution of American civilization from a lifestyle little different from that of the Indians, to the twin glories of civilization, agriculture and commerce. Fussell has also noted that *frontier* can mean both the border crossed to reach a new place and the place itself, that it is ‘sometimes a line and sometimes a space’ (Fussell, 17). When that space is on the other side of the line from ‘civilization’, *frontier* is interchangeable with *wilderness*.

Annette Kolodny, meanwhile, cites still another definition of the frontier, as provided by historians Howard Lamar and Leonard Thomson, who “regard a frontier not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration between ... previously distinct societies.” Using this definition as a starting point, Kolodny suggests a reconfiguration of the term *frontier*, by which it is conceived not merely as a geographical area or line, but as a complex series of interactions between previously distinct cultural groups, and a terrain that is alien or new to at least one of those groups. This encounter enacts a change, not only on the peoples coming into contact with each other, but on the terrain; and this change is mediated by language and encoded in texts. The frontier, therefore, is ‘a locus of first cultural contact, circumscribed by a particular physical terrain in the process of change

---

<sup>5</sup> See Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, ed. by Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 45-47; and Benjamin Rush, ‘To Thomas Percival: An Account of the Progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania — Philadelphia, October 26, 1786’, in *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. by L. H. Butterfield, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), I, 400-406.

*because of the forms that contact takes, all of it inscribed by the collisions and interpenetrations of language*'.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis does not attempt to choose between these various definitions of the frontier, or to impose one of its own. My aim being to reflect diversity rather than to impose continuity, I have allowed myself to be led by the authors themselves, whose work, as will become apparent, displays considerable conceptual variance. One of the most useful ways of conceptualising the frontier emerges from a suggestion by Roderick Nash, in his efforts to define the related term 'wilderness'. Nash conceives of 'a spectrum of conditions or environments ranging from the purely wild on the one end to the purely civilized on the other — from the primeval to the paved'. The mid-point of this spectrum is 'the rural or pastoral environment'. The term 'frontier', as used by the authors discussed here, can be applied to any part of this scale from the pastoral to the 'purely wild'. Thus it can be cognate with 'wilderness' or 'desert' in some instances, and yet mean little more than 'rural' on other occasions.<sup>7</sup>

In *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), probably the most comprehensive study of the frontier in American literature, Richard Slotkin has argued that the repetition of structural patterns and stereotypes in frontier narratives constitutes a national mythology, defined as 'a complex of narratives that dramatizes the world vision and historical sense of a people or culture, reducing centuries of experience into a constellation of compelling metaphors'.<sup>8</sup> Slotkin privileges the universal and non-local ingredients of the texts he examines; even in militantly ideological Puritan narratives, he uncovers the traces of an enduring 'American' experience. While not exactly disagreeing with Slotkin's account of the myth-making process, my own concern, as already outlined, is to emphasise that writers can consciously tap

---

<sup>6</sup> Annette Kolodny, 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions: Notes Towards a New Literary History of the American Frontiers', in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy N. Davidson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 12, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 6.

into this evolving national myth and reconfigure its generic patterns along local, political, or personal lines.

As Slotkin shows, the raw materials for American myth were in place at the birth of the United States; factional disputes therefore manifested themselves in competing attempts to define and control the nation's mythology, as codified in its literature. Jared Gardner has recently examined the interaction of narratives of race with narratives of national identity:

Race helped provide the terms and the metaphors by which the first generations could stabilize national identity by giving it a past and a future – not because race itself was a stable and fixed category, but because the term invoked in its late-eighteenth-century definitions narratives of origins, histories of change, and fantasies about the futures of peoples.<sup>9</sup>

'The frontier', I will argue, functioned in a very similar way. Indeed, the two categories are closely interlinked, both providing a symbolic vocabulary with which these narratives, histories, and fantasies — in effect, a national mythology — could be developed.

## II. LITERARY NATIONALISM AND THE AMERICAN CANON

From the infancy of the republic, American writers were convinced that the young nation needed to achieve a cultural independence to mirror its political autonomy, by creating a uniquely American literary tradition distinct from its European roots. The source for this 'American' literature, they believed, would almost certainly be the frontier. Charles Brockden Brown, in the preface to his novel *Edgar Huntly* (1799), recognised that the experience of encountering the wilderness, and the incidents of Indian conflict, offered American writers a frame of reference unavailable to Europeans: 'That new springs of action, and new motives to curiosity should operate; that the field of investigation, opened to us by our own country, should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived'.<sup>10</sup> Brown's analogy between literal and literary pioneering would be adopted and repeated by a generation of American writers seeking to detach themselves from the

---

<sup>9</sup> Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleep-walker*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, 6 vols, IV, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1984), 3.



influence of Europe, and Britain in particular. Edwin Fussell has summarised the dependence of American literary nationalism on the frontier metaphor:

[W]ithout the real and imagined experiences of actual pioneering to serve as informing principle and guiding light, nineteenth-century American literature as we know it would never have come into being. Insofar as it resulted from a series of aesthetic transformations, through which intrinsically meaningless pioneer experiences were elevated to the status of ideas and forms, American literature may in its origins fairly be called an effect of the frontier. (Fussell, 12)

More recently, Lucy Maddox has emphasised the need to see *all* literature of the period in the context of ‘the politics and ideology of Indian-white relationships’, complaining that

in our reading of nineteenth-century literature, we have generally assumed that only a handful of writers were actively concerned with the politics or the ideology of Indian-white relationships, and that the only major one among them was James Fenimore Cooper; the rest were minor frontier writers, western local colorists, or negligible sentimentalists.<sup>11</sup>

Fussell and Maddox argue that American literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries needs to be read in the light of, respectively, the ‘Westward movement’ of the nation’s boundaries and population, and the conflict with the native population which this movement engendered. Although their work differs profoundly, both critics apply their frame of reference to a roll call of ‘great’ nineteenth-century writers: Hawthorne, Melville, and Thoreau, in particular. Maddox’s book, benefiting from the recent scholarship of Carolyn Karcher and Mary Kelley, includes excellent discussions of Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Lydia Maria Child, writers outside the conventional canon. Maddox rightly complains that for most critics, ‘Indianness is *still* taken to be only a naively constructed trope that is usually employed by bad novelists’, and that for such critics, ‘as soon as Indians appear in a text, that text ceases to be ideologically interesting and complex, and starts to become embarrassing’ (Maddox, 175). Her argument is that many ‘serious’ American writers were actually interested in the Indians *as Indians*, not merely as tropes; but she nevertheless assumes that some

---

<sup>11</sup> Maddox, Lucy, *Removals: Nineteenth Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6.

novels are ‘good’ and therefore worthy of discussion, and that some are just ‘bad’. She merely reclaims Child and Sedgwick as ‘good’ writers.

By contrast, I focus mainly on what Maddox dismisses as ‘minor frontier writers, western local colorists, or negligible sentimentalists’. Eric Heyne has noted that

Investigations into the role of the frontier in American literature generally proceed along one of two tracks: through the canon or around it. The former attempts to isolate and explain the frontier function, as it were, in canonical American literature. [The latter involves] interpretation and evaluation of previously neglected texts.<sup>12</sup>

I have not combed the familiar texts of the American Renaissance for traces of the issues of race and expansionism, choosing, instead, to blow the dust from a group of texts which, like those of Cooper, *explicitly* engage with these issues as their primary concern. Some of these are the very ‘bad’ writers who Maddox thinks have misled critics into assuming that all American writers responded to Indian affairs in a stereotypical way. My own intention is to show that even stereotypes can carry complex social and political meaning; and that Cooper was not alone in his efforts to create serious literature within the genre of ‘frontier romance’.

Although, for a ‘major’ author, Cooper has suffered an unusual amount of critical neglect and contempt since his death, his novels are nevertheless a common starting point for studies of American fiction generally, and of the frontier novel, or ‘western’, in particular. Cooper himself is *not* discussed in detail here, one of the aims of the thesis being to counter the casual assumption, implied by Maddox, that Cooper was, perhaps not the only, but certainly the first writer to deal with the frontier, and the only one of any significance. It is, of course, impossible to talk about frontier fiction in 1820s and 1830s without recognising Cooper’s influence and importance, and it is not my intention to slight or ignore him — it was through the study of Cooper that I arrived at the less well-known authors about whom I have written at length. Natty Bumppo and his creator are important points of reference for my

---

<sup>12</sup> Eric Heyne, ‘The Lasting Frontier: Reinventing America’, in *Desert, Garden, Margin, Range: Literature on the American Frontier*, ed. by Heyne (New York: Twayne, 1992), 12-13.

discussions of Jacksonian literature, and I have occasionally assumed the reader's basic familiarity with the *Leatherstocking Tales*.

Although working 'around the canon' in one sense, I am not engaged in recovering voices that were repressed or silenced in their own time. Much of the most important work of the last thirty years in American literary criticism generally, and frontier literature in particular, has been focused on expanding the remit of nineteenth-century American literature, to embrace previously marginalized works by slaves, women, or other disenfranchised minorities, and recuperate texts or oral traditions from non-Anglophone cultures. The writers discussed in this thesis, however, are non-canonical in a different sense. Without exception, they belong to the dominant class of educated, reasonably privileged white Anglo-Americans; in their time, indeed, some of them enjoyed considerable literary status, and as much financial reward as any American author was likely to get in the days before strict copyright laws. Up to a point, therefore, they all belong to the same literary and social establishment, and draw upon the same cultural preconceptions and racial stereotypes.

These writers and works are little known for other reasons, some of them obvious. Bleeker published nothing in her own lifetime, and her *Posthumous Works*, published by subscription, did not reach a wide audience, and therefore received few reprints. Over time, it was simply forgotten. Brackenridge has retained a small corner in most overviews of American literary history on the strength of *Modern Chivalry*, but the sheer size of the work, the obscurity of many of its references, and its lack of any sustained narrative, have kept it largely unread and out of print. Although Brockden Brown maintained a slightly higher profile, it was largely in the guise of a 'flawed' precursor to the American Renaissance, remarkable only for his earliness. This admittedly began to change in the 1970s, when psychological and narratological studies of his novels suggested that their complex, contrived plots, deranged protagonists, and disregard for realism, far from undermining them, were what made them so interesting. Since then his stature has grown to the extent that there are accessible and scholarly editions of all his major works, and *Wieland*, at least, can be found on most undergraduate American literature courses. As a frontier writer, however, Brown, unlike

Cooper, has received relatively little attention, despite the fact that *Edgar Huntly* is one of the earliest novelistic treatments of Indian conflict. I have therefore included him in this study not to recover his work *per se*, but to direct attention to his depiction of the processes of geographical expansion and cultural intercourse, in the context of other writing with similar concerns — in effect, to cement his place in an alternative ‘frontier canon’.

The obscurity of writers such as Bird, Paulding, and Simms since their heyday in the 1830s, as suggested above, is partly due to the changing tastes of the literary establishment in the second half of the nineteenth century, and partly a product of social and political upheaval (particularly in Simms’s case, whose affiliation with the Old South automatically marginalized him in the Reconstruction era and beyond). The recovery of these works is complicated by their overt racism — it is hard to read the virulent Indian-hatred of Brackenridge or Bird, or the pro-slavery arguments of Paulding and Simms, without distaste. In the twentieth century, the protracted dominance of New Critical tenets compounded this neglect. Quite apart from their failure to conform to a proscriptive standard of literary value, many of the works in question were also overtly ideological, and as Myra Jehlen has pointed out, in the vocabulary of the New Critics ‘to call a writer “ideological” was to mean that he or she was less accomplished; an ideological work was by definition less literary’.<sup>13</sup>

### III. THE IDEOLOGY OF FRONTIER LITERATURE

My contention is that these texts shed light on the dominant social and political discourses of the era, in which literature played a formative role. They do so, not *despite* their failure to conform to modern aesthetic and cultural standards, but in many instances, *because of* it. In developing this approach to my subject matter, I am indebted to the work of Jane Tompkins, in particular. In her book *Sensational Designs*, Tompkins contends that literary texts should be understood ‘not as works of art embodying enduring themes in complex forms, but as attempts to redefine the social order’:

---

<sup>13</sup> Myra Jehlen, ‘Introduction’, in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. by Sacvan Bercovitch and Jehlen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

In this view, novels and stories should be studied not because they manage to escape the limitations of their particular time and place, but because they offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment.<sup>14</sup>

The texts discussed in this thesis are significant because they suggest that the monolithic face of expansionist, white, Anglo-American culture had, in fact, many facets, which only become apparent to the modern reader when viewed in the light of the 'historical moment' in which they were written. I have, therefore, prefaced my discussions of the literary texts with historical and political surveys, 'as the only way', to quote Tompkins again, 'of accounting for the enormous impact of works whose force escapes the modern reader, unless he or she makes the effort to recapture the world view they sprang from and which they helped to shape' (xiii).

I am, then, explicitly interested in the 'ideology' that my chosen texts embody, and since I will use the term repeatedly in the course of this study, my particular understanding of it requires explanation. As Jehlen points out, New Critics object to ideology in literature because it implies that the text is part of 'a system of interested deceit', rather than 'a vehicle for abiding truths'(Jehlen, 5). This conception of ideology is inherited from Marx, for whom it signified 'false consciousness'; as he and Engels put it in *The German Ideology*, 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas'. '[E]ach new class', he argues, 'which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to present its interest as the common interest of all members of society'.<sup>15</sup> For Marx, ideology was a phantom, an entirely artificial construct imposed on historical narratives to provide the illusion of universality, and disguise material reality.

Later critics, such as Louis Althusser, have qualified Marx, and suggest that ideology can be integrated into material reality. Althusser notes Marx's basic point that any social formation, in order to survive, must not only

---

<sup>14</sup> Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xi.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. by C.J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), 64, 65-66.

‘produce’, but also reproduce the conditions of production. He then argues that ideology forms an integral part of these ‘conditions of production’:

That the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression.<sup>16</sup>

As Jonathan Dollimore paraphrases, ideology ‘has a material existence — that is, the system of beliefs which constitutes ideology is built into cultural practices and social institutions’.<sup>17</sup> However, the notion that ideology expresses the interests of a dominant ruling class, with its simplifying assumption of social and political homogeneity within class boundaries, is inadequate for the purposes of my argument. ‘Ideology’ must be capable of conveying secondary, intra-cultural meaning; it must be able to signify the differences between writers as well as their cultural common ground. If, as Althusser claims, ideology exerts its influence over us through the ritualised patterns of existence, then it is subject to change as those rituals evolve. For example, one of the most powerful ‘state apparatuses’ was the church; but it must be possible to talk with meaning about Catholic, Quaker or Puritan ideology as different belief systems, encoded in their different patterns of worship.

Similarly, in my discussions of American society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when talking about Federalist or Jeffersonian ideology, Whig or Democrat ideology, and so on, I wish to convey the complex splintering of a former whole.<sup>18</sup> In the early republic, citizens were confronted with fundamental choices about the kind of country they wished to inhabit, choices that were formalised into questions of political allegiance. In this increasingly secular, rapidly liberalizing society, political parties were the most visible incarnations of the ‘state apparatus’, displacing the church at the

---

<sup>16</sup> Louis Althusser, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)’, in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, transl. by Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971), 127-128.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984), 19.

<sup>18</sup> This analogy between religion and politics was suggested by Benjamin Rush’s remark that ‘At present we are Roman Catholics in government. A pope in religion and a king in power are equally necessary articles with many people’ (‘To Horatio Gates – Philadelphia, September 5, 1781’, in Rush, *Letters*, I, 265).

centre of American life. Ideological disputes that had once been fought over the pattern and nature of worship, now erupted over the shape, size and composition of the nation.

Norman Grabo has argued that ‘frontier ideology is probably a genuine oxymoron, except in the sense that *frontier* is a concept that may be incorporated systematically into an ideology’. He suggests that

the two terms are genuinely opposed: where one is the other is not. Frontier — when it is not simply a borderline between opposing armies or nations — is a vast unknown, a blank, formless. Ideology is all form, shape, point, purpose, and design. Frontier is the blank canvass; ideology is the painting.<sup>19</sup>

Grabo’s point suggests the extent to which the frontier invites the imposition of meanings from outside itself. Its very formlessness means that it can sustain a multiplicity of ‘readings’, all of which compete for dominance in the various discourses of the early republic.

A function of the relative obscurity of the texts and authors under consideration is that they have received comparatively little critical study, by comparison with more established canonical figures like Hawthorne or Melville. But this is not to say that there has been no work done on these authors, as will become apparent in the course of the individual chapters. Although there is no other study of this group of authors in relation to each other — not even Slotkin mentions them all — my ideas have been informed by a wide variety of related or more specific work. Some of the more influential have already been mentioned in this introduction; others will be gratefully credited later on. Brackenridge, Brockden Brown, and Simms, in particular, are increasingly attracting serious, book-length critical attention, and if the critical corpus on each of the other selected authors is relatively slight, they make up in number what they lack in reputation. The paper trail of journal articles and book chapters is therefore long, for which I refer the reader to the notes, the bibliography, and the discussions of particular critics in each chapter.

---

<sup>19</sup> Norman S. Grabo, ‘Ideology and the Early American Frontier’, in *Early American Literature*, 22:3 (1987), 274.

In chapter 1, I outline a variety of post-Revolutionary attitudes to the frontier, exemplified by the writing and conduct of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other prominent statesmen of the period. The physiocratic idealisation of farming as a virtue-producing activity is contrasted with the economic realities of settlement, and the commodification of the land in the new market economy. By extension, the Republican insistence on expansion as a moral necessity is compared with the Federalist anxiety about the danger to the Union posed by extending the nation's boundaries, and the threat of western secession is discussed from both perspectives. Finally, a brief analysis of Jefferson's writings about Native American character and the conduct of Indian relations provides an overview of white stereotypes of the Indians in this period. The literary works discussed in the following four chapters respond to the preconceptions and attitudes outlined here.

Chapter 2 focuses principally on three texts written between the Revolutionary period and the drafting of the Constitution, isolating the specific events to which they relate and the audiences they seek to cater for. John Filson's *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke*, featuring the famous appendix, 'The Adventures of Daniel Boon', attempts to reassure potential settlers in Kentucky of the region's security and importance by locating its recent history of Indian conflict in the context of a national destiny to settle the land, repulse the British, and displace the Indians; this outcome, in Filson's text, is supervised by an ultimately benign Providence, made manifest in the beauty and fertility of the land itself. The heroic figure of Daniel Boon provides an instructive example of the 'philosophy' necessary for the successful negotiation of frontier settlement.

Ann Eliza Bleecker's fictional captivity narrative *The History of Maria Kittle*, written during the Revolution for private circulation and published posthumously in 1793, suggests that the contemplation of future national glory could not so easily compensate for the personal losses incurred on the frontier. Bleecker's effort to integrate the generic patterns of captivity narratives, biblical texts and sentimental literature breaks down when confronted with the damaging incursions of violence into domestic life. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the pseudonymously authored 'Panther



Captivity'. This fictional captivity narrative has previously been seen to offer an alternative to the conventional masculine myth of the frontier (exemplified by the Boon narrative), and to suggest that the wilderness can be successfully encountered by a female cultivator. I counter this purely mythopoeic reading by placing the original publication of the Panther Captivity in the context of Shays's Rebellion and the Federal Convention, thereby recasting it as a Federalist parable attempting to restrain radical expansionist impulses and assert sedentary, mercantile values.

Chapter 3 focuses on the life and work of Hugh Henry Brackenridge, particularly on the collision of his traditional, agrarian brand of republicanism — informed by his classical education in the East — with the turbulent political and social realities of life in the West. Concentrating primarily on Brackenridge's writing in the 1780s and 1790s, I assess the impact of the frontier on his personal literary and political ambitions, and his hopes for the young nation. Bringing Part I to a close, chapter 4 argues that throughout his career, Charles Brockden Brown sought to strike a balance between ideological extremes — more specifically, that in *Wieland*, 'Memoirs of Carwin', *Edgar Huntly* and 'Somnambulism', he exhorts his readers to resist the divisive influence of political partisanship, and instructs them in how to perceive and inhabit the American landscape.

Chapter 5 establishes the political and intellectual context of Jacksonian American, in which the authors in Part II participate. An overview of the career of Andrew Jackson, the first westerner to inhabit the White House, is used to sketch in some of the political, social and geographical changes that took place in the early nineteenth century. In particular, I discuss the ongoing debate over Indian Removal, the arguments for and against the idea, and its ultimate implementation, noting the dramatic impact of this policy on both the white and Indian populations of the United States.

James Kirke Paulding, the subject of chapter 6, was a constant campaigner for American literary independence, a fanatically loyal supporter of Jackson's Democratic administration, and, at the height of his fame during the 1830s, one of the most popular and respected writers in America. This chapter looks at the ideological importance of the West to Paulding's literary nationalism, and finds in his unswerving Jacksonian principles the grounds for his support

for Indian Removal and slavery. Chapter 7 undertakes a similar study of William Gilmore Simms, whose long career was dedicated to the fictional depiction of the frontier in the South. Like Paulding, Simms was a Jackson supporter, but it was his 'southernness' that gave his fictional frontier its distinctive cast. This chapter examines, in particular, Simms's notion of how the stable society of the Old South should engage with the 'interior frontier' opened up by Indian Removal, with specific reference to his novel *The Yemassee*.

Finally, chapter 8 focuses on Robert Montgomery Bird, with particular reference to his novel *Nick of the Woods*, famous for its bitterly hostile representation of the Indians. Noting the comparative sympathy for the Indians displayed in his early career, I explain this transition with reference to his personal experience of the West and its native inhabitants in the 1830s, and, most importantly, his loyalty to the anti-expansionist Whig party.

Despite the broad chronological scope of the project, and the variety of works and writers discussed, it cannot claim to be comprehensive. There are, by definition, more writers outside the traditional canon than within, and the potential for extending this study is endless. A brief and by no means exhaustive list may convey the number of relatively unknown authors who wrote about the frontier in this period, and whose work merits similar critical discussion: Sarah Wentworth Morton, John Neal, Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Timothy Flint, Nicholas Marcellus Hentz, James Hall, and Charles Fenno Hoffman. Each of these authors offers yet another perspective on the Indians, yet another reading of the frontier; they fill in even more of the blank spaces in conventional literary histories, between the Revolution and the emergence of Poe, Hawthorne, and Emerson in the 1830s. The following chapters, however, make a start on this process of rediscovery.

***Part I: The Early Republic, 1783-  
1815***

---

## *1. Constructions of the Frontier in the Early Republic*

---

### I. DEFINING THE VIRTUOUS REPUBLIC

Speaking in Philadelphia in 1778, Benjamin Rush, the celebrated physician and patriot, declared that ‘Virtue, Virtue alone [...] is the basis of a Republic’.<sup>1</sup> During the Revolution, republican rhetoric sought to distance ‘American’ values from the increasingly mercantile and industrial concerns of a British society on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution. For the Revolutionary generation, the success of their ‘great experiment’ depended on the maintenance of a ‘virtuous’ society; and this virtue, as Joseph J. Ellis points out, was defined as ‘the willingness of the individual to subordinate his private interests for the good of the community; it was also the public-spirited, self-sacrificing quality that the entire populace must possess if government by the people were to have any chance of success’.<sup>2</sup>

Historians have long argued that the American Revolution was a politically radical experiment undertaken by a socially conservative body of men.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the leaders of the revolution were of aristocratic stock — rich, educated landowners, quite distinct from the common labourers and farmers embraced by more radical republican rhetoric. The society envisioned by men like Washington, Hamilton, Adams, and even Jefferson, was not a pure democracy — defined by James Madison in *The Federalist* as ‘a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person’<sup>4</sup> — but a representative democracy, in which the hereditary peerage of Great Britain would be replaced by a ‘natural aristocracy’, whose characteristics, according to Jefferson, are ‘virtue and

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in Carla Mulford, ed., *The Power of Sympathy*, by William Hill Brown, and *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster (New York: Penguin, 1996), ‘Introduction’, xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York/London: Norton, 1979), 33.

<sup>3</sup> See Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1970) for one version of the argument that the radicalism of the American Revolution was political and intellectual, rather than social. For a compelling reassessment of this conventional wisdom, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. by William R. Brock (London: Phoenix, 2000), 45. *The Federalist* was originally published as a series of newspaper articles designed to persuade the delegates of New York State to ratify the Constitution in 1788. The majority of articles belonged to either Hamilton or Madison.

talents'.<sup>5</sup> This meritocratic system would ensure that the new republican government consisted of the most talented and highly qualified men in the nation — namely, the same social and political elite which had largely been responsible for governing individual states before the Revolution. The majority of Americans, in the ideal world of republican theorists, would come to comprise a literate, professionally skilled electorate, possessed of sufficient political awareness to make reasoned and informed choices when selecting their leaders, but also implicitly accepting the need for a natural hierarchy based on ability.

The republican ideology of the Revolution was basically agrarian. To quote Ellis again:

Republicanism [...] was based on a constellation of attitudes appropriate for the small, self-sufficient agrarian villages of the past, where the ideal of communal harmony reigned supreme, the economic incentives for a more dynamic, liberated personality had not yet materialized, and individual freedom was easily subordinated to the demands of social order. Republicanism idealized the values of a world that was already fading. It was a nostalgic, backward-looking ideology resting on assumptions that were fundamentally antithetical to the market conditions and liberal mentality emerging in prerevolutionary America. (Ellis, 34)

Farming was constructed as the antithesis of oppressive British commercialism. The land became an embodiment of America's intrinsic capacity for independence, the value of which was not, and could not be, determined by the British Parliament. Propagandists such as John Dickinson, in his *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, skilfully associated republican virtue with the very soil of the nation, inculcating a faith in the intrinsically beneficial effects of working the American land.<sup>6</sup> Nowhere is this made clearer than in the early part of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*:

Precious soil, I say to myself, by what singular custom of law is it that thou wast made to constitute the riches of the freeholder? What should we American farmers be without the distinct possession of that soil? It feeds, it clothes, us: from it we draw even a great exuberancy, our best meat, our

---

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, October 28, 1813, in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Viking, 1975), 534.

<sup>6</sup> Despite the injuries which he considered the colonists to have suffered at the hands of the British parliament, Dickinson was a relatively moderate figure. Consistently opposed to the movement for independence, he urged the Pennsylvanian delegates to the Continental Congress to campaign instead for apology and redress from the British Crown.

richest drink; the very honey of our bees comes from this privileged spot [...] On it is founded our rank, our freedom, our power, as citizens; our importance, as inhabitants of such a district. (Crèvecoeur, 24)

This physiocratic faith had a crucial unifying function while the conflict lasted, providing a concrete focus for American patriotism, a universally visible symbol of what was being fought for. The right of Americans to cultivate, and even more vitally, to *own* the land, was a fundamental tenet of anti-British republican rhetoric during the war. Commerce was not excluded from the republican vision, but it was an adjunct of agricultural production, the means by which America would come to benefit from its extraordinary fertility, and simultaneously spread the purifying effects of virtuous American labour to the world at large. Unregulated commerce on its own, it was thought, would have a destructive effect on American virtue — as Richard Henry Lee commented in 1785, ‘The Spirit of Commerce throughout the world is a spirit of Avarice’.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, in the long term, this rhetorical strategy, employed by pro-American polemicists, generated enormous tension in post-Revolutionary society. The repeated privileging of agriculture as a virtue-producing activity had generated a high-level of expectation amongst the nation’s farmers, who fully expected to occupy a central position in the new republic. If American virtue and identity derived from the land, then it seemed reasonable to expect the government to make provisions to maximise the availability, productivity and security of that land. Unfortunately, many of the landowners, merchants, and even political leaders who dominated American society both economically and socially, were nervous about the prospect of affording too much power to ‘the mob’ — whether that mob was comprised of rural labourers or urban artisans and mechanics. Rush warned in 1788 that

in cherishing jealousies of our rulers we are too apt to overlook the weaknesses & vices of the people. Is not history as full of examples of both in them, as it is of the crimes of kings? What is the present moral character of the inhabitants of the United States? I need not describe it. It proves too plainly that the *people* are as much disposed to vice as their rulers, and that

---

<sup>7</sup> Richard Henry Lee to James Madison, ‘N.Y. Aug. 11, 1785’, in James Curtis Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 2 vols, (New York: MacMillan, 1914), Vol. II, 383. Lee (1732-1794) was one of the foremost public figures of the time. A prominent patriot leader in his native Westmoreland County, he was also a Burgess and member of the Virginia assembly, one of the movers of the resolutions for the Declaration of Independence and the Plan of Confederation, a President of the Continental Congress, and later a Senator.

nothing but a vigorous & efficient government can prevent their degenerating into savages, or devouring each other like beasts of prey.<sup>8</sup>

In the newly created nation, the republican rhetoric that had proved so effective at motivating and unifying the disparate interests of the various states during the war, came into conflict with the liberalizing forces of an emerging, capitalist economy, in which the acquisition of material wealth replaced benevolence and self-sacrifice as the primary goal of the good citizen. In this climate, commerce and manufacture could not be so easily subordinated to agriculture as the underlying source of virtue. Older republican ideals were replaced by a new liberal ideology — as Stephen Watts, paraphrasing a generation of historians, puts it, ‘the sacrifice of personal advantage to the commonwealth, a long-standing republican ideal, slowly receded before the notion that personal enterprise created productivity and prosperity and thereby *produced* the public good’.<sup>9</sup>

In 1786, Benjamin Franklin wrote to Thomas Jefferson, reporting on the welfare of the nation during the latter’s absence in France. ‘The Disposition to furnish Congress with ample Powers augments daily,’ Franklin wrote,

as People become more enlightened, and I do not remember ever to have seen during my long Life more signs of Public Felicity than appear at present throughout these States; the Cultivators of the Earth who make the Bulk of our Nation having had good Crops, which are paid for at high Prices with ready Money, the Artisans too receive high Wages, and the Value of all real Estate is augmented greatly. Merchants and Shopkeepers, indeed, complain that there is not business enough, but this is evidently not owing to the Fewness of Buyers, but to the too great Number of Sellers, for the Consumption of Goods was never greater, as appears by the Dress, Furniture, and Manner of Living of all Ranks of the People.<sup>10</sup>

Franklin’s belief that the prosperity of ‘all Ranks of the People’ derives in a chain from the ‘Cultivators of the Earth’, demonstrates the extent to which, in the early republic, the various spheres of economic activity were interconnected. As Ellis has argued, this interconnection was implicit in the vocabulary of the age:

---

<sup>8</sup> Rush to Jeremy Belknap, ‘Philadelphia, Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1788’, ‘Belknap Papers’, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 6th Series, IV (1891), 398.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Watts, *The Romance of Real Life: Charles Brockden Brown and the Origins of American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Franklin to Jefferson, ‘Philad<sup>a</sup> March 20, 1786’, in *Selected Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (London: Pickering, 1996), 3 vols., II, 59-60.

No late-eighteenth century American had the need for a word referring to a separate sphere of refined human activity, because it was presumed that the arts would flourish in the free and open air of the marketplace alongside other human activities. Artistic, political, social and economic development were not conceived of as autonomous spheres or disciplines; they were all interrelated. (Ellis, xiii-xiv)

The very word ‘culture’, which has come to signify the intellectual or artistic achievements of a society, or more broadly its customs and manners, simply referred in this period to agriculture — Noah Webster defined it for a generation of Americans as ‘the act of tilling and preparing the earth for crops’.<sup>11</sup> The meaning has not shifted completely — rather, agriculture was understood to be a fundamental part of activities that now come under the general heading of culture. This synthesis of the various realms of economic and artistic production was characteristic of the developmental attitude of the early republic. To most Americans, therefore, the West offered neither the natural sublimity dreamed of by European Romantics, nor the agricultural self-sufficiency envisioned by the physiocrats. Rather, as Peter S. Onuf puts it, ‘American expansionists saw an unprecedented opportunity for a higher synthesis of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures. For them, the development of the frontier would be a movement forward in the history of civilization, not a refuge from it’.<sup>12</sup>

## II. THE SIZE OF THE REPUBLIC

The situation of the United States in the years after Independence did not merely require the redefinition of traditional republican virtue to accommodate modern economic imperatives. Equally fundamental was the question of the geographical extent of the new nation. Two issues required urgent address: could the existing states be more formally bound together, and administered by a federal government; and if so, was it possible for the nation to *continue* to expand, and maintain a unified republican form of government? There was no historical precedent to provide guidance.

---

<sup>11</sup> Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: S. Converse, 1830), 213.

<sup>12</sup> Peter S. Onuf, ‘Liberty, Development and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3, series 43, no.2 (April 1986), 182.



In *The Spirit of the Laws* (required reading for political theorists since its publication in 1748), Montesquieu had suggested that the ideal republic would be geographically small. Obviously, this presented a severe theoretical problem in the United States, even before it began its inexorable westward movement. At the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, opponents of the federal system invoked Montesquieu's maxim as evidence that even a confederation of the original thirteen states would stretch governmental resources too thinly, and that any attempt to institute a republican government over such a vast area was bound to fail. Writing in *The Federalist*, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison reinterpreted Montesquieu's ideas, fundamentally redefining what a republic was capable of being.

In *The Federalist* No. 9, Hamilton argues that the Frenchman's conclusions were drawn from a situation so dissimilar to the United States that the analogy simply breaks down:

If we therefore take his ideas on this point as the criterion of truth, we shall be driven to the alternative either of taking refuge at once in the arms of monarchy, or of splitting ourselves into an infinity of little, jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord, and the miserable objects of universal pity or contempt. (38)

Taking his lead from this, Madison also revises Montesquieu, in *The Federalist* No. 10. He argues, initially, that 'a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views' (43). The surest safeguard against any one of these 'interests' or factions gaining a majority and exerting undue influence on the course of government, Madison argues, is to increase the size and population of the republic:

Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other. (47)

Hamilton and Madison, of course, found themselves on opposite sides of the political schism that took place in the decade following the Constitutional

Convention. Hamilton became the *de facto* leader of the Federalist party, advocating a strong central government and a federal banking system. Federalists were reluctant to see the boundaries of the United States pushed ever further away from the administrative seat of power in the East; central to their ethos was the belief that the existing states must be improved and industrialised before westward expansion could safely take place. The Federalist power base was the Northeast, amongst the traditional commercial elite, although Washington himself was, tacitly, sympathetic to their position. Madison, by contrast, became a mainstay of the Republican faction, which grew up around his fellow Virginian Jefferson. Jeffersonian Republicans, as already implied, were more democratic in their tendencies, appealing to the common man rather than the social elite. They advocated rapid expansion, and sought to defend states' rights against the power of the federal government. Although, in *The Federalist*, Hamilton and Madison superficially have the same aim — to ensure the ratification of the Constitution — the seeds of their later disagreement are already evident. Hamilton argues merely for the necessity of strong central government, whereas Madison raises issues of wider significance, providing the ideological scaffold for proponents of territorial expansion.

### III. LAND AS COMMODITY

As already noted, the ownership and farming of land was a crucial signifier not only of white civilization, but also of republican virtue. Thomas Jefferson, one of the chief apologists and propagandists for the colonies during the Revolution, consistently utilised the pioneer settler and small farmer as emblems of independence from colonial rule, and thus as a cornerstone of American national identity. In *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, published in 1774, he includes the restriction of western settlement in his long list of the injuries inflicted on the American colonies by the British crown. He firstly argues that Anglo-Saxon law, the basis of British law, dictates that Britain has no legal power over America at all, comparing the migration of people to North America from Britain to the ancient migration of Anglo-Saxons to the British Isles:

[T]heir Saxon ancestors had under this universal law [the right of 'going in quest of new habitations, and of there establishing new societies'], in like manner, left their native wilds and woods in the North of Europe, had possessed themselves of the island of Britain then less charged with inhabitants, and had established there that system of laws which has so long been the glory and protection of that country. Nor was ever any claim of superiority or dependence asserted over them by that mother country from which they had migrated. (*Portable TJ*, 4)

By Jefferson's logic here, the feudal system that was imported into Britain after the Norman Conquest is the exception rather than the rule in Saxon law, and therefore the notion that all lands in America were the possessions of the king, from whom a grant must be obtained, was 'a fictitious principle'. It is on the basis of this false law, Jefferson believes, that 'his majesty has lately taken on him to advance the terms of purchase and of holding to the double of what they were, by which means the acquisition of lands being rendered difficult, the population of our country is likely to be checked' (*Portable TJ*, 19).

In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson stated that farming was the means by which the American people would retain their moral strength and virtue, and avoid the vitiation of Europe:

Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phaenomenon [*sic*] of which no age or nation has furnished an example. (*Portable TJ*, 217)

In 1787, Jefferson reiterated his conviction that the possession of land inculcated virtue and thereby created good citizens, writing to Madison that 'our governments will remain virtuous [...] as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled together upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they shall become corrupt as in Europe' (Jefferson to Madison, Dec. 20, 1787, *Portable TJ*, 432).

The right to acquire and settle the land was, in his opinion, the most fundamental entitlement of the American people. The British, anxious about maintaining control over subjects who lived hundreds of miles from the nearest source of civil or legal authority, had attempted to contain settlement to the East of the Appalachians, by the Proclamation of 1763. This attempt to restrict expansion had more than economic implications; to physiocrats like

Jefferson, it signified a moral failure. Almost as soon as the Revolution was over, therefore, many Americans, assuming that the land would become available, began to flow westwards.

Not all the leading statesmen of the period shared Jefferson's belief that expansion should be rapid and unconstrained; but there were pressing political and economic reasons to open at least some of the public domain in the West to new settlement. Writing to George Washington in 1785, Richard Henry Lee referred to 'the momentous business of selling the western lands, in doing which, the first and greatest object seems to be, the discharging effectually the great weight of debt that the war has created, and which obstructs so effectually every arrangement for future security' (Lee to Washington, May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1785, in Lee, *Letters*, II, 353). Even Jeremy Belknap, a conservative New England minister, with deep-seated doubts about the westward movement, saw the powerful economic arguments for expansion, in the short term. While the Constitutional Convention was taking place, Belknap wrote to a friend, 'I wish we may reduce the Continental debt by selling lands', hesitantly searching for a positive interpretation of the growing frenzy of land-speculation.<sup>13</sup>

Quite apart from its ability to keep men virtuous and free, land was, first and foremost, a commodity. The redefinition of virtue to embrace 'personal enterprise' as a valid republican goal had as great an impact on the distribution and settlement of land on the western frontier, as on the commercial transactions of eastern merchants. The settlement of western land in the 1780s and 1790s was a huge land grab, motivated by the thirst for individual profit, which the government tried to contain and exploit.

Despite the fertility of the land, however, its value was not intrinsic. Without accurate surveys and an efficient system of sale, the settlement process was in danger of degenerating into a legal tangle of competing claims. As Onuf has pointed out, the value of the land related to the 'goodness' of the soil, but this goodness was 'a function of the knowledge that [surveys] produced. In this sense, the survey of the West would represent an investment by Congress: it would create value by producing knowledge' (Onuf, 211). Value was further imparted to the land by controlling the supply; if the market

---

<sup>13</sup> Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 'Boston, September 12, 1787', 'Belknap Papers', *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 5th Series, II (1877), 488.

were flooded, prices would drop, and the potential revenue of the frontier be wasted. Moreover, if the rate of settlement were too rapid, then farmers would be unable to transport their produce to market, and the remotest settlers would be more difficult and costly to defend from potential Indian attack.

The government's task was therefore to promote the orderly settlement of the frontier, 'not to suppress speculation but rather to direct it to the public good' (Onuf, 191). The suppression of speculation was the last thing on the mind of George Washington, who engaged in it on a massive scale; and who, even in making decisions on public policy, never lost sight of his personal interests. The example of Washington illustrates the ambivalence of some of the period's most prominent public figures towards the West. Like many Federalists in the 1790s, he considered the region to be important to the welfare of the nation (and of himself), but also to pose a threat; and had only distaste for the actual settlers who lived there, and for the squalid conditions of frontier life.

The future President had first visited the frontier in 1748, as part of a team of surveyors. Even then, as a young man, Washington had no liking for wilderness adventure. He called the route from Virginia to the western country 'the worst road that was ever trod by man or beast', and thought the westerners he met were 'as Ignorant a Set of People as the Indians', 'a parcel of barbarians', whose standard of living was closer to that of 'dogs or cats' than to that of an aristocratic Virginian.<sup>14</sup> But though he hated every minute of his time there, he recognised the potential value of the land, and spent a great deal of time and effort, both before and after the Revolution, in acquiring enormous tracts of frontier real estate, often illegally. Washington saw nothing virtue-producing in the ownership of land, and Jefferson's ideal yeoman farmer was his worst nightmare. For Washington, it was all about profit: 'What inducements have men to explore uninhabited wilds [...] but the prospect of getting good lands? [...] Would any man waste his time, expose his fortune, nay, life, in such a search, if he was not to share the good and the

---

<sup>14</sup> *The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1931-45), 1, 11. Also see Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 79.

bad with those that came after him? Surely no!' (Washington, *Writings*, III, 68).

Neither Washington's self-interest nor his snobbery was unusual. One of the latent fears amongst Americans of his class was the levelling effect that the abundance of land might have on society. 'Men in these times,' wrote Washington to Jacob Read in November 1784, 'talk with as much facility of fifty, a hundred, and even 500,000 Acres as a Gentleman formerly would do of 1000 acres' (Washington, *Writings*, XXVII, 486). The implied difference between 'men' and 'gentlemen' is clear — Washington is talking about a new, lower-class breed of settler and speculator, which he finds disturbing. His ideal paradigm for expansion was radically different to Jefferson's. The first president believed that the West should be purchased and developed by gentlemen landlords like him. As a slave-owning Virginian, moreover, the type of farming he favoured was the plantation, wherever possible. Where the plantation system was impracticable, he would rent out his land to tenant farmers, and eventually sell it after its value had been increased by improvements, thereby becoming inordinately wealthy.

This scheme was threatened by the refusal of settlers to respect the distinctions of class, property and status that Washington held to be sacrosanct. His fear of social change taps into a widespread contemporary anxiety about the detrimental effect of primitive frontier conditions on civil society. The famous French naturalist the Comte de Buffon had claimed, in his *Histoire Naturelle* (1849), that all animal and plant life was subject to degeneration in America. Later French commentators, such as the Abbé Raynal and Corneille de Pauw, had extended this notion from the natural to the social sphere, implying that civilization in America would, under the influence of a wild environment, ineluctably slide into savagery.<sup>15</sup>

Although few Americans gave any credence to such theories, there was nevertheless a real fear that settlers on the frontier, exposed to the wilderness, and removed from the benign influence of civil and legal authority, would

---

<sup>15</sup> De Pauw, whom Franklin described as 'ill-informed and malignant', believed that everything in the New World was 'either degenerate or monstrous'. At a dinner in Paris, when the Abbé Raynal introduced the topic of American 'degeneracy', the tall Franklin suggested that the Europeans and Americans measure themselves against each other. Unfortunately, Raynal was, as Jefferson put it, 'a mere shrimp'. See William Brandon, *New Worlds for Old: Reports from the New World and their Effect on the Development of Social Thought in Europe, 1500-1800* (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 1986), 155-157.

revert to a state of semi-savagery little removed from the actual ‘savages’, the Indians. Benjamin Rush characterized the typical early frontier settler in the following manner:

His pleasures consist chiefly in fishing and hunting. He loves spirituous liquors, and he eats, drinks, and sleeps in dirt and rags in his little cabin. In his intercourse with the world, he manifests all the arts which characterize the Indians of our country. [...] Above all, he revolts against the operation of laws. He cannot bear to surrender up a single natural right for all the benefits of government, and therefore he abandons his little settlement and seeks a retreat in the woods, where he again submits to all the toils which have been mentioned.<sup>16</sup>

Crèvecoeur’s judgment is harsher still, describing these settlers as ‘no better than carnivorous animals, of a superior rank’ (Crèvecoeur, 47).

The predominance of such a primitive mode of life on the frontiers presented a perceptual challenge to proponents of expansionism, convinced as they were that the future glory of the nation lay in the West. Washington believed that such degeneracy was the result of two factors — the wrong sort of people managing to get their hands on the land, and the inadequacy of transportation. Farmers in the far West (that is, western Pennsylvania and Kentucky) were unable to transport their produce to market, and so had little impulse to produce any more than they needed for subsistence, and gave little thought to modern, commercial farming techniques. Such ‘slovenly’ farmers, Washington remarked ‘think (generally) of nothing else, but to work a field as long as it will bear anything, and until it is run to gullies and ruined; then at another; without affording either any aid’ (Washington to William Pearce, Feb. 28, 1796, in *Writings*, XXXIV, 479). The solution to this problem lay in developing transportation, thereby opening up markets to western farmers and activating the greatest spur to improvement, self-interest. Extending the nation’s waterways by means of canals, Washington argued, was the surest means of benefiting the western regions from a commercial point of view — and, incidentally, increasing the value of the many thousands of acres which he owned there.

---

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Rush, ‘To Thomas Percival: An Account of the Progress of Population, Agriculture, Manners, and Government in Pennsylvania – Philadelphia, October 26, 1786’, in Rush, *Letters*, I, 400-401.

#### IV. THE THREAT OF WESTERN SECESSION

The greatest danger to Washington and his fellow absentee landlords was the possibility that the western inhabitants of the United States might split from their eastern cousins. ‘I confess to you candidly,’ he wrote to James McHenry, ‘that I can foresee no evil greater than disunion’ (Washington, *Writings*, XVIII, 227-230). Linking the West to the East, by increasing the dependence of the former on the latter, would lessen the risk of disunion, felt by many to be imminent. Washington himself observed

that the flanks and rear of this United territory are possessed by other powers, and formidable ones too — nor how necessary it is to apply the cement of interest to bind all parts of it together, by one indissoluble band — particularly the Middle States with the Country immediately back of them — for what ties let me, shod. [*sic*] we have upon those people; and how entirely unconnected shod. [*sic*] we be with them if the Spaniards on their right, or Great Britain on their left, instead of throwing stumbling blocks in their way as they now do, should invite their trade and seek alliances with them?<sup>17</sup>

For this reason, the President discouraged the negotiations with Spain over access to the waters of the Mississippi, which would have carried western produce away from the Atlantic states, and, in his opinion, accelerated the secession of the western territories. So long as the Mississippi remained closed, Washington reasoned, the West would need the East; and as he himself put it, ‘there is nothing which binds one country or one state to another but interest’ (Washington to Henry Lee, Oct. 31, 1786, in the Library of Congress, Washington Papers, reel 96; cited by Slaughter, 87).

The problem with this approach was that it angered frontiersmen. They did not want to wait years for canals to be built; they wanted immediate access to the great natural trade route of the Mississippi. The policy pursued by the Continental Congress, and later by the federal government, left them dissatisfied, disillusioned, and, if anything, more prone to secessionist leanings than before. In 1788, the people of Kentucky submitted a petition to the Federal Government outlining their grievances, demanding action, and threatening secession should their requests be ignored. The text of the petition, possibly written by General James Wilkinson, is included by Gilbert

---

<sup>17</sup> *The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799*, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, 4 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), II, 326 (‘4<sup>th</sup> October, 1784’).



Imlay, in the introduction to *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1792), because it ‘contains sentiments so pure, and so manly, that I think there cannot be a better idea conveyed of their [i.e. Westerners’] disposition’.<sup>18</sup>

The main complaint of the petition is the restriction of navigation on the Mississippi, which it presents as a ‘natural right to the inhabitants of this country’ (*TD*, xiii). The implicit assumption is that the very geography of the country is so arranged as to demonstrate a divine plan, for the population and use of the land by white Americans:

Then we ask, can the GOD of WISDOM AND NATURE have created that vast country in vain? Was it for nothing that he blessed it with fertility so astonishing? [...] View the country, and you will answer for yourselves. But can the presumptuous madness of man imagine a policy inconsistent with the immense designs of the DEITY? Americans cannot. (*TD*, xiii).

The concluding question, and its answer, overtly refer to the actions of the Spanish; but they also lead to the conclusion that if the American government remains inactive on the issue, it will be colluding in the obstruction of Providential design.

This pattern, whereby an explicit expression of loyalty conceals an implicit threat or warning, is repeated throughout the petition, but best exemplified by the last two paragraphs:

If you are really our fathers, stretch forth your hands to save us — if you would be worthy guardians, defend our rights. We are a member, that would exert every muscle for your service. Do not cut us off from your body. By every tie of consanguinity and affection, by the remembrance of the blood which we have mingled in the common cause, by a regard to justice, and to policy, we conjure you to procure our rights. May your councils be guided by wisdom and justice, and may your determination be marked with decision and effect! Let not your beneficence be circumscribed by the mountains which divide us; but let us feel that you are really the guardians and asserters of our rights. Then you would secure

---

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Imlay, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America, &c.* (London: J. Debrett, 1792), ix. Imlay himself became involved in a scheme that might have led to the dissolution of the Union. Having fled America in the late 1780s, pursued by legal writs incurred in failed Kentucky land speculations, Imlay wrote *A Topographical Description*, and a companion novel *The Emigrants* (1793). He also became romantically involved with Mary Wollstonecraft, with whom he lived in Paris. On the strength of his books, he was consulted as an expert on the American West by the French Girondist government, and Imlay wrote two communications on the subject to the Commission of Public Safety, advocating an expedition to capture Louisiana from Spain with the help of American frontiersmen, in which he intended to take an active part. These plans collapsed when the Girondists fell from power.

the prayers of the people, whose gratitude would be as warm as their vindications of their rights will be eternal — Then our connection shall be perpetuated to the latest times, a monument of your justice, and a terror to your enemies. (*TD*, xiv-xv)

The language is carefully weighted to suggest loyalty, and the desire for assistance; but it does so without suggesting absolute dependency. The Kentuckians have ‘muscle’ of their own, and the tone of the piece implies that the federal government will live to regret any failure to meet their demands: to ‘cut us off from your body’ would be significantly injurious to both parties. The second paragraph is equally loaded. The exhortation to ‘wisdom and justice [...] decision and effect’ is structured to make any other course of action by the government seem like an abnegation of these qualities; and the repeated ‘Then’, while it holds out the prospect of reconciliation and unity between West and East, makes clear how contingent this is on the satisfaction of their demands.

Matters came to a head during the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, in which whiskey producers in rural Pennsylvania engaged in violent protest against the introduction of heavy duties for the transportation of their goods to the markets of the East. The insurrection was minor, but the government responded by sending in Federal troops to quell the protests. Jefferson was outraged at these heavy-handed tactics, believing that the whiskey producers had been nothing more than ‘riotous’, and correct to protest, since, in his opinion, ‘the excise law is an infernal one’.

The rebellion had been precipitated and fomented by the creation of ‘democratic societies’ in the region, in which the farmers met and discussed their grievances, and formed themselves into a coherent body. After the disturbances had been quashed, steps were taken by the federal government to suppress these societies, which, much to Jefferson’s horror, Washington denounced in his annual message to Congress, on November 19, 1794. Jefferson’s correspondence reveals his disgust, and also his first seeds of doubt about the conduct of Washington:

The denunciation of the democratic societies is one of the extraordinary acts of boldness of which we have seen so many from the faction of monocrats. It is wonderful indeed, that the President should have permitted himself to be the organ of such an attack on the freedom of discussion, the freedom of

writing, printing and publishing. (Jefferson to James Madison, 'Philadelphia, March 24, 1793', *Portable TJ*, 467-468)

Moreover, Jefferson clearly felt that secession was now almost inevitable, and that the excise law was 'the instrument of dismembering the Union, & setting us all afloat to chuse which part of it we will adhere to'. In the West, he reports, 'that separation which perhaps was a very distant and problematical event, is now near, & certain, & determined in the mind of every man' (469).

Jefferson did not *want* the West to break away from the Union; but, unlike Washington, he was prepared to entertain it as a possibility if the interests of liberty, and the good of the people, were to be served by such a move. Acknowledging the unending capacity of men to quarrel with each other, he worried that 'if on a temporary superiority of the one party, the other is to resort to a scission of the Union, no federal government can ever exist. If to rid ourselves of the present rule of Massachusetts and Connecticut, we break the Union, will the evil stop there?' (Jefferson to John Taylor, 'Philadelphia, June 1, 1798', *Portable TJ*, 475).

Despite his concerns for the Union, as President, he felt compelled to make the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803, largely to secure unquestioned navigation rights to the Mississippi, which he felt to be imperative for the long-term welfare of the nation as a whole. The vastly increased size of American territory, however, necessarily brought the idea of a separate western nation to the forefront of political debate once again; and Jefferson finally, in private, gave a reluctant, qualified sanction to the prospect:

These federalists see in this acquisition the formation of a new confederacy, embracing all the waters of the Mississippi, on both sides of it, and a separation of its eastern waters from us. [...] We have seldom seen neighbourhood produce affection among nations. The reverse is almost the universal truth. Besides, if it should become the great interest of those nations to separate from this, if their happiness should depend on it so strongly as to induce them to go through that convulsion, why should the Atlantic States dread it? [...] The future inhabitants of the Atlantic & Mississippi States will be our sons. We leave them in distinct but bordering establishments. We think we see their happiness in their union, and we wish it. Events may prove it otherwise; and if they see their interest in separation, why should we take side with our Atlantic rather than our Mississippi descendants? It is the elder and the younger son differing. God bless them both, and keep them in union, if it be for their good, but separate them, if it

be better. (Jefferson to John Breckenridge, August 12, 1803, *Portable TJ*, 495-496)

## V. THOMAS JEFFERSON, THE WEST AND THE INDIANS

From the drafting of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to the end of his second term as President in 1808, Jefferson was in a unique position of power to impose his particular political and philosophical vision of the nation's destiny. For a brief period during the 1790s that destiny hung in the balance, as Joyce Appleby notes:

Had the Federalists passed on their power to like-minded men in 1800, the course of economic development in the United States would have been guided by government officials attentive to the nation's major investors. The intertwined social and economic prescriptions of the national elite would have informed policies for the country as a whole. Bankers and lenders would have controlled the flow of credit. The pace of settlement would have been slower as land passed first to large speculators, as it did in the Federalist era, and then to the farming family.<sup>19</sup>

After the Presidential election of 1800, however, power passed into the hands of a political party whose ideology explicitly favoured the small farmer over gentleman landlords like Washington, and the emerging middle class over the traditional social and commercial elite. Jefferson's victory facilitated the unprecedented movement of the population westwards in the course of the nineteenth century.

Of course, the greatest obstacle to settlement by white Americans was the fact that the land was already inhabited, by people unwilling, for the most part, to relinquish it. The question of how to acquire Indian land, and how to behave to its possessors, was the most enduring and irresolvable political issue of the first fifty years of American history, more so even than slavery. No individual before Andrew Jackson had such a profound effect on the fate of the Native American population as Jefferson. A brief survey of his expressed opinions about the Indians, and his behaviour towards them, provides a useful introduction to the history of Indian-white relations in the period.

To Jefferson, as to so many of his contemporaries, the Indians seem to have existed most vividly as a useful image or metaphor, rather than as real

---

<sup>19</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 57.

people with a complex culture and valid legal and territorial claims. During the Revolution, Jefferson made propagandistic capital of the frequent, brutal Indian attacks on frontier families. Thomas Paine, in his influential pamphlet *Common Sense*, had characterised Britain as ‘that barbarous and hellish power, which hath stirred up the Indians and the Negroes to destroy us’.<sup>20</sup> When he came to draft the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, Jefferson also sought to arouse American indignation by yoking British political oppression with a physical, racially coded threat. Amongst the many offences of George III, he emphasised the fact that he ‘has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions of existence’. Jefferson had inscribed into one of the defining documents of the United States an implicit association of Native Americans, with both a threatening, imperialist power, and acts of brutal violence.

Jefferson’s willingness to demonise the Indians was tempered, however, by his deep-rooted nationalism. Although it was convenient, for certain purposes of propaganda, to conceive of the Indians and the British in a threatening axis, attacking republican white Americans from either side, in the aftermath of the war Jefferson became aware that the natives could be an equally potent means of demonstrating the moral and physical superiority of Americans over their former masters in Europe.

In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, published in 1785, Jefferson took up the cudgels to defend his native country from the slanders of Buffon and Raynal. Having comprehensively disproved Buffon’s claim that American animals were smaller and fewer in number and variety than those of Europe, Jefferson considers its validity in relation to human beings, citing Buffon’s extraordinary attack on the aborigines of America:

‘The savage is feeble, and has small organs of generation; he has neither hair nor beard, and no ardor whatsoever for his female; although swifter than the European because he is better accustomed to running, he is, on the other hand, less strong in body; he is also less sensitive, and yet more timid and cowardly; he has no vivacity, no activity of mind; the activity of his body is less an exercise, a voluntary motion, than a necessary action caused by want; relieve him of hunger and thirst, and you deprive him of the active principle of all his movements; he will rest stupidly upon his legs or lying down entire

---

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, ed. by Isaack Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 99.

days...they love their parents and children but little [...] Physical love constitutes their only morality; their heart is icy, their society cold, and their rule is harsh.' (*Portable TJ*, 93-94)

Jefferson was too devoted to the American cause to let such a misrepresentation go unchallenged, and was compelled to paint a positive picture of the Indians in response. The Indian, he states, is

neither more defective in ardor, nor more impotent with his female, than the white reduced to the same diet and exercise; he is brave, when an enterprise depends on bravery [...] he is affectionate to his children, careful of them, and indulgent in the extreme [...] his friendships are strong and faithful to the uttermost extreme [...] his vivacity and activity of mind is equal to ours in the same situation (95-96).

However, Jefferson's reasoned defence of the Indian's physical and mental abilities, stressing the importance of environment and education in determining the nature of a society, places him in another dilemma. The Indians, in Jefferson's view, are not racially inferior to whites (as he believed blacks to be) but, as Wallace puts it, 'culturally inferior, childlike in their savage state'.<sup>21</sup> They are the product of the environment in which they live. In order fully to deflect Buffon's insinuations, Jefferson also has to emphasise that this environment, although it generates certain admirable qualities in the red man, is itself subject to change, and has no role to play in the future United States. He argues that it is a physical necessity for the Indian population to civilize themselves, and adapt to the white way of life — otherwise, they will simply die out, unable to compete with the fertility and productivity of a stable, agricultural way of life, a point he reinforces with an analogy: 'Where food is regularly supplied, a single farm will shew more of cattle, than a whole country of forests can of buffaloes' (97).

Jefferson utilised his simplistic vision of Indian society to assert America's primacy in the political sphere. In a letter of 1787, the Indians are used as an image to celebrate the political emancipation of America, whilst also warning his countrymen to avoid the pitfalls of government into which Great Britain had fallen:

---

<sup>21</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 95.

I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments. Among the former, public opinion is in the place of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did any where. Among the latter, under pretence of governing they have divided their nations into two classes, wolves and sheep. (Jefferson to Edward Carrington, 'Jan. 16, 1787', *Portable TJ*, 415)

This association of the Indian way of life with natural virtue, deriving from their simplicity, skilfully undermines the attacks of European commentators by admitting the absence of 'sophistication' from the American way of life, and locating in this absence a source of moral strength inimical to the corruption engendered by hierarchical European forms of government. Jefferson never showed any awareness of the complex structures of tribal societies, and never inquired into the powerful bonds of kinship on which many were based. He preferred to simplify, in order to make the point that it is better to have a complete *absence* of government (as embodied by his Indians), than to adopt the European model.

Lucy Maddox has observed that one of the major sticking points of Indian-white relations in the early nineteenth century derived from the 'binary [...] conception of the possible modes of social and political organization', which was held by the overwhelming majority of white American society (Maddox, 9). The discussion of the 'Indian question' — that is, the fate of the native people still living in the eastern United States, attempting to maintain their tribal identity — inevitably polarized into an 'either/or' dichotomy. The position of the Indians thus tended to be discussed in terms of the rhetorical opposition between 'civilization' and 'extinction'.

Such a 'binary conception' existed in the early republic as well as the nineteenth century. The Federalist administrations of Washington and Adams insisted that no tribes would be forced from their land without their consent. Through the medium of Indian agents and missionaries, they encouraged the Indian population to embrace 'civilized' habits of farming, religion, and social organization. The inevitability of their decline and disappearance if they clung to 'primitive' traditions was repeatedly insisted upon, while a succession of land purchases were negotiated and formalized in treaties.

In practice, however, the treaty-making process was rife with confusion and corruption, and the United States spent the first half of the 1790s embroiled in a hugely expensive and frequently disastrous Indian war in the Ohio Valley. The tribes themselves were often divided in opinion as to whether they should sell their land, whether to adapt a white mode of living or preserve the old ways. Thus treaties were frequently made with tribes, or sections of tribes, who could not presume to speak for the population of an area as a whole. In the eyes of the whites, a treaty might be fair and binding, but to many Indians it would have no legitimacy whatsoever. Just as frequent was a tendency on the part of settlers to misconstrue, deliberately or otherwise, the terms of a treaty, and to trespass on lands to which they had no legal right. The inevitable reprisals from one side and then the other would continue unchecked, until the conflict escalated to such an extent that military force had to be exerted to suppress the Indians, and thus remove their lands by violent means. Whatever measures the government might take, this pattern was acted out again and again.

The cycle of frontier violence is perhaps best exemplified by Jefferson's well-known account, in the *Notes*, of the Shawnee chief John Logan, or Tachnedorus. While discussing of the intellectual and creative abilities of the Indians, Jefferson chooses Logan as an example of their skilled oratory: 'I may challenge the whole orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, and of any more eminent, to produce a single passage, superior to the speech of Logan, a Mingo chief, to Lord Dunmore, when governor of this state' (*Portable TJ*, 99).

Logan had been an advocate of cooperation and conciliation with the white settlers for some time, when 'a robbery and murder were committed on an inhabitant of the frontiers of Virginia, by two Indians of the Shawanee tribe'. A party set out for revenge, led by one Colonel Cresap, who was, according to Jefferson, 'a man infamous for the many murders he had committed on those much injured people' (99). Encountering a canoe full of women and children, Cresap and his party opened fire on them and killed them all, not knowing or caring that they were Logan's family. In the conflict that followed, known as Lord Dunmore's War, Logan sought revenge, and when the Indians eventually sued for peace, he alone chose not to surrender,



sending instead a messenger to the governor to deliver his famous address. Fiercely noble and elegiac, 'Logan's Lament', as it came to be known, outlines the injustice of his treatment, and the necessity he was under to avenge the murder of his family, ending with an acknowledgment of his essential powerlessness:

There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it: I have killed many: I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country, I rejoice at the beams of peace. But do not harbour a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? — Not one. (*Portable TJ*, 100)

However noble his behaviour or dignified his speech, it is clear that Logan, like the race for whom he is emblematically speaking, is fated either to be transformed beyond recognition or to disappear entirely. That Jefferson chose this particular story, and this speech, as a means of applauding the intellectual capacity of the Indians seems, then, particularly ironic, and also calculated to carry the complex double standards that apply throughout the history of Indian-white relations in the period.

Wallace has recently noted that Jefferson's retelling of Logan's story 'embodies a tragic, self-fulfilling philosophy of history that describes the process by which the fall of the Indian nations and the acquisition of their land would be accomplished'. In this sense, Logan's lament

may be regarded as an epitomizing event, to use anthropologist Raymond Fogelson's apt phrase — a narrative that encapsulates, in an account of a single, salient happening, the attitudes, values, feelings, and expectations of a community about important, complex, ongoing historical processes. It serves as a rationalization of the past and a vision of the future, a paradigm of destiny and a parable of fate. (Wallace, *Jefferson*, 2)

The impact of this 'epitomizing event' was undoubtedly significant, not for the immediate effect it had on Indian-white relations during Lord Dunmore's War, but in its transformation into narrative form by Jefferson, one of the most powerful and influential spokesmen for his country. Logan's Lament came to be considered a classic example of oratory in the United States, memorized and recited by schoolchildren well into the twentieth century.

As with the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson has written into a text with an ostensibly neutral purpose a sub-textual assumption about the future

of the Indian population of the United States. The *Notes* were widely read in both America and Europe after 1787; they provided people at home and abroad with a sense of what America was like, geographically, politically and socially. The opinions of this work were further legitimised by Jefferson's subsequent career, which lent authority to his descriptions. Thus his subtle articulation of the two alternatives which he would hold out to the native populations — civilization or extinction — had enormous cultural impact, and, guided by Jefferson's own hand, helped shape the course of Indian-white relations long after the *Notes* were published.

The story of Logan makes clear that Lord Dunmore's War was a by-product of aggression by both Indians and whites — the initial murder followed by the disproportionately brutal and indiscriminate response. The story exemplifies the main difficulty encountered by legislators trying to preserve peace on the frontiers, and to respect the original Indian title to the land. Henry Knox, Secretary of War under Washington and Adams, and the principal author of the Federalist civilization policy towards the Indians, was unequivocal in his criticism of frontier lawlessness:

The angry passions of the frontier Indians and whites, are too easily inflamed by reciprocal injuries, and are too violent to be controlled by the feeble authority of the civil power. [...] There can be neither justice or observance of treaties, where every man claims to be the sole judge in his own cause, and the avenger of his own supposed wrongs. (Wallace, *Jefferson*, 166-167)

Violence against Indians was frequently arbitrary and unprovoked, and to an easterner like Belknap, demonstrated that the whites on the frontier were more savage even than the Indians:

I hear a bad account of the Kentucke people. They are said to be almost as savage as the Indians, and make it their constant practice to kill every Indian they meet with. Major S. told me yesterday that a person from *Wheeling* had gone into the Indian country, and was piloted back by two Indians; that all the influence and authority of one of the principal men at that settlement was not enough to protect these two friendly Indians from being murdered by the people, but that he was obliged to conceal them, and in a dark night to conduct them out of the place on their way homeward. (Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 'Boston, 29 September, 1787', *CMHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, II, 493)

The obvious means of enforcing peace along the borders of the nation was to establish military outposts in key strategic locations, to dissuade both

sides from escalating minor differences into outright war. Such a plan had been strongly advocated by Hamilton in *The Federalist*:

Previous to the Revolution, and ever since the peace, there has been a constant necessity for keeping small garrisons on our Western frontier. No person can doubt that these will continue to be indispensable, if it should only be against the ravages and depredations of the Indians. (*The Federalist* No. 24, 118)

Although Hamilton does not make it explicit, such standing armies would also enable the government to control the ‘ravages and depredations’ of the whites.

Jefferson did not fundamentally disagree with this Federalist proposal. However, the political realities of the 1790s increasingly forced him to reject Hamilton’s solution, and to insist that such garrisons should not be built, whatever the cost to the Indians, or to the prospect of lasting peace on the frontier. To the inhabitants of the frontier, these outposts represented an infringement of their liberties (especially the liberty to kill Indians whenever they liked). As Imlay expressed it in *A Topographical Description*, ‘the patriotic heart mourns for the sacrilege committed upon their privileges with that impunity, which the patronage of a standing army affords to the executive power of a state’ (*TD*, 24).

As the bipartite political struggle developed between the Republicans and the Federalists, Jefferson’s political backing came increasingly from the west, from the remote, rural areas where Indian conflict was taking place. He could not possibly accede to the Federalist plan to install military outposts to control the regions which were his political power base; nor be seen openly to criticise the conduct of the very people who supported him. To quote Wallace, ‘Jefferson was more dedicated to freedom than to union, and this commitment placed him on the side of Indian-hating, riotous, even secessionist western frontiersmen rather than orderly, centralist eastern governments’ (Wallace, *Jefferson*, 16). His enlightened desire ‘to let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix, and become one people’ was marginalized by political necessity (Jefferson to Benjamin Hawkins [Superintendent for the Southern Indians], February 1823; quoted in Wallace, *Jefferson*, 223).

The long term effect of this dilemma became evident during his presidency, when Jefferson began to lean more and more towards the policy of Indian removal, which Andrew Jackson would eventually put into practice

some twenty-five years later. Part I of this thesis charts a variety of literary responses to some of the political and social issues discussed above. In doing so, they take us up to the point at which Jackson emerged onto the national political stage, recently vacated by Jefferson, with profound effect on the course of Indian-white relations, and the history of the American frontier.

## 2. *From Revolution to Constitution*

---

### I. ORDER OUT OF CONFUSION: JOHN FILSON'S PROVIDENTIAL VISION

In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, the territory of Kentucky, to the majority of easterners, was known for two things: the reputed fertility of its land, and the savagery of its Indian wars, which had only abated in 1782. If potential settlers were concerned about the value of the available land, they could turn to surveyors' reports for information. But if they were worried about the likelihood of being butchered and scalped, they were reliant on rumours and hearsay, or occasional published accounts of battles and captivity, notable for their sensational and gory detail. Although the reading public's appetite for such stories was seemingly endless, they preferred to experience them on the page than on the frontier, posing a serious problem for the speculators who had purchased huge tracts of land in Kentucky.

One such speculator was John Filson. Born in Pennsylvania in 1753, Filson trained as a land surveyor in Maryland, working as a teacher and surveyor in his native region during the Revolution, before moving to Kentucky in 1783. His intention being to profit through speculation, he acquired the title to large areas, but quickly realised that land was only valuable if people wanted to buy it. Filson's response to this situation was innovative and influential; he wrote a book to counteract Kentucky's negative image, presenting it as a region not only of enormous fertility, but, equally importantly, of security. Published in 1784, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* is a travel-guide with a difference; it works on an imaginative as well as a factual level, offering its readers information about the land, its rivers, its flora and fauna, but also addressing their fears. Having gratified his readers' taste for excitement and conflict, Filson reassures them of the current safety and suitability of Kentucky for settlement. His book instructs them in how the dangers of frontier life might be encountered, and promises that they will ultimately be overcome.

*Kentucke* claims an unusual degree of first-hand authority; this is not rumour or sensational invention, Filson stresses, but fact. As he was already

travelling extensively throughout the region to conduct land surveys, Filson took the opportunity of interviewing with many of the celebrated frontiersmen who had played vital roles in Kentucky's short but dramatic history. The book, he declares at the outset, has been sanctioned and assisted by three such distinguished figures — Daniel Boon, Levi Todd and James Harrod, who, 'at the request of the author of this book, and map, have carefully revised them and recommend them to the public'.<sup>1</sup>

Attached to the book is an original map of Kentucky, clearly showing the waterways and wilderness roads that link the region's towns and forts, to each other and to the East. Such a map was obviously a helpful tool for prospective settlers trying to visualise the territory and select their preferred sites, and, indeed, it was reprinted separately from the book on several occasions. Richard Slotkin, however, has suggested that the map is integral to the work as a whole. Arguing that *Kentucke* is modelled structurally on Puritan narratives and histories, Slotkin contends that

where the traditional sermon form begins with a biblical text, Filson takes the map of Kentucky for his text. His plan is to develop the meaning inherent in the land in much the same way that the Puritan sermon exfoliates the meaning in the biblical passage. The map itself is watermarked with a plowshare and the words "Work & be Rich." By holding the map up to the light, the alert reader can thus see behind the pattern of the map the substance of Filson's doctrine. (Slotkin, *RTV*, 272)

The actual text is divided into four sections — a brief history of Kentucky since its discovery in 1754; an appendix entitled 'The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon; containing a narrative of the Wars of Kentucke'; a topographical description of the country, concentrating particularly on its rivers; and an account 'Of the Indians', including 'their Manners and Customs, and Reflections on their Origin'. This structure delineates a careful progression, from the image of Kentucky as an untouched, fertile wilderness at its discovery, through the period of intense conflict which earned it the nickname of 'the Dark and Bloody Ground', to the state of harmony and rural bliss in which, Filson claims, it currently rests. The region's recent past is dramatised and given historical legitimacy by its identification with the

---

<sup>1</sup> John Filson, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (Wilmington: James Adams, 1784), 109. For consistency, I will follow Filson's spelling of Boon's surname; hence 'Boon' rather than 'Boone', as it often appears elsewhere.

Revolution — the settlement of new lands is associated with the creation of the nation itself. The Indians, meanwhile, are transformed in the course of the book from implacable foes of civilization to the subject of anthropological reflection; the act of numbering and classifying them renders them less alien, less threatening. The book ends with a vision of temperate agricultural abundance:

In your country, like the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, and all kinds of fruits, you shall eat bread without scarceness, and not lack anything in it; where you are neither chilled with the cold of capricorn, nor scorched with the burning heat of cancer; the mildness of air so great, that you neither feel the effects of infectious fogs, nor pestilential vapours. Thus, your country, favoured with the smiles of heaven, will probably be inhabited by the first people the world ever knew. (109)

‘The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon’ — described by Slotkin as ‘the first nationally viable statement of the myth of the frontier’ (269) — created the enduring image of Boon as the archetypal frontiersman, ‘an instrument ordained to settle the wilderness’ (*Kentucke*, 81). Like the map, this popular appendix had a life in print distinct from that of the rest of *Kentucke*, both at home and abroad. Daniel Boon, as he appears in this text, was the blueprint for the legion of frontier scouts who would inhabit the pages of American literature for the next seventy years or so. Resilient, resourceful, and honourable, Boon emerges from Filson’s narrative as a leader of men. The ‘Wars of Kentucke’ can easily be seen as a microcosmic re-enactment of the War of Independence (of which they were in fact a small part); and if so, Boon is the Washington of Kentucke.<sup>2</sup> In the minds of western settlers, as for Jefferson, both conflicts were struggles for the right to settle on God-given, fertile land, and develop it for agricultural purposes. Here, as elsewhere, the Indians are linked with the British in their opposition to this basic American right.

Slotkin’s account of *Kentucke* as a whole and of the Boon narrative in particular is exhaustive and compelling, and I have neither the space nor the

---

<sup>2</sup> Filson/Boon is careful to tell us that, although there had been attacks before, a concerted campaign of Indian hostilities does not begin until after the Declaration of Independence, when, ‘On the fourteenth day of July, 1776, two of Col. Calaway’s daughters and one of mine, were taken prisoners near the fort’ (60). Boon, incidentally, rescues the kidnapped girls.

desire to compete with it here. My intention is rather to note the capacity of Filson's narrative to subsume the horrors of frontier violence and Indian war into an overarching narrative of American empire, supervised by Providence. Later in the chapter I will contrast Filson's narrative device with two alternative texts from the 1780s, which refuse to legitimate the frontier experience in this way, and in which the wilderness is violent, uncontrollable, or simply regressive.

Slotkin observes that *Kentucke* as a whole draws on a variety of 'the major intellectual currents that had determined the evolution of America's vision of the frontier — Puritan Calvinism, deism, and the basic tenets of the physiocrats' (271). The ascetic self-reliance of the Puritans is synthesised with the physiocratic vision of nature as a source of virtue. Where Puritan sermons extrapolate moral conclusions from a biblical text, Filson takes the land itself (emblematically captured in his map) as the 'text' from which he learns, and in which God is made manifest. In 'The Adventures of Daniel Boon', Filson reworks the Puritan form to apply it to an American environment, which, though superficially hostile, he wishes to embrace. Where Puritan captives in the wilderness look inwards to overcome their despair, to their personal dependence on God, Boon looks outwards to the natural world surrounding him for his inspiration.

In the Boon narrative, the Providential abundance of nature develops and perfects Boon's internal virtue:

Thus situated, many hundred miles from our families in the howling wilderness, I believe few would have equally enjoyed the happiness we experienced. I often observed to my brother, You see now how little nature requires to be satisfied. Felicity, the companion of content, is rather found in our own breasts than in the enjoyment of external things: And I firmly believe it requires but a little philosophy to make a man happy in whatever state he is. This consists in a full resignation to the will of Providence; and a resigned soul finds pleasure in a path strewed with briars and thorns. (53)

Filson is effectively arguing here that neither of the competing frontier paradigms — the 'howling wilderness' and the land of plenty — are empirically 'true', but are the product of a state of mind. They are merely perceptual categories, and the former can be transformed into the latter by sheer force of will ('a little philosophy' and 'resignation to the will of Providence').



The adaptation of the often-sensational captivity narrative form to Filson's more commercial purpose is reflected in the text's inconsistent tone. Filson occasionally echoes the captivities' highly subjective and emotive language, to describe the brutality and violence of the Indians. Large sections of the narrative, however, are distinguished by a singular lack of emotional content, even when describing some of Boon's incredible feats of bravery or endurance, or moments of tragic personal loss:

[O]n the sixth day of October, 1780, I went in company with my brother to the Blue Licks; and, on our return home, we were fired upon by a party of Indians. They shot him, and pursued me, by the scent of their dog, three miles; but I killed the dog, and escaped. (73)

At these moments, instead of the familiar execrations of 'the savage', the narrative retreats into detail — precise dates of departure or arrival, accurate estimates of the duration of sieges, of the length of journeys, or of the number of dead lost in a particular battle. Boon's description of landscape, whilst making a tentative, pseudo-romantic attempt at the sublime, betrays in its vocabulary his surveyor's fascination with boundaries:

I had gained the summit of a commanding ridge, and, looking round with astonishing delight, beheld the ample plains, the beauteous *tracts* below. On the other hand, I *surveyed* the famous river Ohio that rolled in silent dignity, *marking the western boundary of Kentucke* with inconceivable grandeur. (55, my italics)

Such a utilitarian approach to the landscape was characteristic of Europeans attempting to reduce the magnitude and grandeur of the American scene to manageable and comprehensible terms. In his compulsion to list and quantify, and his constant recourse to Providence and nature for sustenance, Boon's adventures in the wilderness recall a text that shares many of Filson's commercial preoccupations — Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The comparison is evoked by the stretches of solitude Boon experiences — for instance, during Boon's first trip to Kentucky, his brother returns to the settlements for supplies, leaving him, 'without bread, salt or sugar, without company of my fellow creatures, or even a horse or dog. I confess,' adds Boon, echoing Crusoe, 'I never before was under greater necessity of exercising philosophy and fortitude' (53). And yet this text is peculiarly

American in its emphasis on finding pleasure in overcoming obstacles, and the enjoyment of a life devoid of superfluities.<sup>3</sup>

Boon's example of fortitude in the face of hardship, and resignation to Providential will (familiar also from Puritan captivities), transforms a narrative of bloodshed and tragedy into one of triumph. It is a rhetorical strategy employed repeatedly in the text, often as a means of redirecting attention from a scene of particular horror. When a party of savages attack 'the house of a poor defenceless family, in which was only a Negro man, a woman and her children', the slave struggles with one of the Indians who has entered the house, and the woman cuts off his head. But rather than dwelling on this extraordinary act of violence, Filson chooses to philosophise: 'Thus Providence, by the means of this Negro, saved the whole of this poor family from destruction' (79).

The combined effect of the precise attention to dates, dispassionate description of violence, and emphasis on a Providential plan, is to make the progress of settlement, even in the midst of war, seem orderly and rational. Although Boon occasionally describes the effects of violence in an emotive manner (such as the dreadful defeat the Kentuckians suffered at the Blue Licks), these sections are mournful interludes in a narrative of war, which render the triumphant conclusion all the more powerful. Random acts of violence are absorbed into a controlled vision, in which they become a necessary part of forging a bountiful American nationhood:

What thanks, what ardent and ceaseless thanks are due to that all-superintending Providence which has turned a cruel war into peace, brought order out of confusion, made the fierce savages placid, and turned away their hostile weapons from our country! May the same Almighty Goodness banish the accursed monster, war, from all lands, with her hated associates, rapine and insatiable ambition. Let peace, descending from her native heaven, bid her olives spring amidst the joyful nations; and plenty, in league with commerce, scatter her blessings from her copious hand. (81)

Despite its popularity, and its lasting and substantial influence on American literature, *Kentucke* failed to make its author a rich man. Within three years of its publication, Filson had lost the title to most of his lands, due

---

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Rush had suggested, in a letter to John Adams (Philadelphia, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1780), that the American character flourishes when opposed or oppressed: 'Our republics cannot exist long in prosperity. We require adversity and appear to possess most of the republican spirit when most depressed', Rush, *Letters*, I, 253.

to the legal entanglements, which so often followed on the heels of land speculation. Filson's fate after the publication of *Kentucke* imparts a bleak irony to this narrative of fortitude and nation-building. Forced to return to land surveying to make a living, he undertook an expedition into Kentucky along the Ohio River — the very region that had looked so ripe for settlement on his map — in the employ of John Cleves Symmes, the prime mover of the Miami Purchase settlement. According to Symmes, he was deserted by a group of Kentuckians who had promised to escort the party down the Miami River; after which Filson (eschewing Boon's example) became so nervous about continuing on the expedition that he too abandoned Symmes, who later wrote that 'Mr Filson publisher of the Map of Kentucky was killed in three hours after he left us, by a single Indian'.<sup>4</sup>

## II. ANN ELIZA BLEECKER'S REVERSED PROSPECT

I will now turn to a Revolutionary text in which the author cannot transform the personal cost of frontier conflict so easily into a celebration of white American civilization and progress. *The History of Maria Kittle* by Ann Eliza Bleecker was first published in 1793 in a posthumous collection of her works, incorporating two short novels, and her surviving poetry and letters. It had been written, however, more than ten years earlier, during the Revolution, and thus has a strong claim to be the earliest American novel. The *Posthumous Works* was published at the instigation of her daughter, Mrs Margaretta V. Faugères, who provides the fullest and most reliable account of her mother's life.

Ann Eliza Bleecker was born in New York in October 1752, the youngest child of one Mr Brandt Schuyler, and became 'passionately fond' of books at a young age.<sup>5</sup> Although she apparently started writing poetry very early, there is nothing extant earlier than 1769, when she married John J. Bleecker, of New Rochelle. After living in Poughkeepsie for between a year and two years, the couple moved to Tomhanick, also in upper New York State, eighteen miles from Albany. Here they built an idyllic house and garden, where they lived with their children, Ann Eliza's mother, and her half-sister Miss Ten-

<sup>4</sup> Symmes to Jonathan Dayton, 'Limestone, October the 12<sup>th</sup>, 1788', in *The Correspondence of John Cleves Symmes*, ed. by Beverley W. Bond, Jr (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 46.

<sup>5</sup> *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1793), i.

Eyck (to whom she sent and addressed much of her poetry), until 1777. At this point, to use her daughter's words, 'the clamorous thunders of *War* frightened them from their peaceful dwelling, and the blasting hand of *Desolation* dispersed them as a flock in the desert' (v). The approach of the British forces under Burgoyne forced her to flee on foot with her family while her husband was away in Albany. Although they were eventually reunited with Mr Bleecker, in the course of their exile from Tomhanick, her mother, her sister, and her baby daughter Abella all sickened and died — a series of losses from which Bleecker seems never to have fully recovered, and the memory of which infects all her writing. In August 1781, her husband and two of his men were captured by 'a party from Canada' — 'three Tories, one Hessian, and two British soldiers' — but were fortunately rescued and returned within six days (Bleecker to Miss V——, Albany, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1781, *Posthumous Works*, 136). Remaining in Tomhanick until the peace, she shortly thereafter, in spring 1783, revisited her native city, and was appalled by its devastation, and by the death or departure of most of her old friends and acquaintances. Returning home broken-hearted, her health rapidly declined, and she died on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1783.

This melancholy life feeds directly into her writing, which depicts the invasion and destruction of an idyllic rural home by the demonic forces of war, conjured in the form of the savage Indians. Much of the force of Bleecker's work comes from the contrast between her insistent classical personification of landscape ('Phoebus', 'Echo', 'Phosphor', 'Ceres') and the invasive physical presence of the 'tawny natives'. Bleecker's rural paradise is fragile, and having tasted its pleasures, its loss is more keenly felt. Personal loss is the defining element of her work, and she struggles to palliate the depth of that loss by reflecting on the cause of liberty for which it was incurred. Violence, far from seeming to her the evidence of a providential order in the universe, erupts chaotically and inexplicably out of the dark woods by which her home is ringed; and the Indians are configured purely as the vehicles of this random destructive force.

This is most apparent in her poetry, which juxtaposes the rural idyll of the Bleecker's Tomhanick estate with the violence of frontier warfare. The calm

fertility of life before the War is conjured up panoramically, as in the following extract from 'A Pastoral Dialogue':

Look from this point, where op'ning glades reveal  
 The glassy Hudson shining 'twixt the hills;  
 There many a structure dress'd the steepy shore  
 And all beyond were daily rising more:  
 The bending trees with annual fruit did smile,  
 Each harvest sure, for fertile is the soil.  
 ('A Pastoral Dialogue', ll. 93-98, *Posthumous Works*, 258)

However, the poem goes on to undermine this way of describing the American landscape, and to suggest its inadequacy. As Robert Clark has argued, the prospect was not a conventional means of describing landscape in America until after the Revolution. As far back as Columbus and Raleigh, and as recently as Jefferson or Filson, writers had commented on the beauty of a particular scene, without attempting to recreate that scene for the reader, preferring to catalogue the dimensions of American rivers and mountains, concentrating, as we have seen with Filson, on their utility. The aestheticised description of a 'prospect' as a response to landscape emerged in Europe during the eighteenth century. Unlike the Jeffersonian catalogue, the prospect, in Clark's words,

constructs readers by instructing them in their subjective response, placing attention on the aesthetic rather than the utilitarian qualities of objects perceived. The prospect brings elements into relationship; it harmonizes, hierarchizes, stabilizes and censors, providing an image of the world that protects the interests of those in power because wherever utility appears within it [...] it is masked, and wherever history and economy are mentioned, they appear as ancient.<sup>6</sup>

The prospect, obviously, came to be important for American writers and artists after the Revolution for precisely these reasons. Albert Boime makes the following point about landscape artists, which is equally true of nineteenth-century writers who attempt to describe the experience of viewing a landscape, rather than merely record its dimensions:

The privileged nineteenth-century American's experience of the sublime in the landscape occurred on the heights. The characteristic viewpoint of

---

<sup>6</sup> Robert Clark, 'The Absent Landscape of America's Eighteenth Century' in *Views of American Landscapes*, ed. by Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 97.

contemporary American landscapists traced a visual trajectory from the uplands to a scenic panorama below [...] This Olympian bearing metonymically embraced past, present, and future, synchronically plotting the course of Empire. The experience on the heights and its literary and aesthetic translation became assimilated to popular culture and remained and continues to remain a fundamental component of the national dream. As such, it is inseparable from nationalist ideology.<sup>7</sup>

The prospect view provided a means of regulating and controlling the potentially disruptive forces latent in America's natural environment, and imparted to the American scene a sense of grandeur and history.

To Bleecker, however, writing amidst the chaos of revolution, such a sense of order was illusory, and however desirable it might be to impose the prospect view over an American scene, her poetry implies that it would inevitably be disrupted by violence. Julie Ellison, defining the 'prospect' as 'an aestheticized vista that signifies leisure', notes that

Bleecker's prospective poetry is altered from its British precedents by the fact that war, racial conflict, and national destiny do not observe their habitual remoteness on the poet's horizon. Rather, they break through the frame of leisured sensibility and require different kinds of representation.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, in 'A Pastoral Dialogue', shortly after the passage already quoted, Bleecker writes:

Down rush'd the tawny natives from the hill,  
And every place with fire and murder fill;  
Arm'd with the hatchet and a flaming brand,  
They soon *reverse the prospect* of the land:  
(ll. 109-112, in *Posthumous Works*, 258, my italics)

The 'tawny natives' intrude from the edges of the frame, disrupting the composition of the aestheticised vista by advancing from background to foreground, thereby 'reversing the prospect'. By refusing to remain passively objectified by the observer's gaze, the Indians shatter the illusion of control over the landscape.

If, in literary terms, Bleecker's poetry embodies the collision of a conventionally English rhetorical voice with a dangerous, disruptive

---

<sup>7</sup> Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Julie Ellison, 'Race and Sensibility in the Early Republic: Ann Eliza Bleecker and Sarah Wentworth Morton' in *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism and Bibliography*, (September 1993), 65:3, 450.

American landscape, then in *The History of Maria Kittle* we see the author trying to resolve this discrepancy of form and content by adapting a uniquely American genre, the captivity narrative, to the pattern of English sentimental fiction. The captivity genre afforded a ready-made instrument for the depiction of cultural conflict and the decimation of 'leisured sensibility', providing a vehicle for the fear, anger, anxiety and grief that Bleecker sought to express.

*Maria Kittle* — taking the form of a letter from Bleecker to her sister-in-law Susan Ten Eyck — is set during the French and Indian War of 1756-1763, and purports to be a true account of the life of one of Bleecker's neighbours, recently deceased. Although the work is almost certainly fictional, the opening makes clear that the reader's sympathy should be more fully engaged by the text's supposed biographical authenticity:

However fond of novels and romances you may be, the unfortunate adventures of one of my neighbours, who died yesterday, will make you despise that fiction, in which, knowing the subject to be fabulous, we can never be so truly interested. While this lady was expiring, Mrs C—— V——, her near kinswoman, related to me her unhappy history, in which I shall now take the liberty of interesting your benevolent and feeling heart. (19)

The narrative describes the traumatic experiences of Maria Kittle, who, after a brief period of happiness in a rural home similar to Bleecker's own Tomhanick, has that idyll shattered by an Indian attack. Hearing rumours of the assault, the family had prepared to evacuate, but were persuaded to stay, by a friendly Indian's promise of protection. However, whilst out hunting, Mr Kittle's brother Peter is killed by hostile Indians. Mr Kittle immediately heads to the nearest settlement to procure a wagon to transport his family to safety, promising to return within the hour. Almost as soon as he leaves, however, the Indian attack on the Kittles' home begins, and a scene of carnage ensues. Maria and her brother Henry, the only survivors, are taken captive. The narrative, after a brief pause to describe Mr Kittle's reaction to the devastation of his home and family, follows the captives as they are marched north to Montreal, where they are handed over to the French Governor, and treated with great kindness by the women of the city. Eventually, Mr Kittle arrives in Montreal, and is joyfully reunited with his wife.

As a reworking of the familiar providential captivity form, on the model of Mary Rowlandson, this short narrative assumes both religious and political meaning. The language of the text is insistently biblical, and, superficially, traces a movement from an Old Testament to a New Testament world-view. We are also clearly meant to see parallels between the French and Indian war, during which the story is set, and the Revolution through which Bleecker is living as she writes. Finally, the narrative also instructs its readers how best to respond, not only to misfortune, but also to accounts of the misfortune of others — in effect, it tells its readers how it should be read.

The trope of infanticide occurs in many of the ‘true’ captivity narratives that were so eagerly read in the colonial period and early republic. Its roots almost certainly lie in historical fact. The slaughter of innocent children occurs in most early accounts of Indian atrocity, and the failure, or inability, of Indians to distinguish between men (acceptable objects of violence) and women or children, when waging war, was one of the most frequently repeated accusations levelled against them. However, Bleecker’s appropriation of this trope for her fictional captivity is more than another attempt to give her tale ‘authenticity’. The death of Bleecker’s own baby in 1777, tempts one to read the infanticidal scenes in *Maria Kittle* as expressions of the author’s private maternal nightmare. Infanticide, however, also has a definite biblical significance. Unsurprisingly, it is usually a manifestation of divine displeasure:

And Hazeal said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.<sup>9</sup>

*Maria Kittle*’s use of such imagery imparts scriptural meaning to Maria’s sufferings, and the presence of the Indians transforms the American environment into the arena for a metaphysical battle between heaven and hell, between the Children of Israel and the Philistines, a battle in which God is

---

<sup>9</sup> II Kings 8. 12. The speaker here is the prophet Elisha, and one might speculatively suggest further parallels between this biblical text and Bleecker’s work. Several chapters earlier, Elisha had brought a dead child back to life; and at the beginning of this chapter, he warns the mother of the child to take her family to live elsewhere, ‘for the Lord hath called for a famine; and it shall come upon the land seven years’ (II Kings 8. 1). When Bleecker sent *Maria Kittle* to Susan Ten Eyck, the war was entering its seventh year.



repeatedly invoked, but never shows his hand. When Mr Kittle finds his home devastated and his family either murdered or captured, his language implies that he has entered a kind of hell-on-earth: “O hell! hell!” he cried, “you cannot inflict torments so exquisite as those I now suffer!” (45).

The demonic nature of the Indians is further suggested by their insistent association with fire, again in accordance with the biblical prophecy. The ‘elderly savage’ who promises to protect Maria and her family offers to ‘guard this wood with a wall of fire’ (24). The ‘wall of fire’ that will keep enemies out is inverted during the attack, when Anna, Maria’s eldest child, is trapped within the burning house by ‘sheets of flame’. The fate of Anna seems almost an ironic punishment for Maria’s vengeful prayers, and religious doubts, uttered moments earlier:

‘O hell! are not thy flames impatient to cleave the center and engulf these wretches in thy ever burning waves? are there no thunders in heaven — no avenging Angel — no God to take notice of such Heaven defying cruelties?’ (38)

Fire, however, seems to be the Indians’ natural element, obedient to their will. The cultivated landscape through which the captives travel is incinerated by their passing:

They continually passed through a scene of conflagration, the savages firing every cottage in their way, whose mournful blaze catching the dry fields of grain, would scorch off hundreds of acres in a few moments, and form a burning path for their destroyers. (51-52)

The Kittles’ suffering may be Old Testament in character, but their prayers to an interventionist God are repeatedly shown to be ineffective, even counter-productive. At one point, Maria incorrectly believes the retribution she has requested is actually taking place, when a ‘large meteor, or fiery exhalation’ strikes the earth near to the Indian party and their prisoners, causing an earthquake. The Indians cower, believing it to be a ‘fiery dragon on his passage to his den’ (56-58); and Maria flees in the conviction that God is about to punish the murderers of her family. She is found on the summit of a nearby hill, on her knees, praying. This juxtaposition yokes the Indian superstition with Maria’s own religious preconceptions; both are shown to be misreadings of natural phenomena.

The Indians in this text receive no retribution; they successfully sell their captives in Montreal and then vanish from the narrative. Maria and her husband are not solaced by the thought that the murder of their children has been punished. 'Thirsting for revenge', Mr Kittle joins the army after the devastation of his family; but despite considerable worldly success, remains a tormented man until his pilgrimage to Montreal. Experiencing a presentiment that Henry (not Maria) may still be alive, he travels to Canada despite the discouragement of his comrades, and is duly rewarded for his faith: 'while (like the Apostles [*sic*] friends) he believed not for joy, he was conducted to her arms, and found his bliss wonderfully real' (87). Maria, meanwhile, stops demanding vengeance, and behaves with meek humility in Mrs D——'s household. She too, is rewarded in the narrative for the exhibition of this Christian virtue.

*The History of Maria Kittle*, then, contains elements of religious allegory. The Kittles are tested, and succumb to base instincts of revenge; but over time, they cultivate the correct Christian response. The difficulty with such a reading is that the allegory is not sustained; indeed, its presence in the text is almost certainly a generic inheritance. Captivity narratives customarily utilised a system of Puritan typology to stigmatise the Indians and impart providential meaning to the sufferings of the captives themselves. So integral are such eisegetical 'readings' to Puritan captivities that it would be difficult to absorb their formal tone and content without osmotically acquiring remnants of their theology as well. This is not to say that Bleecker is unaware of the inheritance, or that she does not deliberately impart a degree of Providential meaning to the text; rather that she is not entirely committed to this schematic development, in the way, for example, that Mary Rowlandson is. The majority of the text is an expression of uncertain or lost faith, and the 'happy ending' (brought about by Mr Kittle's vague and inaccurate 'fancy', and pure coincidence) fails to disguise or resolve these doubts. The text's insistent scepticism about the working of divine justice when confronted by such atrocities — "O God! O Christ! Can you bear to see this!" (37) — are much more powerful than the conventional Christian resolution.

The failure of *The History of Maria Kittle* convincingly to deliver its religious message may be explained by the presence of an entirely separate, secular level of meaning within the text, superscribed on the religious allegory like a palimpsest. Bleecker must have sensed a correlation between her own sense of loss and a widespread public unease, occasioned by the violent separation of the American colonies from their parent state. Searching for a metaphor for the ‘unnatural’ conduct of Britain to her American subjects, political leaders also hit upon the emotive image of infanticide. In 1765, the young John Adams wrote

We have been told, that [...] “Britain is the mother and we are the children, that a filial duty and submission is due from us to her.” [...] But admitting we are the children; have not children a right to complain when their parents are attempting to break their limbs, to administer poison, or to sell them to enemies for slaves? Let me entreat you to consider, will the mother be pleased when you represent her as deaf to the cries of her children? When you compare her to the infamous miscreant, who lately stood on the gallows for starving her child? When you resemble her to Lady Macbeth in Shakespear [*sic*], (I cannot think of it without horror),  
 Who “had given suck, and knew  
 How tender ’t was to love that babe that milked her.”  
 But yet, who could, “even while ’t was smiling in her Face,  
 Have plucked her Nipple from the boneless Gums,  
 And dash’d the Brains out.”<sup>10</sup>

Maria Kittle, unlike Lady Macbeth, does not kill her own child, but the identification of the emergent American nation with a helpless baby informs Bleecker’s narrative, here tapping into a pool of anxieties about the vulnerability of the States: that they might be destroyed by internal conflict (Maria’s baby, William, suffocates during a violent tug-of-war between Maria and a ‘savage’, which almost literally rips him in half), or by further violent incursion from without (released in despair by Maria, the savage ‘instantly dashed his little forehead against the stones’ [37]). This latter fear is even more vividly articulated in the gruesome fate of Maria’s sister-in-law, Comelia, who has her unborn child ripped from her womb:

His sanguinary soul was not yet satisfied with blood; he deformed her lovely body with deep gashes; and, tearing her unborn babe away, dashed it to pieces against the stove wall; with many additional circumstances of infernal cruelty. (30)

---

<sup>10</sup> John Adams, ‘A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law’, in *The True Sentiments of America &c.* (London: I. Almon, 1768), 134-136.

In this period, American virtue was frequently represented by a female figure — Columbia, Liberty — and here Comelia embodies American womanhood, rhetorically heightening the division between virtuous America and the demonic axis of Britain and her ‘black ally’, the savage Indians. The perceived attack is two-pronged, targeting existing white American society (‘her lovely body’), but also future generations (‘her unborn babe’).

Ellison has argued that ‘unlike some other practitioners of captivity rhetoric, Bleecker does not use the association with the Indians to demonise the British, whom she regards as still capable of politeness. Rather, she locates the whole terror of the war in the Iroquois’ (451-452). As I have argued above, however, Bleecker’s use of the infanticidal trope exploits contemporary rhetoric to implicate Britain in the attack on innocent women and children. Moreover, by locating the action in the French and Indian War, Bleecker is deliberately reassessing colonial values. In the earlier conflict, the French were enemies of colonial Anglo-Americans, whereas during the Revolution, they were allies of the United States. The French at Montreal, in the later part of the *Maria Kittle*, are shown to be humane because they are now allies; whereas the British, the enemies of the Revolution, but ostensibly on the same side as Maria, are largely absent as sympathetic figures in the narrative.<sup>11</sup> Mrs Bratt, a former neighbour whom Maria meets in Canada, explicitly rejects the colonial attribution of national characteristics: ‘I now reject [...] all prejudices of education. From my infancy I have been taught that the French were a cruel and perfidious enemy, but I have found them quite the reverse’ (73). The complete absence of tribal distinctions in the text, by contrast, allows for the straightforward elision of Indian identity between the two periods.

Bleecker critiques the conventional Rousseauesque ‘noble savage’, and mocks the notion of Indian eloquence, as articulated, for instance, in Jefferson’s account of Logan, or in Sarah Wentworth Morton’s narrative poem *Ouâbi* (1790). During Maria’s captivity, one of her Indian captors,

---

<sup>11</sup> The one possible exception to this is Mrs D——, a benevolent ‘English woman’ with whom Maria stays in Montreal. However, it is not clear whether ‘English’ means specifically ‘from England’, or more generally, ‘English-speaking’, as opposed to French. The term ‘American’ does not occur as a separate designation in the text, so I am inclined to think that Mrs D—— is in fact a colonial American woman.

alarmed by the approach of a deer, nearly kills her rather than allowing her to be rescued. His conduct on discovering his mistake is initially incongruous, given the previous accounts of indiscriminate violence:

Though an uncivilized inhabitant of the forest, he blushed at his precipitancy, and returning the instrument of death to his girdle, after some hesitation made this apology:

“Maria, this sudden discovery is well for you; I thought we had been pursued, and we never suffer our prisoners to be re-taken; however, I was imprudent to attempt your life before there was a probability of your being rescued.” (52-53)

The language here is almost courtly, but the intention is parodic. The gulf between the genteel tone of the speaker, and the sinister meaning of his words, signals Bleecker’s ridicule of the honour-system by which the Indians are reputed to live. Noble bearing and fine words, she implies, cannot redeem a race who slaughter innocent women and children.<sup>12</sup> Bleecker offers the reader a concise summary of the narrative’s racial politics, in the words of Madame De Roche, one of the benevolent Frenchwomen who befriends Maria after her release:

“Would to Heaven!” said Madame De R., “that the brutal nations were extinct, for never — never can the united humanity of France and Britain compensate for the horrid cruelty of their savage allies.” (81)

As I have already implied, the text undergoes a marked transformation once Maria arrives in Montreal. The Indians disappear, along with the symbolic landscapes they inhabit; and the narrative shifts into a more conventional sentimental form. Of particular interest is a scene in which a group of women visits Maria, and she and two other American captives are invited to narrate their stories. The women respond with ‘tears, and pleasing melancholy’ (69); they actually *enjoy* hearing about the misfortunes of others, and the narrators also find the experience beneficial. These stories remind us that the whole narrative is in epistolary form, addressed to ‘Susan’, the ideal female reader. Twice in the text, Bleecker addresses ‘Susan’ directly, each

---

<sup>12</sup> The further the captives (and the narrative) get from the scene of the massacre, the less impersonal the Indian characters become; but any acts of generosity or civility they perform are instantly undermined. For instance, after Maria and Henry are beaten by Indian women upon arrival at their village, an ‘old Indian’ gives them a healing drink and poultice for their bruises; but the positive impression is effaced by the immediate descent of their Indian hosts into drunkenness.

time apologising for having allowed the focus to shift from Maria, to attend to the structural necessity of accounting for her husband. These authorial interjections assume that the female reader is not really interested in the activities of the male protagonist, so deeply involved is she with the heroine. By embedding two further stories within the main narrative, which already has two putative frames (the retelling of Maria's story by her 'near kinswoman', and Bleecker's letter to Susan), the reader is confronted by a succession of women retelling, listening to, or reading about the experiences of other women. These women form a community of suffering, empathy and benevolence that defies national and political allegiances, and is essentially feminine.<sup>13</sup> We, like them, are meant to relish the 'pleasing melancholy' provoked by the tale, to use it as a spur to our 'benevolent and feeling heart'.

However, as with the religious allegory, the extreme events described in the earlier part of the narrative render the generic sentimentality of this scene unconvincing. The problem is one of proportion. In most sentimental fiction, 'pleasing melancholy' is an appropriate response to suffering — to stories of bankruptcy, poverty, bereavement, seduction and suicide. There is usually, however, a moral to the story, a sense that the various fates of the unfortunate sufferers have been brought upon themselves. In *Maria Kittle*, that moral tone is absent, because of the apparently random nature of the violence. Moreover, shedding a quiet tear is simply not enough when confronted with accounts of the indiscriminate slaughter of whole families. The inadequacy, of course, does not lie in the women themselves, but in the form. Sentimental fiction cannot accommodate the extremes of American frontier experience, and the hurried resolution of the story seems a tacit acknowledgement of this.

Ultimately, *Maria Kittle* is pessimistic about the prospects of white Americans settling the wilderness. The sense of loss underpinning the narrative is too intense to be balanced by joy at the potential of the new nation, at the prospect of hard-won liberty, or even of Christian redemption. Even Bleecker's poems, which, freed from the historical restrictions of *Maria Kittle*, are more overtly patriotic, cannot fully reconcile the personal tragedy of the conflict with its result. Both *The History of Maria Kittle* and Bleecker's

---

<sup>13</sup> Not universal, however. Female sensibility is shown to be unique to civilized society, when Maria, having looked forward to sympathetic female company in the Indian settlement, receives only verbal and physical abuse (59-60).

poetry display an early awareness of the inadequacy of European literary models, introducing the conventions of sentimental literature to a specifically American genre and setting, and allowing the natural incongruity to emerge. They reflect the breakdown of colonial structures when dealing, in particular, with a frontier environment lacking the stability necessary for domestic happiness. Bleecker dismantles the familiar forms of prospective poetry with literal incursions of horrific violence, and articulates the need to find a non-domestic, anti-sentimental mode to represent the experiences of the American pioneer; but she does not use these insights to construct a way of writing which is recognisably new.

### III. THE 'PANTHER CAPTIVITY' AND SHAYS'S REBELLION

Ann Eliza Bleecker gives no instances of accommodation to the wilderness, no point of common ground between garden and desert in which a white woman might make a home, and retain her civilized status. And even though Filson's Boon declares his pride in 'my wife and daughter being the first white women that ever stood on the banks of the Kentucke river' (*Kentucke*, 60), as soon as she believes him to be dead she returns to North Carolina, clearly feeling that the frontier is no place for a woman without a husband, or perhaps indicating that she does not share her husband's zeal for such an arduous way of life.

There were, however, alternative constructions of women in a wilderness environment, in which they were not merely the victims of violence, or silent, reluctant accessories to the expansion of patriarchal American society. Several texts, while not depicting active female participation in the traditionally male activities of Indian-fighting or exploration, entertained the possibility that American women might be capable of adapting to the extraordinary demands of frontier settlement.<sup>14</sup> Instances of female resistance to violent abduction occur in genuine captivity narratives, as far back as Cotton Mather's account of Hannah Dustan, who, in 1697, killed and then scalped an entire Indian

---

<sup>14</sup> Which of course they were. It has been estimated that less than one percent of adult pioneers were single — see James E. Davis, *Frontier America, 1800-1840: A Comparative Demographic Analysis of the Settlement Process* (Glendale: H.H. Clark, 1977), 57-61. Westward expansion, in reality, was driven by families, not by solitary scouts and hunters. Boon himself, though Filson makes no mention of the fact, had sixteen children.

family who were holding her captive.<sup>15</sup> We may also recall Filson's account of the woman who decapitated an Indian with the help of her slave. Slotkin argues that Daniel Boone provided a crucial myth-figure for the early Republic, assisting and instructing actual pioneers in their engagement with difficult frontier conditions; but as Annette Kolodny correctly points out, women, too, 'required imaginative constructs through which to accommodate themselves to the often harsh realities of the western wilderness'.<sup>16</sup>

Bleecker demonstrates the failure of sentimental fiction to accommodate the needs of a society existing on the margins of the 'civilized'; but writers of the early Republic could not entirely abandon the paradigm of virtue provided by the figure of genteel womanhood. The perceived danger was that if a woman transgressed into traditionally male spheres of activity (such as Indian-fighting) in a context in which 'civility' was already in danger of attainment from 'savage' influences, then she might lose the traits of feminine virtue. I have already noted the remarkable swiftness with which Filson, in describing how his nameless woman decapitates an Indian brave, passes over the actual performance of this physically demanding task, preferring instead to portray it as the intervention of Providence. Filson wants to avoid any suggestion that women in the West become masculinised by the hardships that they undergo, so ingrained is the sentimental notion of what a 'civilized' woman ought and ought not to do. The usual means of addressing this problem, in writing about the frontier, was to keep the wilderness as a uniquely masculine zone; women, if they enter it at all, will necessarily be in danger of attack, and of losing or blurring their identity, whereas male hunters define themselves in relation to the untamed forests or plains.

One text from this early period has been credited with attempting to undercut the categorisation of the West as an arena for masculine self-discovery. *A Surprising account of the Discovery of a lady who was taken by the Indians in the year 1777, and after making her escape, she retired to a lonely Cave, where she lived nine years*, to give it one of its various titles, was

---

<sup>15</sup> Cotton Mather, *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances. A Brief Discourse on the Matter and Method, of that Humiliation which would be an Hopeful Symptom of our Deliverance from Calamity. Accompanied and Accommodated with a Narrative, of a Notable Deliverance Lately Received by Some English Captives, from the Hands of Cruel Indians* (Boston: Green & Allen, 1697).

<sup>16</sup> Annette Kolodny, 'Turning the Lens on "The Panther Captivity": A Feminist Exercise in Practical Criticism', in *Critical Inquiry*, Chicago, 1981 (Winter), 8:2, 331.



first published in Benjamin West's *Bickerstaff's Almanack for 1788*,<sup>17</sup> the author being one Abraham Panther, almost certainly a pseudonym. The 'Panther Captivity' as it thankfully came to be known, despite existing only in the form of pamphlets printed mainly on tiny village presses, became widely popular, going through twenty-four editions in the New England area between its publication and 1814.

This short narrative takes the form of a letter, written by Panther at the request of a friend, whom he obliges with an account of his recent journey to the West. Panther had set out with a friend, Mr Camber, 'to penetrate the Western Wilderness as far as prudence and safety would permit'.<sup>18</sup> Their expedition proceeds according to plan, and as Kolodny has observed, the tone echoes the early sections of Filson's narrative, in the depiction of an exotic region of immense fertility. While exploring this region, they hear singing; following the sound, 'to our inexpressible amazement, we beheld a most beautiful young LADY sitting near the mouth of a cave' (86-87). When they approach her, her dog barks, and she faints in terror. After recovering, she tells the travellers her story.

She was born near Albany in 1760, to a rich father. When she was fifteen, her father employed a young clerk, who fell in love with her, and she with him. Knowing her father would not approve of their liaison, they attempted to conceal it from him, but inevitably failed. The young lovers eloped, and upon discovering that her father 'had hired several men to search the country in pursuit of us, that he threatened vengeance on us both, and declared that he would be the death of the man who carried off his daughter', they fled 'further back into the country' (88). After four days, however, they were captured by Indians, 'who led us about two miles and then barbarously murdered my lover, cutting and mangling him in the most inhuman manner' (88). Almost without trying, the lady managed to escape from the Indians, who neglected to guard her, or, apparently, to pursue her. After wandering for fourteen days, she encountered 'a man of a gigantic figure', who took her back to his cave, and tried to force her to sleep with him. When she refused, he tied her up and

---

<sup>17</sup> Printed by J. Trumbull in Norwich, Connecticut, during October, 1787. An earlier edition was advertised in the *Middlesex Gazette*, May 21, 1787, to be printed by Woodward and Green, of Middletown, Connecticut, but there is no extant copy of this printing.

<sup>18</sup> 'The Panther Captivity' in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, ed. by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), 86.

gave her the night to reconsider, the alternative being death; but during the night, she broke her bonds and killed him with a hatchet, disposing of his body with great efficiency and notable *sang-froid*: 'I then cut off his head, and next day having cut him into quarters, drew him out of the cave about half a mile distance, when, after covering him with leaves and bushes I returned to this place' (89). The lady then took possession of the giant's cave, where she lived for nine years, alone. Panther and Camber remain with the lady for five days, before persuading her to return home with them. They accompany her to the house of her father, with whom she is reconciled; but the shock of the encounter leads to his death, and the inheritance of 'a handsome fortune' by his daughter.

Annette Kolodny has provided the fullest reading of this fascinating text, which, she notes, like *Kentucke* and *Maria Kittle*, draws on a variety of generic sources, such as 'the male adventure narrative, the captivity narrative, the sentimental romance, and Indian fertility myths'. Crucially, however, each of these generic elements is 'quietly subverted or altogether superseded':

The male wilderness adventure (the precursor to the later Western tale) is displaced by a narrative of female adventure; the now standard narrative of female captivity turns instead — and for the first time in American literary history — toward acculturation and accommodation to the wild; the passive, languishing heroine of sentimental romance demonstrates her capacity to survive on her own in the woods; and the story of the slaying of the corn god here makes possible not a tribe's but a white woman's continued existence. Clearly, each generic alteration moves in the direction of projecting an image of a white *lady's* (and I use the word purposefully) capacity to survive and sustain herself in the wilderness. ('Turning the Lens', 335)

The Panther Captivity, according to Kolodny, reassures its readers that it is possible for white women to retain their femininity at the same time as they adapt to the frontier environment. The lady in the tale is stereotypically feminine in the manner of most sentimental heroines: she sings beautifully, she faints, she cries, she keeps a dog for a pet, she acts the gracious hostess to her guests despite the peculiarity of her circumstances, and perhaps most remarkably, she resumes her place in civilized society at the narrative's conclusion without any apparent difficulty. Her status as a civilized lady is not compromised in any way by her exposure to the wilderness; indeed, the wilderness seems to shape itself to her needs.

The landscape even takes on female sexual contours, which the two men must traverse to discover the source of the mysterious feminine voice that they hear:

When the voice ceased, we observed a small foot path, we followed; and arriving at the top of the hill, passing round a large rock, then through a thicket of bushes, at the end of which was a large opening. (86)

Panther initially mistakes the lady's voice for a bird, so integrated is she into the natural environment which she inhabits. The discovery of the lady in what they had assumed was an uncharted territory punctures the two friends' comfortable assumption that the wilderness is an exclusively male preserve, and deflates their boyish conception of themselves as heroic explorers and hunters. Instead of the dangerous confrontation with untamed nature, which they had been expecting and hoping for (as suggested by the echoes of Filson), they find themselves in the 'garden' of a civilized lady.

In Kolodny's words, the oppositions here are 'not so much between civilized European associations and the Indianized wilderness as they are between different ways of being in and relating to the vast American landscape. At stake, in short, was the new nation's choice of a defining fantasy' — the 'heroic mythology of the hunter' or the romance of the wilderness cultivator ('Turning the Lens', 343-344). Slotkin argues that the Panther Captivity contains both these alternatives, but does not choose between them, whereas Kolodny argues that it shows the likely primacy of the hunter mythology, in that the lady's 'garden' is invaded by the male presence, and she is forced to return to civilization, and resume her allotted place in the patriarchal scheme.

This point is astutely made, but this formulation of the text needs readjustment, because the lady in the story is unconvincing as a cultivator. There is a connection as well as an opposition between hunting and agriculture; the former being a necessary precursor to the latter, through which land is explored and charted, before being cleared. This sense of order must be brought to the wilderness before true agriculture can begin. If the lady's activities as a farmer were meant to represent the republican investment in agrarianism, then she would surely display some of the aspects of white cultivation — the process of clearing, of defining borders — which, in the

minds of white Americans at the time, distinguished their use of the land from that of the Indians. But her instinct is to merge with the landscape, rather than to alter and control it. She shows no inclination during her entire sojourn in the wild even to find out where she is, or to determine whether she can get back to civilization — it takes seventeen days to reach Panther's house, but she had *nine years* to prepare for the journey, if she had wanted to leave. Moreover, although she has planted a bit of Indian corn, she has made no attempt to farm the land in any real sense, preferring instead to keep it as a wild, paradisaical garden. Her response to the landscape is instinctual and organic; and the text presents the wilderness as a feminised zone of natural fertility and abundance, which is pastoral rather than agricultural.

There is, however, a way of reading the Panther Captivity which can make sense of this anomaly, and which suggests that the 'defining fantasy' it offers is neither that of the male hunter nor the female cultivator. As Kolodny notes, contemporary readers will almost certainly have been sensitive to the historical and geographical indicators that give the narrative context:

At the time of her birth, Albany was the central base for British fur-trading interests, competing with the French at Montreal for control over that trade. The counting houses at Albany made fortunes for the merchants who traded with the Iroquois, even as they harnessed English dreams of empire in the Northwest to an economy based on hunting and allied to mercantile interests. No contemporary reader would have been ignorant of these facts; and, for such a reader, the conclusion that the girl's father had amassed his wealth through the fur trade would have been probable, if not inescapable. ('Turning the Lens', 340)

She goes on to argue that the girl's rejection of her father symbolises the colonies' rejection of George III, and that her flight into the woods suggests the rejection of the 'dictates of materialism and mercantilism insisted upon by the English'. However, although I agree with the first half of this reading, I would argue that the narrative is anything but a rejection of 'materialism and mercantilism'. If one considers not only the historical period and location in which the story is set, but also the time and place in which it was published and read, a different meaning emerges.

From the late summer of 1786 to early 1787, Massachusetts witnessed the first popular uprising of the post-Revolutionary era, a rebellion against state

authority that would have profound consequences on a national scale. During the early years of the Revolution, many farmers in the state had made the transition from subsistence to commercial farming, encouraged by the state government to grow crops and breed livestock to feed the Continental army, and liberally paid in paper money. Agricultural conditions in western Massachusetts subsequently deteriorated throughout the 1780s, and tensions rose between rural farmers and the commercially-dominated state legislature, perceived to be indifferent to the economic suffering of their western neighbours. Heightened competition between American and English merchants had sparked a period of aggressive commercial expansion into rural areas, driven by the extension of almost unlimited credit. As a result, many farmers were not only suffering from high taxes and the depreciation of paper currency, they were also heavily in debt.

Many of the sufferers had fought in the Revolution, and one such veteran was Daniel Shays. In the autumn of 1786, Shays gathered about him an army of some nine thousand men — more than a quarter of the adult male population of rural New England — determined to redress their grievances and force the state government in Boston to take measures to alleviate their sufferings. Popular protests closed country courthouses around the state, but in each of three major confrontations, in September, January and February — at Exeter (New Hampshire), Springfield, and Petersham, (both in western Massachusetts) — the ‘Shaysites’ were routed by state troops.

Shays’s Rebellion, as it came to be known, was brief, disorganized and easily suppressed. Some historians have even contended that it was not particularly radical, and that the insurgents were merely drawing upon an older paradigm of conduct, based on the seventeenth-century Whig theories of Locke, James Harrington and Algernon Sidney. According to such formulations (which had helped to shape Revolutionary rhetoric) a ‘protection covenant’ existed between ‘rulers’ and ‘ruled’, whereby ‘yeomen’ did not dispute the right of ‘gentlemen’ to govern them, but reserved the right to discipline their rulers in the form of popular protest if they were perceived not to be fulfilling their obligations. As Allan Taylor has argued:

The New England Regulators did not intend to overthrow their state government but simply to suspend execution of particular “oppressive” and “unconstitutional” laws until their rulers could rectify their mistakes. Court

closings simultaneously bought time and alerted rulers that they had violated their covenant to behave as “political fathers.” Once they had forced their rulers to do their duty, the Regulators believed that they could quickly and quietly return to their farms and to grateful obedience.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately for the rebels, however, the ‘gentlemen’ with whom they were dealing had replaced such colonial views of political culture with more republican notions. According to the commercial elite in Boston (including former radical republicans like Samuel Adams), crowd actions such as Shays’s Rebellion were unacceptable in a republic, because the rulers who were being ‘disciplined’ were elected representatives, and had therefore been invested with popular sovereignty. To quote Taylor again, ‘the electoral moment denied the people any legitimate extralegal power to discipline their representatives between elections’ (151).

The response to the uprising, in conservative Bostonian circles, and around the nation, was therefore considerably more violent than Shays and his followers — guided by an older conception of political relations — might have expected. As Stephen E. Patterson notes, ‘shrill hyperbole filled the eastern newspapers expressing exaggerated fears of imminent invasion by barbaric hordes of ignorant farmers’.<sup>20</sup> The ‘Friends of Government’, as the anti-Shaysite forces called themselves, characterised the rebellion as an act of ‘phrenzy’, or in Secretary of War Henry Knox’s words, ‘a formidable rebellion against reason, the principle of all government’ (Slaughter, 48). Jeremy Belknap echoed these sentiments, expressing both his horror at the insurgency, and his disgust at the failure of the local government to deal with what he felt to be treason:

They [the General Court] ought to *declare*, what everybody knows to be a fact, that a rebellion exists, and then to ‘let loose the dogs of war,’ who, from the animation they have already discovered, will soon seize and worry these ravening wolves [...] These insurgents appear to be governed by an enthusiastic frenzy [...] Is not their attack on the Arsenal a declaration of war against the United States? and ought not Congress to take them in hand, if this Government should fail of their duty? They appear to be far more

---

<sup>19</sup> Alan Taylor, ‘Regulators and White Indian: The Agrarian Resistance in Post-Revolutionary New England’, in Robert A. Gross, *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 151. One of the terms by which the rebels were known — ‘Regulators’ — captures this idea; their aim was not to overthrow the government, merely to regulate its conduct.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen E. Patterson, ‘The Federalist Reaction to Shays’s Rebellion’, in *In Debt to Shays*, 115.

dangerous enemies than the Ohio Indians, against whom the United States are sending a force. Let us have peace at home before we engage in war abroad! (Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 'Boston, February 2, 1787', *CMHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, II, 456)

The language which he uses to describe the rebels is telling — 'ravaging wolves [...] governed by an enthusiastic frenzy' — and seems to suggest that, to Belknap, they are metaphorically stripped of their humanity by their treasonous opposition to the United States. He cannot see the logic of raising an army to fight the Indians, when there is a more serious danger to civil society on their doorstep.

Unbeknownst to Belknap, Congress agreed with his assessment of the relative threats of Indians and rebels. A resolution was passed on 20 October 1786 to reinforce the continental army with 1340 non-commissioned officers and privates, as a precaution against impending conflict with Indians in the Ohio Valley. Suspicions were aroused about this force when it turned out that 1220 of the men were to be raised in New England, far distant the supposed seat of hostilities. The Indian threat was actually being used as an excuse to muster troops for the suppression of Shays's Rebellion, although, in the event, they were not needed. Even in acts of Congress, it would seem, 'the Indians' were automatically invoked to convey all fears of anarchy and degeneration.

As Michael Lienesch has noted, this stance involved a revision of the theories of Locke and Rousseau, and a reversion to a Hobbesian world-view: 'Their descriptions [of the rebels] were rife with references to barbarism, cannibalism, and savagery of all kinds. [...] For these thinkers, the state of nature was the state of war; rebellion assumed a return not to innocence but to violence'.<sup>21</sup> The people were proving themselves incapable of self-government on strictly democratic lines: as James Warren, a formerly radical republican, wrote disconsolately to John Adams, 'The Truth of the Matter is [...] the People resemble a Child' (Lienesch, 170). The parent they required was a federal government.

Shays's Rebellion was seized upon by political activists in Massachusetts and elsewhere, who, convinced of the need for a centralized government, had long been agitating for reform of the Articles of Confederation. Without

---

<sup>21</sup> Michael Lienesch, 'Reinterpreting Rebellion: The Influence of Shays's Rebellion on American Political Thought', in *In Debt to Shays*, 171.

strong federal authority, it was suggested, such insurrections would ultimately rip apart the fragile union of the states. The spectre of anarchy, repeatedly invoked by federalist commentators during and immediately after the rebellion, has traditionally been seen as a major contributing factor in the decision to convene the federal convention in Philadelphia later that year, and the drafting and signing of the Constitution on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1787.<sup>22</sup>

The first extant version of the Panther Captivity was printed in Norwich, Connecticut, less than fifty miles from Springfield, Massachusetts, the scene of Shay's assault on the federal arsenal.<sup>23</sup> It appeared, moreover, in October, 1787, a month after the signing of the Constitution. Even more significantly, it appeared in *Bickerstaff's Almanack for 1788*. The previous year's *Almanack*, printed in late 1786, had featured editorial attacks on Daniel Shays as 'an upstart and demagogue, scheming for power at the expense of liberty', alongside a woodcut depicting Shays and his deputy, Job Shattuck.<sup>24</sup> The *Almanack* was the work of Benjamin West, an astronomer and mathematician who had been publishing his astronomical predictions since 1763, and was renowned for his accuracy. West contributed his charts to a number of different almanacks, printed simultaneously on small presses all over New England, and even further afield. The contents of each almanack, apart from West's calendar, varied from place to place, and included everything from homespun medical advice to pseudo-historical narratives such as the Panther Captivity. They also listed the dates of county court sessions throughout the New England region, and, as this association with the legal system suggests, were generally conservative in their socio-political allegiance.

In October 1787, New England's almanacks were predictably preoccupied with recent events in both Massachusetts and Philadelphia, and routinely linked the two. *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack [...] for 1788*, for instance — exactly contemporaneous with the Trumbull issue containing the Panther Captivity — includes a frontispiece depicting Washington and Franklin

---

<sup>22</sup> Historians generally accept that the uprising at least accelerated the move to federalism, although some argue that the Constitution would have come into being even without Shays's Rebellion. For the argument against the significance of Shays, see Robert A. Feer, 'Shays's Rebellion and the Constitution: A Study in Causation', in *The Formation and Ratification of the Constitution: Major Historical Interpretations*, ed. by Kermit L. Hall (New York: Garland, 1987), 159-181.

<sup>23</sup> The earlier version, advertised by Woodward and Green in the *Middlesex Gazette*, would have been printed in Middletown, Connecticut, even closer to the scene of the rebellion.

<sup>24</sup> Gross, ed., *In Debt to Shays*, 31, note to illustration 7.



‘seated in the Federal Chariot’, celebrating ‘the grand Fabrick of American Independence, the Federal Constitution [...] which will prove the political Salvation of [the] country’. On the inside, there is a poem, entitled ‘The Grand Constitution: or, The Palladium of Columbia; A New Federal Song’, which declares:

Here Plenty, and Order, and Freedom shall dwell,  
And your Shayses and Davies won’t dare to rebel.<sup>25</sup>

While other almanacks were publishing such zealously patriotic and rampantly federalist propaganda, the Norwich edition of *Bickerstaff* printed the Panther Captivity; but the frame of reference was identical, and its first readers would have come to the text with denunciations of Daniel Shays, and praise of the Constitution, ringing in their ears. In this context, Panther’s narrative can be read as a conciliatory federalist parable depicting the growth of America from its dependent adolescence as a colony, through its period of radical revolt, and subsequent years of uncertainty, to its final maturity and inheritance of its birthright, a birthright founded on commerce and the rejection of agrarianism.

The Lady of the narrative, like the familiar figure of Columbia, symbolises America itself, or perhaps more accurately, the American people. Her Father stands for government, and undergoes a shift in the course of the narrative, from an embodiment of tyrannical monarchy, to a figure of benevolent republicanism. The Lady, born in 1760, is fifteen when the young man who becomes her lover enters her father’s house. It is therefore 1775, and this youth signifies the radicalism necessary to effect the schism with her father. Their elopement is more than a retreat from British control; it is a retreat from society, and from union. The appearance of the Indians signifies the familiar anxiety about the effects of independence — the potential eruption of anarchy and savagery. The execution of the lover points to the inherent instability of radicalism; having effected the break with the tyrannous father, the lover is overpowered by the degenerative chaotic forces he has unleashed, leaving the Lady/America without patriarchal leadership. As a result, she wanders aimlessly, and although she succeeds in temporarily

---

<sup>25</sup> *Bickerstaff’s Boston Almanack, or the Federal Calendar, for the Year of our Redemption, 1788* (Boston: Russell, 1787), 3.

escaping and overpowering her savage captors, she becomes trapped in an undeveloped state of society, cut off from all other people, and therefore deprived of the improving effects of commerce. As a cultivator, she is nothing more than a subsistence farmer; and although she is not corrupted, nor is she improved by her lifestyle. She never puts sufficient distance between herself and her savage precursor, as suggested by the fact that his weapons and skulls remain in her home after so many years. This was the conviction of conservative, mercantile thinkers in the East: agriculture is merely an early stage on the road to civilization, whose crowning glory was commerce.

The Lady returns to civil society nine years after her capture, in 1786, the year of Shays's Rebellion, and almost the present day. She embraces the new, republican father figure, who forgives his child's disobedience, as the civic leaders of Massachusetts had forgiven the defeated, penitent rebels. The sudden death of the father does not signify the collapse of the government, but its evolution. This is the pivotal moment, as the child — 'the People resemble a Child', as Warren said — leaves behind both her destabilizing radicalism and her naïve agrarianism, and accepts a birthright founded upon commercial wealth. This transition is marked by the production of a stabilising document — the text itself, which in this configuration is aligned with the Constitution.

Two further editions of the *Panther Captivity* were printed in the same year as its first appearance, in Vermont and New York. There was then a lull in editions until 1794, when it began to be reprinted regularly, annually or biannually until 1800, again mainly in Vermont, Maine and Massachusetts, continuing to receive new imprints until the end of the War of 1812. While Kolodny's patriotic, anti-British reading certainly informs the early part of the narrative, we must remember that the 'image of an independent republic of yeoman farmers' ('Turning the Lens', 341) was by no means universally held to be the only desirable future for the United States, least of all amongst the politically dominant merchant class of the North East. The wilderness of this text, whether understood as the domain of the masculine hunter or the pastoral garden of the lady, is a symbol of disorder and dangerous social innovation.

The timing of the *Panther Captivity's* imprints is suggestive. The gap between 1787 and 1794 corresponds with the gap between the two major

incidents of civil unrest in the early republic — Shays’s Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion — and the re-emergence of the text into the public sphere at this time circumstantially supports my suggestion that it should be read as a conservative attempt to reconcile incipient radicalism and expansionism with sedentary, mercantile values. Its regular imprints through the remainder of the 1790s were an iteration of this message in the period of the greatest political rivalry between Federalists and agrarian Jeffersonian Republicans. Following the election of Jefferson as president, with Federalism on the wane as a political force, printings become more sporadic. After a final resurgence during the war, when the former association with the British revivifies its meaning, the Panther Captivity disappears from circulation.

### 3. *Hugh Henry Brackenridge and the Collapse of Agrarian Idealism*

---

**H**ugh Henry Brackenridge is best remembered as the author of *Modern Chivalry*, his sprawling, satirical account of frontier mores, and American life in general, written and published between 1792 and 1815. One of the few eastern writers to relocate to the frontier of the new nation, his diverse oeuvre reveals the difficulties presented by life in the West to a man of literary ambitions and traditional republican beliefs. These difficulties were not merely practical, although the provisions for literary production were meagre enough when he first travelled across the Allegheny mountains in 1781. They were also ideological, for Brackenridge, despite a rural upbringing, had acquired a traditional classical education, and trained as a lawyer — a background which gave him an unshakable faith in the sanctity of the law, the necessity of civil order, and, by the late 1780s, in the need for a central government and Constitution.

These beliefs were underpinned by a typically classical understanding of how a republic ought to be governed, and by whom — namely, an educated social elite motivated by republican virtue, a trait which, as his fictional creation Captain Farrago would later argue, consisted in ‘humility and self-denial,’ and a desire to serve the people rather than advance oneself.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it was the job of writers, whether of poetry, fiction, or journalism, to educate the bulk of the electorate, enabling them to make rational and well-informed decisions about who should represent them. Brackenridge, of course, saw himself as ideally qualified for both these roles, but his principles were placed under intense pressure by his decision to relocate to the frontier.

This chapter will attempt to trace how Brackenridge’s experiences on the frontier interacted with his political and social theories to shape the mind of the man who would come to write *Modern Chivalry*. As a youth at Princeton, he had clearly set out the precise nature of his republican ideals, and his conception of how America was to establish itself as the pre-eminent nation on the earth. He arrived in the West with the intention of implementing an

---

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry*, ed. by Claude M. Newlin (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 392.

agrarian system of land-use and government which would foster civic order and individual virtue, whilst allowing talented and educated men such as himself to rise to prominence and direct the public's welfare. The society he encountered in the West confounded this republican plan, and, as I will argue, this collision of inherently conservative personal ideals and ambitions with the political and social concerns of the Pennsylvanian 'back-country' forced Brackenridge into the occupation of a peculiar middle ground. The uniqueness of his position derived from the discrepancy between his conception of how western society ought to develop, and the ambitions of most frontier settlers.

### I. THE RISING GLORY

Born in 1748 in Kintyre, near Campbellstown in Scotland, Brackenridge emigrated with his parents to America when he was five years old. The family settled in York County, Pennsylvania, and as a child he lived through a period of intense Indian hostility during the French and Indian War. Although his father was a farmer, and Brackenridge was required to labour on the farm once he was old enough, his parents encouraged his early appetite for books. He learned Greek and Latin from a local clergyman, became a schoolmaster at the age of fifteen, before entering the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) at the comparatively late age of eighteen. Here, the farmer's son from rural Pennsylvania became classmates with men who would help shape American culture in the years to come —James Madison and Philip Freneau were amongst his closest friends.<sup>2</sup>

In 1771, the young Brackenridge collaborated with Freneau on a fervently patriotic poem entitled 'The Rising Glory of America', in which they set forth their belief that North America would initiate a new era in the cycle of human civilization. Freneau later revised the poem, without the assistance of Brackenridge, in 1786, and again in 1809, making it, in the first instance, more explicitly republican, and in the second, more anti-British, but the basic form — 'lengthy blank verse tetrameter colloquies spoken by three

---

<sup>2</sup> For information on the ideological and political traditions to which Brackenridge was exposed at Princeton, see Michael T. Gilmore, 'Eighteenth Century Oppositional Ideology and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*', *Early American Literature*, 13 (1978), 181-92; Lucille M. Schultz, 'Uncovering the significance of the animal imagery in *Modern Chivalry*: an application of Scottish Common Sense Realism', *Early American Literature*, 14:3 (Winter 1979/80), 306-311.

characters' — remained the same.<sup>3</sup> Written as tensions were rising between the colonies and Great Britain, the fervent patriotism of the two young writers is apparent in every line of the 1771 version; and the distinctive republican vision of a society founded on the close alliance of agriculture and commerce, of which the 'Rising Glory' is an early expression, shapes Brackenridge's later attempts to engage with life on the frontier.

The poem draws on the familiar theme of *translatio imperii*, standing in a direct line of descent from Bishop George Berkeley's 'Verses of the Prospect of Planting Learning and the Arts in America' (1726), in its insistence that the westward drift of civilization over the course of human history makes the rise of America, and the eclipse of Great Britain, historically inevitable. At the heart of the poets' ideological stance is the equally familiar insistence that the American landscape was 'Designed by nature for the rural reign, / For agriculture's toil'.<sup>4</sup> The land, they suggest, will be the source not only of America's prosperity, but of its virtue as well, since 'more noble riches flow / From agriculture, and the industrious swain, / Who tills the fertile vale, or mountain's brow' (*RG*, ll. 234-236), than from any other source. Brackenridge and Freneau do not wish to imply that agriculture can or ought to be self-sustaining. They certainly were not seeking to diminish the importance of trade to the welfare of the nation, making it quite clear that civilization depends upon the capacity to trade: 'Strip Commerce of her sail, and men once more / Would be converted into savages' (*RG*, ll. 286-292). Rather, the two spheres — agriculture and commerce — complement and balance each other, and in conjunction will ensure that America achieves 'Dominion from the north, and south, and west, / Far from the Atlantic to Pacific shores' (*RG*, ll. 529-530).

At this pivotal moment of American history, before the battle for independence has even begun, Brackenridge and Freneau are convinced, not only that Anglo-American society *will* expand and engulf the whole continent, but that it *ought* to do so. Like later proponents of expansionism, the poets justify the unfettered acquisition of land for white farming with a theory

---

<sup>3</sup> Eric Wertheimer, 'Commencement Ceremonies: History and Identity in "The Rising Glory of America," 1771 and 1786', in *Early American Literature*, 29 (1994), 37.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Freneau and Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Rising Glory Of America: Being Part Of A Dialogue Pronounced On A Public Occasion*, extracted from the American Poetry Full-Text Database published by Chadwyck-Healey Inc., ll. 20-21.

evolving directly from their faith in the linked powers of agriculture and commerce. The Indians have their claim to possession of the land undermined in several ways. Firstly, the poem raises the question of racial origin: 'But whence arose / That vagrant race who love the shady vale, / And choose the forest for their dark abode?' (RG, ll. 25-37). Several alternative answers to this question are put forward, all denigrating to the Indians:

Perhaps far wandering toward the northern pole  
 The streights of Zembla, and the frozen zone,  
 And where the eastern Greenland almost joins  
 America's north point, the hardy tribes  
 Of banished Jews, Siberians, Tartars wild  
 Came over icy mountains, or on floats,  
 First reached these coasts, hid from the world beside. — (RG, ll. 52-58)

The idea of an ancient migration of peoples is of course a valid one, but the poets here make the direction of that move East to West. This suggestion gives a new impetus to the *translatio imperii*. Usually employed to explain and justify the dissolution of the link between America and Europe, the theory is here employed to sanction the displacement of the Indians, also on the grounds of historical inevitability. Brackenridge's Indians are far from Rousseau's 'natural' men, relegated to the role of indigent forerunners, fleeing before the advance of civilization.

The poem's suggestion that the Indians descend from supposedly 'banished', inferior races, distinguished by their nomadic lifestyle, is equally distinctive. The idea that virtue was inherently sedentary, because associated with agriculture, and that a nomadic, mobile way of life was intrinsically inferior, is central to Brackenridge's thought. Freneau and Brackenridge develop this notion, drawing a further distinction between the Indians of South and North America, the former possibly descending from a lost band of Carthaginians, which would explain their apparent superiority, in the poets' eyes, because they could farm and build cities. The North American Indian is denied even this back-handed compliment:

But here, amid this northern dark domain  
 No towns were seen to rise. — No arts were here;  
 The tribes unskill'd to raise the lofty mast,  
 Or force the daring prow thro' adverse waves,  
 Gazed on the pregnant soil, and craved alone  
 Life from the unaided genius of the ground, —

This indicates they were a different race;  
From whom descended, 'tis not ours to say — (ll. 124-131)

They have no naval ability ('unskill'd to raise the lofty mast'), and hence no capacity for commerce; but, the poem implies, the most damning deficiency of the Indian way of life is the fact that they cannot cultivate (an inaccurate but almost universal Anglo-American assumption). The Indians therefore abuse the privilege of possessing the land, because they do nothing with it. To these deficiencies, Freneau and Brackenridge add their lack of creativity ('No arts were here'), seen as a natural consequence of the virtuous life engendered by agriculture and commerce. In this light, it is almost criminal to stunt the development of mankind by allowing the Indians to arrest or retard the expansion of Europeans across the continent.

## II. PEARLS BEFORE SWAINS: CLASSICS ON THE FRONTIER

Brackenridge did not leave Philadelphia in 1781, heading for the West, in the belief that the frontier had already achieved an agrarian zenith of perfection. Many easterners harboured an enormously negative view of their western cousins, and predictions of conflict and even schism between the two regions had been frequent long before the Revolution.

In the eyes of one such easterner, Timothy Pickering, settlers on the frontier were 'the least worthy subjects in the United States. They are little less savage than Indians' (Slaughter, 30). Brackenridge cannot have been ignorant of such harsh appraisals of westerners before his move. He did believe, however, in the *possibility* that the West could become the garden of the nation, a fertile realm in which the American experiment could truly begin, and an arena in which he could combine his personal advancement with the cultivation of civic virtue in his community. The reality he met with when he arrived in Pittsburgh must have come as something of a shock; for the first time, he must have entertained the notion that his agrarian plan for the frontier might not be practicable.

Living conditions for the majority of settlers in Western Pennsylvania were appalling, certainly to the eyes of visitors from the East, and standards of behaviour fell some way below the level of virtue republicans envisaged for their new society. In the words of one witness,



The whole society was, with very few exceptions, about as wicked as fallen human beings can be on this side of utter perdition. Female seduction was frequent, quarrelling and fighting decidedly customary — drunkenness almost universal, and therefore scarcely a matter of reproach.<sup>5</sup>

Others described the frontier inhabitants as ‘a parcel of abandoned wretches [...] like so many pigs in a sty’. They were, in the appalled eyes of civilized travellers, ‘the scum of nature’ (Slaughter, 64).<sup>6</sup>

Quite apart from the filthy conditions and appalling, violent behaviour, settlers in Pittsburgh and its smaller satellite villages were, for the most part, extremely poor. Society was even more economically divided in the West than in the East. In 1780, more than a third of the population of Western Pennsylvania was landless, a proportion that increased in the next fifteen years. In the 1780s and 1790s, even the wealthiest residential landowners of the frontier could not compete with eastern land speculators (like George Washington), who bought up vast tracts of western land as an investment, but who rarely, if ever, visited their property, administering it through agents who charged and collected high rents.

The propaganda pamphlets and newspaper reports about western fertility and potential were not utter fabrications — they had merely omitted to mention that the good land had long ago been bought up, leaving nowhere for new emigrants to settle. And, to exacerbate this situation, the western country experienced a population explosion between the end of the Revolution and the end of the century:

The free population of western Pennsylvania increased about threefold — from about 33,000 to 95,000 — from the end of the Revolution to the turn of the century. Between 1783 and 1790 the population of the state’s three western counties grew by approximately 87 percent. Roughly the same number of immigrants arrived each year through the 1790s as well. During this same period the state as a whole experienced growth of about 40 percent. (Slaughter, 65)

---

<sup>5</sup> William Winans, ‘Recollections of Boyhood Years in Southwestern Pennsylvania, 1788-1804’, in *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 22 (1939), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Slaughter borrows these unattributed comments from James Patrick McClure, ‘The Ends of the American Earth: Pittsburgh and the Upper Ohio Valley to 1795’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1983), 85, 114, 116. I have not been able to consult this thesis in order to trace the actual origin of these quotations.

Many men became ‘croppers’, working the land of wealthy landowners and paying their rent in the crops they grew. Such a system of exchange was common in other transactions, too; the chronic absence of currency meant that frontier society operated largely on a barter economy.

These were the conditions that Brackenridge encountered when he arrived in Pittsburgh in 1781. His new home was the largest settlement in western Pennsylvania, but was nothing more than a village, at best — a census in 1790 indicated that it had a population of 376, and so (assuming the growth rate of 87 percent to be roughly correct) it can only have been around 200 in 1781.<sup>7</sup> Brackenridge had grand plans, however; he intended to oversee the cultural development of the town, and foresaw his personal advancement as synonymous with the gradual civilization of the frontier. One of his first achievements was the co-founding of the first newspaper of the western country, *The Pittsburgh Gazette*, for which he was a frequent contributor; and as he acknowledged in that organ in 1787, his motives for all his schemes for civic development were personal as well as philanthropic:

I had a strong interest to prompt me to offer myself to that place. The same interest which prompts me to wish the wealth and happiness of the western country, in every point of view. My residence, and all the property I have is here, and in proportion as it is rendered flourishing, I profit by it; wealth cannot be drawn from a poor country. My object was to advance the country and thereby myself.<sup>8</sup>

The first issue of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* appeared on July 26, 1786, and featured a piece by Brackenridge entitled ‘On the situation of the town of Pittsburgh, and the state of society in that place’. In a reissue of his gazette publications twenty years later, he acknowledged that he had written it ‘to give some reputation to the town with a view to induce emigration to this particular spot’, and he paints an ideal portrait of the society he would like to have existed. It clearly demonstrates that after five years on the frontier, the agrarian hopes he had articulated in ‘The Rising Glory’ were still firmly fixed in place.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Solon J. Buck and Elizabeth Hawthorn Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939), 148.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh Henry Brackenridge, ‘To the Inhabitants of Westmoreland County,’ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, April 28, 1787. Quoted by Claude M. Newlin, *The Life and Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932), 84.

The world Brackenridge conjures up for his readers embodies exactly the union of agriculture and art, town and country, so typical of the republican cast of mind:

[H]ere we have the breezes of the river, coming from the Mississippi and the ocean; the gales that fan to the woods, and are sent from the refreshing lakes to the northward; in the mean time the prospect of extensive hills and dales, whence the fragrant air brings odours of a thousand flowers and plants, or of the corn and grain of husbandmen, upon its balmy wings. Here we have the town and country together [...] It must appear like enchantment to a stranger, who after travelling an hundred miles from the settlements, across a dreary mountain, and through the adjoining country where in many places the spurs of the mountain still continue, and cultivation does not always shew itself, to see, all at once, and almost on the verge of the inhabited globe, a town with smoaking chimnies, halls lighted up with splendor, ladies and gentlemen assembled, various music, and the mazes of the dance. He may suppose it to be the effect of magic, or that he is come into a new world where there is all the refinement of the former, and more benevolence of heart.<sup>9</sup>

The above passage begins by emphasizing the felicity of the geographical position of the town — proximity to waterways, of course, signifies access to trade routes. Brackenridge again suggests the interdependence of agriculture and commerce with his repeated references to the air — ‘breezes [...] gales [...] fan [...] refreshing [...] fragrant air [...] odours [...] balmy wings’ — which imply that the association is as inevitable as the mixing of scents in the air, and as natural and healthy as breathing. Such fertility and cultivation, he stresses, does not exist at the expense of the more refined, social pleasures such as music, which exist in equal measure, but are complemented by the defining grace of republicanism: ‘benevolence of heart’.

However, it is not merely in the reiteration of such basic republican values that the ‘Observations’ recall the ‘Rising Glory’. The newspaper piece shares the poem’s insistence that republican society will exceed British achievements, at the same time as displacing the Indians who formerly occupied the land. This frontier region, according to Brackenridge, is not a howling wilderness, any more than New York, Philadelphia or Boston were at the outset of the Revolution — it also has a colonial history of cultivation. He mentions, for instance, that the first British commanding officer of Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh) planted an orchard which still bears fruit abundantly; there are

---

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Gazette Publications* (Carlisle, PA: Alexander & Phillips, 1806), 18-19.

also gardens which are ‘cultivated highly to usefulness and pleasure, the soil favouring the growth of plants and flowers, equal with any on the globe’ (*GP*, 12). He describes a row of ‘houses, elegant and neat, and not unworthy of the European taste’, which

have been swept away in the course of time. [...] These buildings were the receptacles of the ancient Indian trade, which, coming from the westward, centred in this quarter. But of these buildings, like decayed monuments of grandeur, not a trace remains. Those who, twenty years ago, saw them flourish, can only say, here they stood. (*GP*, 12-13)

The implication is clear: although the natural productions of the land have flourished, the identifiably ‘European’ buildings which the British left, and which embodied the British alliance with the Indians, have been erased from the landscape, to be replaced by American constructions.

Brackenridge goes further, however, in his efforts to demonstrate how America has revitalized the ancient principles of civilization; he attempts to forge a link between the West and its classical precursors, just as with Britain. The classical idiom he employs seems inappropriate to the landscape he is describing, and the result, unfortunately, is clumsy, archaic prose. It is, however, entirely consistent with his background as a classicist, and more specifically, his conception of the westward drift of empires:

Approaching in the appearance of a river god, a swain begirt with weeds natural to these streams, and crowned with leaves of the sugar tree, hailed us, and gave prophetic hints of the grandeur of our future empire. His words I remember not, but it seemed to me for a moment, that the mystic agency of deities well known in Greece and Rome, was not a fable; but that powers unseen haunt the woods and rivers, who take part in the affairs of mortals, and are pleased with the celebration of events that spring from great achievements and from virtue. (*GP*, 13-14)

Brackenridge was trying to lure new settlers to the frontier by inviting them to share his own wilful delusion, presenting them with his own vision of what the future would hold for western society. His rhetorical strategy suggests that western society is more developed than it actually is; but at the same time he makes clear that there is room for improvement — that ‘the grandeur of our future empire’ must be earned by the virtuous effort of new settlers.

Brackenridge is here utilising a trope common amongst American writers well into the nineteenth century, described by Stephen Fender as ‘the figure of

anticipation' — the rhetorical description of future American civilization as though it were already achieved.<sup>10</sup> To Brackenridge, this misleading representation was justified, since the potential that he saw in western society could never be realised without such emigrants. Thus, though they may suffer certain inconveniences, they would ultimately advance the cause of American civilization. Moreover, Brackenridge felt responsible for the people of the western country — having got them there, he intended, as we have noted, to instruct and assist them in becoming ideal citizens, and to represent their interests to the government of the United States.

Unlike other western propagandists like Filson and Imlay, Brackenridge had no direct financial stake in encouraging settlers to relocate from the East — he was not a land speculator himself, and was fiercely opposed to their activities. His personal ambitions rested on his political aspirations — 'to advance the country and thereby myself'. To do so, he had, to a large extent, to divorce himself from an eastern perspective, despite the fact that his ideological conceptualisation of the West grew from his eastern education. Thus, even as he was trying to shape the cultural development of Pittsburgh by introducing a newspaper, churches, a library, and a bookstore, he was slowly being changed by his immersion in the issues of frontier life, and he became fully involved in the debates which preoccupied westerners during this period.

In the 1780s, settlers on the western frontier had several key demands from the Continental Congress, and subsequently from the federal government: they wanted protection from the attacks of hostile Indians on their borders; navigation rights to the Mississippi to be negotiated with Spain, to provide a convenient means of exporting their produce; and the abandonment of any plans to impose excise taxes in the western country.

---

<sup>10</sup> Fender cites the English traveller Morris Birkbeck, who, travelling through the States in 1817, visited Pittsburgh, which he had been told was the 'Birmingham of America'. Expecting an industrial inferno, he instead found a modest manufacturing town, and wrote: 'There is a figure of rhetoric adopted by the Americans, and much used in description; it simply consists in the use of the present indicative, instead of the future subjunctive; it is called *anticipation*. By its aid, what *may* be is contemplated as though it were in actual existence. For want of being acquainted with the power and application of this figure, I confess I was much disappointed by Pittsburgh' — see Stephen Fender, 'American Landscape and the Figure of Anticipation: Paradox and Recourse', in *Views of American Landscape*, ed. by Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 57.

These issues were interlinked — western willingness to pay either state or federal taxes was contingent on the central government providing an adequate response to their other main requests. They were also issues that would have a profound affect upon Brackenridge's subsequent career.

### III. THE MISSISSIPPI QUESTION

The Mississippi, and its many tributaries, held the key to the commercial success of the western territories; it was the easiest route by which the agricultural produce of the West could be transported to market. To the East lay the Appalachian mountain range, difficult to negotiate even on horseback, never mind with wagons laden with perishable goods. For many months of the year, the narrow mountain passes were all but impenetrable, giving westerners a narrow window of opportunity for moving their goods to the most important markets, the large cities and (comparatively) dense populations of the East. Unfortunately, the lower portion of the Mississippi, including its mouth at New Orleans, was controlled by Spain, and so farmers and traders were either forbidden from exploiting the network of waterways which linked the fertile regions of the west, or forced to pay a high premium in tax to the Spanish crown. For this reason, one of the most frequent demands made by frontiersmen to the Continental Congress, and subsequently to the Federal government, during the 1780s and 1790s, was for them to secure the rights to navigation of the Mississippi, by brokering a trade agreement with Spain.

These petitions, however, fell on deaf ears, largely due to the opposition of eastern politicians to the extension of navigation rights to the western territories. Nor could westerners rely, in this instance, on the Southern states to support their opposition to Northeastern interests — many prominent Southern leaders, including Washington, shared the view, in the words of the Virginian Richard Henry Lee, that 'if this navigation could be opened and the benefits be such as are chimerically supposed, it must in its consequences depopulate and ruin the old states'.<sup>11</sup> In 1785, Secretary for Foreign Affairs John Jay was instructed to negotiate free navigation of the Mississippi for Americans; but in May 1786, Congress voted to change his instructions, allowing him to secure a commercial treaty instead, without broaching the

---

<sup>11</sup> Lee to George Washington, July 15, 1787, in *Lee, Letters*, II, 426.

question of navigation rights. In the eyes of frontiersmen struggling to make a living, this was an appalling betrayal by a government they had expected to protect their interests, as neither the British parliament nor state assemblies had before them.<sup>12</sup>

Brackenridge's response to this crisis was a vital litmus test of his allegiance to the interests of his frontier home. It would require him to take a position contrary to that of the government; not to do so would be to accede to the strangulation of his hopes for developing an agrarian society in the West. Nowhere is his stance more evident than in another of his publications from the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, his transcription of his 'Speech Delivered (1788) in the Legislature of Pennsylvania on a Motion to Instruct the Delegates of that State in Congress Relative to a Proposition to Cede Spain the Right of Navigation of the Mississippi River'. His passionate appeal to Congress to secure the navigation rights to the Mississippi is built upon the beliefs already outlined — that agriculture is essential to the nation, and that commerce is essential to agriculture — to which he adds a warning that to ignore the needs of the West is to invite rupture and conflict between the regions, disastrous for both. The interdependency of agriculture and commerce, he argues, equates to an equivalent interdependency between East and West. Each will contribute to the greatness of the other:

It is laid down by some merchants with whom I have conversed, that a trade with the western country would be more profitable than a trade with Spain. This country will be the Germany of America; *officina gentium*, the great birth place of nations, where millions yet unborn shall exist: it will be the Russia of America in point of the trade which will be carried on. Iron, lumber, hemp, hides, fur and other things will be carried hence by the merchants of these very towns on the sea coast, and like the towns in Holland and England by the Russian trade, they will be enriched and aggrandized. Not until the population of the western country is extended will even Philadelphia become a great city. Since the decline of trade [due to Spanish restrictions] even at this time, the whole country languishes: the wheat of last year lies in the barn: there is no object to prompt industry — we are sinking to the pastoral and bordering on the barbaric state. (*GP*, 48-49)

The danger of disrupted trade is faced by the whole nation, he argues, not just by the West. He invokes here the predictable fear of degeneration — agriculture is what distinguishes civilized man from 'the barbaric state', but it

---

<sup>12</sup> My discussion of the Mississippi question is particularly informed by the excellent analysis given by Slaughter, 28-60.

cannot exist without trade. Brackenridge's economic argument is compelling, and obviously well calculated to appeal to the self-interest of the easterners he wishes to persuade, but it also hints at a growing cynicism in his attitude. He no longer feels that invoking republican duty is enough to compel the correct behaviour; he must lace his appeal with the promise of financial rewards, a telling concession to the growing capitalist economy. Moreover, his analogy between the regions of America and the countries of Europe is a dangerous one. Although it works well for his primary purpose of stressing the economic links that bind them, it also, perhaps unintentionally, suggests the depth of the cultural and political differences that divide them.<sup>13</sup>

Brackenridge's primary concern in this situation was to preserve the union between East and West, rather than to encourage a break between them.<sup>14</sup> He emphasises this by attaching to his economic argument a warning to easterners of the latent violence in the West, which might result in secession or damaging civil war. Frontiersmen, he implies should not be taken lightly:

Will it not alienate the affections of this infant country? Will they not bind themselves with Canada, or endeavour to detach some of the southern states. Is it of no service to preserve the affections of this infant country? *Treat thy son delicately*, says the wise man, *and when he is grown up he will be thy friend*. Make peace with the young lion; an injury in distress is not easily forgotten — favours to the unprotected are more gratefully remembered. The western country may long be preserved by the maternal embrace of the eastern part of the continent. Roused with indignancy she will resent the wrongs of dereliction. (*GP*, 49-50)

Brackenridge's warnings were based on a knowledge of frontier temperament and politics. He well knew that many westerners at this time,

---

<sup>13</sup> The eastern prejudice against westerners was, at least in part, a product of xenophobia. Many settlers in the west were recent immigrants. In western Pennsylvania, for instance, the federal census of 1790 revealed that only 37% of the region's population were English in origin; the rest consisted of large communities of Welsh, Scots, Irish, and 'Dutch' (Germans), alongside various miscellaneous nationalities. Many established Anglo-Americans on the east coast held such recent arrivals in contempt, and even Brackenridge had to deflect accusations that the character of Teague Oregon in *Modern Chivalry* was offensive to the Irish. His reply suggests the extent to which the West was associated with immigrants: 'The American has in fact, yet, no character; neither the clown, nor the gentleman. So that I could not take one from our own country; which I would much rather have done, as the scene lay here. But the midland states of America, and the western parts in general, being half Ireland, the character of the Irish clown, will not be wholly misunderstood' (*MC*, 405).

<sup>14</sup> He became less sanguine about the ability of the various regions of the United States to remain in a Union as he got older, referring to their break-up in Part II, Vol. IV of *Modern Chivalry* (1804) as 'an event certain, and inevitable; but which, the wise and the good delight to contemplate as remote; and not likely to happen for innumerable ages' (*MC*, 403).



disgusted at the refusal of the government to heed their appeals, were agitating for secession, either to establish themselves as an independent state, to re-ally themselves with Britain, or even, if it would win them access to the Mississippi, with Catholic Spain. All along the frontier, from Vermont in the North, through Pennsylvania and Kentucky, down to the Carolinas in the South, the 1780s and 1790s witnessed a variety of abortive and unsuccessful frontier independence movements, which posed a very real threat to the fabric of the Union. Thus, although Brackenridge's appeal for navigation rights could be dismissed as 'weak and indecent' by an eastern politician such as Richard Henry Lee, he was nevertheless treading a moderate line by western standards. It is a pattern that repeats itself in his responses to most of the key issues that were debated on the frontier at this time — too moderate for radical westerners, too extreme for conservative easterners.

#### IV. HOW TO FIGHT INDIANS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

There was perhaps no issue, including the navigation of the Mississippi, which animated western settlers more than the perpetual cycle of conflict with the Indians. It was an inescapable and brutal fact of life, continually reinforced by appalling acts of violence committed by both sides. In the eyes of frontiersmen and women, however, the aggression of the Indians seemed motiveless and arbitrary, their methods unnecessarily brutal, and their claims to the land entirely spurious. Nothing angered them more than the apparent indifference of the central government to their sufferings at the hands of the 'savages', and the failure to implement adequate protective or retributive measures against Indian depredations. It was an emotive issue — virtually every westerner had lost friends or family to Indian raids; and a consequent hatred and contempt for the natives was a defining trait of the frontier character.

Despite Brackenridge's tendency — displayed even on the Mississippi question — to argue a pro-western case which westerners themselves did not wholly understand or condone, many commentators have argued that, in his hatred of Indians, his opinions chime almost completely with the majority of frontiersmen. However, although his hostility towards 'the animals vulgarly

called Indians' is unquestionable, his conception of how they ought to be dealt with is, I will argue, as unconventional as his stance on navigation rights.

'The Rising Glory of America' indicates Brackenridge's personal antipathy towards the Indians even before he moved West, perhaps influenced by his childhood exposure to Indian war. This predisposition towards Indian-hating — in itself an unusual position for an eastern gentlemen, many of whom felt the westerners themselves to be little better than savages and largely responsible for perpetuating the wars — quickly received fuel from the ongoing conflict looming over everyday life in the western country. Matters reached a pitch in 1783, following a disastrous expedition against the Indians led by Colonel Crawford, which ended in the total rout of the troops under Crawford's command. Brackenridge edited a compilation of two narratives of the expedition and its aftermath, by two of the survivors. The resultant *Narratives of a Late Expedition Against the Indians* were first published in the *Freeman's Journal* in Philadelphia from April to May, 1783. Prepared for and directed at an eastern audience, the collection opens with an address to the public that makes explicit the genocidal intention behind the publication of the work:

[A]s they ['the Savages'] still continue their murders on our frontier, these Narratives may be serviceable to induce our government to take some effectual steps to chastise and suppress them; as from hence they will see that the nature of an Indian is fierce and cruel, and that the extirpation of them would be useful to the world, and honourable to those who can effect it.<sup>15</sup>

The narratives themselves — by the expedition's surgeon, Dr Knight, and a scout called John Slover — are fairly standard examples of the Indian-hating captivity genre. Knight's account (which he apparently wrote himself, whereas the illiterate Slover dictated his to Brackenridge) has as its centrepiece a description of the awful torture, mutilation and execution of Crawford himself, which Knight witnessed before managing to escape. Slover's tale is largely corroborative of the details of Knight's narrative.

---

<sup>15</sup> Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *Indian Atrocities: Narratives of the Perils and Sufferings of Dr Knight and John Slover, Among the Indians, During the Revolutionary War, With Short Memoirs of Col. Crawford and John Slover, and a Letter from H. Brackenridge, on the Rights of the Indians etc.* (Cincinnati: U.P James, 1867). The *Narratives* were reprinted several times, always with a slightly different title. The text of the different editions, as far as I have been able to determine, is consistent.

Both narratives emphasise that the Indians are spurred to their ‘inhuman cruelty’ by the British, who are equally inhumane. Slover tells us, for instance, that the British authorities in Detroit explicitly instructed the Indians to ‘Take no more prisoners, [...] of any sort; man, woman or child’ (*Indian Atrocities*, 49-50). Many perceived western secession to be a danger because the frontiersmen might ally themselves with the British. The West, for all its faults, acted as a buffer zone between the established thirteen states and the British, and the absorption or removal of that barrier was felt to be detrimental to the security of the nation. Brackenridge himself expressed this idea succinctly: ‘[I]t is not the western country only that you are defending. It is the very sea coast settlements. For if we give way, and return to the east of the mountains, will not the enemy come to the east after us?’ (*MC*, 227).

Brackenridge’s *Narratives* were published before the end of the Revolution, when the threat of secession was less pronounced. However, the pattern Brackenridge establishes here is repeated throughout his career, even in the final volume of *Modern Chivalry* published in 1815. In his eyes, the Indians and the British are allies in their demonic persecution of Americans, and there is no perceptible change in his attitude once the Revolution has officially ended; the resumption of the British/Indian alliance in the War of 1812 was merely a confirmation of what Brackenridge had been arguing for thirty years. As he wrote in 1792, ‘It is not a war [...] with the Indians merely; it is a war with the British king, under cover. Have we felt the jaw of the lion, and shall we be lashed with his tail?’ (*GP*, 96). In the final volume of *Modern Chivalry* (1815), the nature of the warning has changed little: ‘John Bull will come by the water,’ he warns, ‘and Tecumseh by the wilderness’ (*MC*, 783).

Brackenridge touches on another issue of central importance in sectional debates between westerners and easterners in this period — the question of how best to defend the frontiers from Indian attack. Both Slover and Knight, through the mediating hand of Brackenridge, blame the expedition’s failure on the undisciplined militia — the untrained ‘locals’ attached to the army, as opposed to the regular troops. The militia had to be enticed into joining the expedition in the first place with promises of exemption from regular tours of militia duty, and of reclaiming plunder from the Indian towns. Once they are confronted by the Indians, however, they panic and flee in disarray, ignoring

the orders of their commanding officer, thereby contributing to his capture and death.

It was a problem to which there was no easy solution. As we have already seen, Alexander Hamilton expressed the thoughts of many easterners when he suggested, in *The Federalist*, that permanent military outposts manned by federal troops were the only means of ensuring lasting peace, by restricting the aggression of both whites and Indians. To many frontiersmen, however, such a solution was anathema, as it would necessarily reduce their much-valued freedom to behave as they pleased. On the other hand, there was escalating bitterness against the federal government for their perceived lack of interest in the welfare of their citizens on the frontier; eastern leaders were repeatedly criticized for their failure to deal with the 'Indian problem' once and for all.

To many eastern politicians, the attitude of their western cousins was unfathomable and irrational — they seemed to be appealing for aid, then complaining bitterly about the infringement of their liberty when federal troops were employed. Moreover, they showed a marked unwillingness to help — the militia was raised with enormous difficulty, not only in Crawford's campaign but also in many others, including the similarly disastrous expedition against the Miami Indians led by General Josiah Harmar in 1790. Easterners found the accusation of indifference galling, in the light of the quite astonishing fact that between 1790 and 1796, the federal government spent five sixths of its operating budget — some \$5,000,000 — on the defence of the frontier.<sup>16</sup>

Brackenridge had his own firm opinions on the issue, and these were typically at variance with those of many of his neighbours. As he had indirectly implied in the *Narratives*, he felt the militia to be inadequate to the task of defending the frontiers, and demanded a permanent and disciplined force with which to intimidate, or if necessary, exterminate, the Indians. In Part I, Volume III of *Modern Chivalry*, published in 1793, he spells out his opposition to the use of militia, a use based on an inappropriate analogy between the Indian war and the Revolution:

---

<sup>16</sup> See John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era, 1789-1901* (New York: Harpers, 1960), 183.

Let the event be what it may, I am one of those who not only approve of the present war against the Indians, but also of the principle on which it is carried on, viz. by a body of regular and well disciplined troops. It is suggested by some, that the militia would be adequate. What? [...] Did not the militia during the war with Britain, groan under the necessity of being obliged to act? And shall this grievance exist to the western country, ten years after that war has been terminated; and when it is in the power of the government, knowing the seat of war with the savages, to have regular troops to oppose them; not as in the case of the British, where by means of their fleets, the war was suddenly transferable from place to place, and the militia were obliged to act, in order to assist the parts of our army, until a greater force should arrive. (*MC*, 225-226)

Brackenridge, of course, felt there to be no inconsistency between the presence of federal troops and civil liberties, as he was a firm supporter of the Constitution and a harsh critic of many of the violent excesses in which frontiersmen engaged. The order and stability that federal troops would impart to the country would facilitate the other civic improvements he was hoping to see implemented. While composing the first part of *Modern Chivalry*, Brackenridge published an article called 'Thoughts on the Present Indian War,' specifically designed to upbraid Philadelphians whom he thought to be ignorant of the real issues involved:

Being at the seat of the General Government, in the winter of the year 1792, I found the current of opinion in Congressional debates, and in newspaper publications, to run strong against effective measures with the Indians on our frontiers. These *children of the forest*, as they were kindly called by some, appeared to have humane advocates, who seemed to think them an injured people, and that they ought to be suffered to possess their land, or to defend it as they thought proper. And, amongst those who were willing to repress their ravages, a difference of opinion existed with regard to the means, whether by the militia of the country, or by regular troops, and a permanent force. (*GP*, 93)

He urges the introduction of regular troops, but dismisses the traditional response of frontiersmen to Indian attacks — 'an incursive war of small parties with a premium for scalps, fighting the Indians in their own way' — not on any moral grounds, but because it would produce no 'substantial and lasting effect' (*GP*, 96). Brackenridge suggests that the most successful course of action would be for the regular troops to follow the example of the aggressive guerrilla warfare favoured by westerners, rather than pursuing 'what is called a defensive war, by posts on the frontiers, and ranging companies.[...]osts and ranging companies are but a help and no effectual

defence. It is but watching beasts of prey, who come against our folds, instead of penetrating the forests where they haunt, and extirpating the race' (*GP*, 97).

Given his explicit desire to 'extirpate the race', it is perhaps no surprise that Brackenridge found the notion of negotiating with the Indians to be reprehensible, if not absurd. His objections partly derived from his fundamental belief that the Indians had no right to the land they inhabited, and that it was not theirs to sell; indeed, in his harsher moments he believed that the Indians were barely human, and it was beneath the dignity of the American government to treat with them. Even more importantly, he felt that treaty-making was an impracticable expedient for a distant government to undertake with tribes of which it knew very little. Along with most other residents of the frontier, he placed little or no faith in the likelihood of treaties being respected by the Indians; and he most commonly chose to express the absurdity of the attempt by equating the natives with animals:

Struck with the good effects of treating with the savages, and that our wise men who conduct affairs, pursue the policy, I have been led to wonder, that the agricultural societies, have not proposed treaties with the wolves and bears, that they might not clandestinely invade our sheep and pig folds. This might be done by sending messages to the several ursine and vulpine nations, and calling them to a council fire, to which four or five hundred waggon load of beef should be sent, and distributed. If it should be said, that this would restrain them no longer from their prey than while they continued to be satiated, the same might be said of the Potawotamis, or other Indian nations; and yet we see that those at the head of our affairs think it prudent to negotiate with them. (*MC*, 61-62)

His point is made most forcibly by means of such satire. In Volume I of *Modern Chivalry*, Captain Farrago and Teague Oregon encounter an Indian treaty-maker, a white man who asks to borrow Teague to impersonate a 'king of the Kickapoos'. This episode, with its suggestion that most Indian treaties are made with Welsh or Irishmen dressed up as Indians, and that the money intended to create peace ends up in the pockets of con-men, is deliberately exaggerated and absurd; but its underlying point is serious — that the government could not know whether the treaties it made were binding, because their knowledge of Indians was negligible. Brackenridge is mocking what he perceives to be the prevalent eastern inability to distinguish between the *idea* of an Indian borrowed from Rousseau — 'that an Indian was a good creature, simple and inoffensive, like a young child; that you might put your

finger in his mouth, and he would not bite' (*MC*, 217) — and what he believed to be the reality:

That [...] a savage differed little from a beast of prey; a wolf, or a panther of the woods; was rude; his passions violent, attached to no farm; cultivating no art; his only amusement, or sense of honor, war; or hunting, the image of war; his sense of justice, little, his sense of honor, none at all; no government in his state of society; no security for individual or national engagements; that fear pervading the mass, by reaching the feelings, and apprehensions of each individual was the only means by which they could be governed; that instead of treaties and giving goods, as heretofore, it became us to retaliate by a heavy war against them, and to make known, by feeling, our superior strength. (*MC*, 217-218)

Almost all of Brackenridge's comments on Indians take one of the forms discussed above: didactic statements of policy, emotive appeals for action, or satirical mockery of government policy. The absence of detailed accounts of Indian character, culture or behaviour is striking in the work of an author apparently engaged with frontier issues. But the simple explanation for this absence is that Brackenridge's anthropological impulses towards aboriginal societies were subordinate to his concern for contemporary white society. Thus, Indians figure in his writing primarily as an example of what white settlers should try to avoid; the persistent conflation of Indians with animals is indicative of this. In Brackenridge's view, only an institutional framework can distinguish a civilized society from the unadulterated 'nature' of savages and beasts, a framework defined by laws and lawmakers.

Only once in his long career as a writer did he depict an individual Indian character. 'The Trial of Mamachtaga' is a short narrative based on his experiences in 1785, when he agreed to act as the defence counsel for an Indian accused of murdering two white men. The account, written shortly after the events it describes, has posed difficulties for critics attempting to reconcile the virulent Indian-hatred of Brackenridge's other work, with the more neutral, distant tone displayed in this piece. Daniel Marder has stated that it 'renders a realistic story that compels understanding and sympathy for the Indian forced to live in a white man's world'.<sup>17</sup> However, this reading seems to me to be mistaken; the narrative is more concerned with demonstrating a model of right behaviour for *white* settlers, which has nothing

---

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Marder, ed., *A Hugh Henry Brackenridge Reader, 1770-1815* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), 355.

to do with sympathy for Mamachtaga. The 'nature' of the Indian is explored only in order to warn Brackenridge's white readers against adopting any of his distinctive, savage traits.

Mamachtaga was a Delaware Indian imprisoned and put on trial for the murder of two white men, and the wounding of two others, while drunk. Of the Delawares, only one group, led by a chief called Killbuck, had refused to join in a recent war against the United States, and this group was living on an island in the Ohio close to Fort Pitt, called Killbuck's island. Some Delawares who had been active in the war, including Mamachtaga, were now in this encampment. The white men had crossed to the encampment to trade, when the incident occurred. Brackenridge goes to the encampment the next morning to find out what happened, as he had loaned a blanket to one of the murdered men. The mention of the blanket is the first of several details in the narrative which suggest Brackenridge's preoccupation with material goods; his entire involvement in this affair seems to have been sparked by his desire to retrieve that blanket. Self-interest and idle curiosity certainly seem to have played their part in his offer to represent the Indian in his trial:

Living in the place and being of the profession of the law, said I to the interpreter Joseph Nicholas, one day, "Has that Indian any fur or peltry, or has he any interest with his nation that he could collect some and pay a lawyer to take up his defense for this homicide?" The interpreter said that he had some in the hands of a trader in town, and that he could raise from his nation any quantity of racoon or beaver provided it would answer any purpose. I was struck with the pleasantry of having an Indian for a client and getting a fee in this way, and told the interpreter to go to the Indian, and explain the matter to him. (*Brackenridge Reader*, 356)

The perversity of his decision becomes apparent later in the narrative, when the possibility of an Indian escaping justice because of the intervention of a lawyer arouses the wrath of the rest of the white community. Initially, Brackenridge is insensitive to such local feeling; but there is no suggestion in the narrative that he is acting from a belief that everyone is entitled to legal defence. He is preoccupied with personal gain and 'pleasantry'. Indeed, once he has received payment in beaver from the Indian camp, it becomes clear that Mamachtaga has no hope of avoiding execution, and that Brackenridge is perfectly aware of this fact: 'After this as it behoved, I went to consult with



my client and arrange his defense, if it were possible to make one on which a probable face could be put' (*Brackenridge Reader*, 357).

Mamachtaga, it emerges, has misunderstood the nature of the service being offered by Brackenridge:

His idea was that he was giving the beaver as a commutation for his life. Under this impression it did not appear to me proper that I should take the beaver, knowing that I could do nothing for him, besides seeing the manner in which the dark and squalid creature was accommodated with but a shirt and breech-clout on, humanity dictated that the beaver should be applied to procure him a blanket and food additional to the bread and water which he was allowed. (*Brackenridge Reader*, 357)

Brackenridge is very generously offering to let Mamachtaga pay for his own provisions; there is certainly no sense that if he had not already had in hand the order for the beaver, he would have been willing to take on the burden of providing for 'the dark and squalid creature' himself. In short, I would argue, the initial response of Brackenridge to the situation is consistent with his depiction of Indians elsewhere. There is no need to extol the violent extermination of the Indians here, because Mamachtaga is already captive, and offers no threat. Instead, we have a portrait of a wily frontier lawyer looking to exploit the prisoner for personal capital, within the bounds of the law. He does not behave with any real kindness — indeed, he is at pains to show that his own interest was the motivating force behind his decision to represent Mamachtaga, to refute the accusation of sympathy towards the Indians that had been laid at his door.

Up to this point, Mamachtaga has been given no distinctive characteristics, nothing to distinguish him from the template of the ignorant, drunken, murderous savage. However, in the latter part of the narrative, he pays greater attention to the Indian character; which Marder has suggested, is intended to 'compel [...] understanding for the Indian'. It seems to me, however, that Brackenridge tries to undermine even those aspects of Indian behaviour which are conventionally admired, because they derive from too great a concern for the public opinion.

Brackenridge introduces this theme when he visits Mamachtaga in prison:

I had a curiosity to know the force of abstract sentiment in preferring greater evils to what with us would seem to be less, or rather the force of opinion over pain. For knowing the idea of the Indians with regard to the disgrace of

hanging, I proposed to the Indian woman [a Delaware waiting in attendance on Mamachtaga outside his cell] who spoke English as well as Indian and was a Delaware herself (Mamachtaga was of that nation), to ask him which he would choose, to be hanged or burned? (*Brackenridge Reader*, 358)

The rest of the narrative continues to explore the question of how far human behaviour is governed by ‘the force of opinion’. The white community is shown to be subject to its vagaries as well, as an angry crowd gathers at the jail, under the mistaken apprehension that Mamachtaga may be released. But it is the much-vaunted Indian notion of ‘honour’ that Brackenridge is most keen to undermine. The prisoner asks to be allowed to ‘run’, referring to the Indian custom of being given a certain length of time before execution in which to attempt to amass property with which to buy a pardon from the family of the victim; after the expiration of this period, he will present himself at an appointed time and place. Despite the inadmissibility of this custom, Brackenridge admits that

if this Indian had been suffered to run at this time, [...] he would have come with as much fidelity as a man challenged would on a point of honor come to the place assigned [...] to risk himself to his adversary. Such is the force of opinion, from education, on the human mind. (*Brackenridge Reader*, 361)

This might appear to be a grudging acknowledgement of the Indian’s capacity for honesty; but Brackenridge mentions it as an instance of the irrationality of Indian customs. It is only ‘force of opinion’ that compels such behaviour, not rational or sensible thought. The comparison to duelling is certainly not meant to demonstrate the inherent nobility of Indians; Brackenridge was consistently contemptuous of the practice. In *Modern Chivalry*, Captain Farrago outlines the appropriate response to an invitation to a duel: ‘It is this: a stout man calls upon me, with a challenge in his hand, I knock him down, if I can, without saying a word’ (*MC*, 47). The very concept of ‘honour’, he argues, is an artificial construction — ‘the custom of these times’ — dependent on public opinion for its existence, and therefore of no intrinsic value. To subordinate the power of human reason to the force of public opinion, he is suggesting, whether by duelling or by gathering in a mob, is to show no greater degree of civility than an ignorant savage.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> In *Modern Chivalry* he would further stigmatise such adherence to outmoded and irrational social codes, by characterising it as anti-Republican behaviour: ‘Honour is the principle of

This point is reiterated by an episode that occurs towards the end of the narrative, in which Mamachtaga offers to gather herbs from the woods to cure his jailor's child of a fever. Whilst doing so, he makes no attempt to escape, but again, Brackenridge ignores the generosity of the action, and instead characterises it as evidence of the extent to which Indian are crippled by their futile respect for the 'force of opinion': 'It would have been easy for him to have made his escape. But such is the force of opinion as we have before said, resulting from the way of thinking among the Indians, that he did not seem to think that he had the physical power to go' (*Brackenridge Reader*, 363). As the *Narratives* demonstrate, Brackenridge found it a rational and admirable thing for a man to attempt to save his own life.

The career of the Indian interpreter, Nicholas, enacts the lesson of Brackenridge's narrative. Originally white and 'civilized' — like settlers before they arrive on the frontier — he was captured as a boy, and became Indianized. He returns to white society as a mediator between civilization and the wilderness; however, falling out of step with public opinion forces him to flee, and return to 'Indian country'. This is the danger awaiting frontier society if it invests its faith in the ability of the people to govern themselves, almost by instinct — they will unconsciously be forcing themselves closer to the wilderness, and limiting the potential for individual advancement, because without recourse to the law, one must always be afraid of alienating the opinion of the majority. The ideology displayed in this short narrative is entirely consistent with the ardent defense of the Constitution that distinguished Brackenridge's later career. As Captain Farrago, in this instance evincing the opinion of his creator, comments in *Modern Chivalry*, 'But for the constitution and the laws, what would you differ from the racoons and opossums of the woods? It is this which makes all the *difference that we find between man and beast*' (*MC*, 755).

---

monarchy, distinction of rank, titles, dignities. In the American republics, we retain yet a great deal of the spirit of monarchy' (*MC*, 480). Brackenridge is here echoing Montesquieu, who notes that '*political virtue* [...] is the spring that makes republican government move, as *honor* is the spring that makes monarchy move'; *The Spirit of the Laws*, transl. and ed. by Anne M. Cohler and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), xli.

## V. LAND, VALUE AND MEANING ON THE FRONTIER

Closely connected to the Indian question was the issue of how the lands of the western country ought to be divided and used, and how their ownership should be determined. Before he could even begin to develop a coherent theory of agricultural land use, Brackenridge felt the need to refute the suggestions of many easterners that the Indians actually had an intrinsic right to the land; and that the land ought to be purchased from them by way of negotiated treaties. As we have seen from the 'Rising Glory' he had articulated a theory of land use that justified their dispossession, because they did not 'improve' the ground on which they lived, long before he moved to Pittsburgh. This intellectual position was quickly bolstered by his experiences on the frontier, and his exposure to the horrors of Indian fighting.

Arguably the most interesting ingredient of the *Narratives of a Late Expedition Against the Indians* is the 'Letter to the Publisher' by Brackenridge himself, in which he spells out 'some observations with regard to the animals, vulgarly called Indians' (*Indian Atrocities*, 62). He claims authority to write on the subject deriving from the first-hand knowledge he has acquired on the frontier; but also implies, as I have already suggested, that he was no Indian-lover to begin with:

Having an opportunity to know something of the character of this race of men, from the deeds they perpetrate daily round me, I think proper to say something on the subject. Indeed, several years ago, and before I left your city, I had thought different from some others with respect to the right of soil, and the propriety of forming treaties and making peace with them. (*Indian Atrocities*, 62-63)

He states here that, even before he had discovered the murderous, bestial nature of the Indians, he believed that they should be dispossessed and denied 'the right of soil' — and this belief was a necessary adjunct of his agrarian cast of mind. Fundamental to the system he outlines in this letter is the notion that no man is entitled to more land than he needs to support himself — this is, therefore, a rejection of hereditary entitlement to land as much as it is aimed at undercutting Indian claims. Mere occupancy, he argues, imparts no intrinsic rights:

The whole of this earth was given to man, and all descendants of Adam have a right to share it equally. There is no right of primogeniture in the laws of

nature and of nations. There is reason that a tall man, such as the chaplain in the American army that we call the High Priest, should have a large spot of ground to stretch himself upon; or that a man with a big belly, like a goodly alderman of London, should have a larger garden to produce beans and cabbage for his appetite, but that an agile, nimble runner, like an Indian called the Big Cat, at Fort Pitt, should have more space than his neighbours, because he has traveled a great space, I can see no reason. (*Indian Atrocities*, 65)

However, Brackenridge's definition of entitlement is more complex than this. He asserts that the amount of land an individual needs does not, or *may* not, vary according to that individual's occupation, because there is only one permissible frontier occupation: farming. The fact that the Indians are not farmers (or at least not *exclusively* farmers, in the manner in which he understands the term) does not matter. They have no rights to the land they inhabit, beyond what they would need to support them if they employed white farming practices:

What use do these ring, streaked, spotted and speckled cattle make of the soil? Do they till it? Revelation said to man, "Thou shalt till the ground." This alone is human life. It is favorable to population, to science, to the information of a human mind in the worship of God. Warburton has well said, that before you can make an Indian a christian, you must teach him agriculture and reduce him to civilized life. To live by tilling is *more humano*, by hunting is *more bestiarum*. I would as soon admit a right in the buffalo to grant lands, as in Killbuck, the Big Cat, the Big Dog, or any of the ragged wretches that are called chiefs and sachems. (*Indian Atrocities*, 69)

The hostility displayed here towards the Indians is ferocious; they are, in his eyes, little better than animals. But the system of land use which he has outlined is not exclusively aimed at the Indians; it has a broader application to the situation of most frontier settlers.

As we have already noted, land speculators had swallowed up millions of acres of land along the nation's frontiers, and either charged high rents to tenants or left the land unsurveyed and unimproved, merely waiting for it to rise in value. Such absentee landlords, as much as the Indian inhabitants, failed to satisfy Brackenridge's criteria for entitlement. But Brackenridge's theory becomes yet more radical; not even large landowners who are resident upon their land and who actively improve and cultivate it are entitled to more land than they need to support themselves and their families. Cultivation is not enough to justify such an imbalance:

It may be said that the cultivation or melioration of the earth, gives a property in it. No — if an individual has engrossed more than is necessary to produce grain for him to live upon, his useless gardens, fields and pleasure walks, may be seized upon by the person who, not finding convenient ground elsewhere, chooses to till them for his support. (*Indian Atrocities*, 66)

It is clear that Brackenridge was setting out terms for land use which would, if they were implemented, free up the empty spaces of the West for the occupancy of a multitude of small free-holding farmers — the ‘yeomen’ who figure so prominently in eighteenth-century republican rhetoric. It was not only their engagement in virtue-producing farming that he desired so ardently; it was also essential that they own their land. As James Sanderson has noted, agrarian theory operated on the assumption that the yeoman farmer was ‘a freeholder, which made him, above all else, a property owner and therefore an independent and free man’. Being ‘independent’ in this way meant that a man was not beholden to anyone else, and could therefore enter into the political process with disinterestedness.<sup>19</sup>

In order to realise his ideal frontier society, Brackenridge needed to disrupt the increasingly dominant capitalist approach to property — the idea, as he put it, that ‘an individual holding one acre cannot encroach on him who has a thousand, because he is bound by the law of the state under which he lives’ (*Indian Atrocities*, 66). But he was faced with a problem — although he acknowledged this arrangement to be inequitable and wrong, he was a lawyer, and had a fundamental respect for the law. Just as he saw secession as the inevitable precedent to chaos, he felt that the flagrant transgression of the laws of the land, even property laws with which he did not agree, would result in social discord. Thus Brackenridge frequently found himself acting for eastern land speculators in their prosecutions of squatters on their property. He looked for ways to unsettle this status quo within the law, however, and in 1785 he opposed none other than Washington himself, who was attempting to remove thirteen squatters from a property he had recently bought from a Colonel Groghan. Brackenridge’s legal argument was adapted from his agrarian theory of land-use: the Colonel had purchased the land from Indians, but this, he

---

<sup>19</sup> James Sanderson, ‘Agrarianism in Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s Articles in The Pittsburgh Gazette’, *Early American Literature*, 22:3 (1987), 307-308.

said, was not a valid claim, since the Indians had not cultivated the land, and therefore had no title to it, and, logically, could not sell what they did not own. Ingenious though this was, he lost the case.

Unfortunately for his hopes of personal advancement and civic improvement, Brackenridge was hidebound by his stubborn adherence to a variety of principles which worked to obstruct each other, preventing him from ever realising any one of his goals. If he could not achieve his vision of a society of small free-holding yeomen by manipulating the law, he might, he reasoned, achieve it by entering the political sphere. In 1786 he was elected to the State Assembly, largely because he promised to secure the right of westerners to pay for their land 'partly in cash and partly in State certificates of indebtedness' (Newlin, 76). But when it came to a vote in the assembly, Brackenridge had reconsidered; he opposed the bill, despite the fact that he earnestly desired settlers to be able to buy their own land, and that his constituents themselves wanted the bill to be passed. Another principle had intervened, as the report of his conduct in the *Pittsburgh Gazette* attempted to explain:

It was extremely difficult for people in this part of the country to obtain enough money to pay for certificates, to warrant the land they had a right to by occupancy, and as this measure would tend to raise them still higher, and so make it more difficult, he opposed it. [...] He remarked upon the fortunes acquired by speculators, men devoid of honesty and principles, by getting measures of this kind adopted. For tho' it was held out to relieve those who owed arrearages to the state, it would not do it so greatly as expected. These certificates would rise in their value, and the poor farmer, instead of getting them for two and six-pence, or five shillings the pound, would be obliged to give ten or fifteen shillings. (Quoted in Newlin, 77)

He objected, it seems, to two things: that 'poor farmers' should be made to pay *at all* for land which they had, in his view, already acquired a *de facto* title to, by living on and cultivating; and, given that such payment was inevitable under the law, that the rise in the value of certificates would play into the hands of speculators, under the guise of helping the farmers.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> The details of this bill are complicated. State certificates of indebtedness had been issued by the Continental Congress during the Revolution, as a means of paying for goods and services, due to the chronic shortage of specie currency. After the war, in the continued absence of hard currency with which to redeem them, the certificates themselves began to be used as a substitute currency, although their worth was less than their face value. Despairing of ever having them honoured to the full amount, many holders of certificates sold them to speculators for a lesser value, sometimes as little as ten percent. The bill in question proposed

The constantly reiterated ‘moral’ of *Modern Chivalry* — that ‘the cobbler should stick to his last’ — displays a similar attitude. Brackenridge has an unshakeable faith in implicit, objective value, even in people, which they cannot and ought not attempt to transcend:

I shall have accomplished something by this book, if it shall keep some honest man from lessening his respectability by pushing himself into public trusts for which he is not qualified; or when pushed forward into a public station, if it shall contribute to keep him honest by teaching him the folly of ambition, and farther advancement; when in fact, the shade is more to be coveted, and the mind, on reflection, will be better satisfied with itself for having chosen it. (*MC*, 481)

Certain people are suited to certain tasks — some are leaders, and some are farmers — and his writing tries to inculcate in his readers an ability and willingness to perceive and respect these distinctions. He does this in *Modern Chivalry* by holding up to our view a nightmare vision of disorder and chaos, a democratic society in which social and professional distinctions have collapsed, more attention is paid to appearances than to substance and integrity, and value is defined by the clamour of the public voice.

There is a close analogy between the economic disruption engendered by the speculators and the political and social disruption he depicts in *Modern Chivalry*. Both reward imposture, and the appearance of worth, and both are exacerbated by the unique conditions of the frontier. As already noted, most transactions operated on a system of barter, where value is entirely a subjective matter. Con-men prosper just as speculators grow rich, by exploiting the absence of an objective standard of determining value which would be provided by, respectively, respect for the laws and a hard currency. The absence of order in frontier life, which most westerners cherished as ‘liberty’, was, to Brackenridge, anarchy, and compelled him to support the

---

to admit these certificates, at face value, as payment for lands. On the surface, this would assist poor farmers to raise the funds to buy their property, since it was cheaper to buy certificates to the value of a farm (‘two and six-pence, or five shillings the pound’) than to pay the full price in cash. However, Brackenridge’s opposition to this proposal emerged once he realised that the passing of the bill would immediately inflate the value of the certificates (to ‘ten or fifteen shillings’). Thus, although it would still be cheaper for farmers to buy their farms in this way, it would play into the hands of the speculators who had bought up all the certificates for a low price when they seemed to be worthless, and were now selling them on at a great profit.



Constitution and the establishment of the Bank of the United States, measures which were generally unpopular amongst his neighbours.

The final casualty of this growing disjunction between real and perceived value, Brackenridge worried, would be language itself — a collapse of meaning where there is no correlation between the signifier and the signified. For an author this had particular resonance, raising the question of whether a writer's intention can ever be fully communicated by his words. In the early republic this anxiety was particularly extreme, as the nation was literally trying to define itself into existence by inscribing its values and institutions in documents of national importance.<sup>21</sup>

James Madison, in *The Federalist*, encapsulates the fear which he shared with his old classmate:

The use of words is to express ideas. [...] But no language is so copious as to supply words or phrases for every complex idea, or so correct as not to include many equivocally denoting different ideas. Hence it must happen that however accurately objects may be discriminated in themselves, and however accurately the discrimination may be considered, the definition of them may be rendered inaccurate by the inaccuracy of the terms in which it is delivered. (*The Federalist*, no. 37, 180-181)

Even where one's perception and comprehension are reliable, expression may still be inadequate. In 1805, Brackenridge included an evolved version of Madison's point in *Modern Chivalry*. In discussion with 'a politician,' Captain Farrago articulates the author's increasingly fragile faith in the capacity of the Constitution to protect liberty from the dangers of individuals seeking power, when he declares that 'Individual injury may be done [...] but the constitution is a barrier to usurpation'. The politician replies:

Our constitutions are yet green [...] Inflexions are easy. It is construction makes the constitution; and these vary with the men in power. (*MC*, 488)

Brackenridge knew that even on the frontier, people were poor but not necessarily ignorant. In America, literacy rates were remarkably high during this period.<sup>22</sup> Most people could, and did, read newspapers, as indeed

---

<sup>21</sup> See Nicholas Rombes, 'Cheating with Sound: Imagining Civic Culture in Federalist America', *Arizona Quarterly* 54:4 (Winter 1998), 1-24.

<sup>22</sup> See Ellis, 80-81, on American literacy before the Revolution: 'Although American literacy rates varied from region to region — New England led the way, followed closely by the middle colonies and then the South — approximately 70 to 75 percent of the white male

Brackenridge had hoped they would; and they too, as inevitably as the men in power, would seek to give 'constructions' to the Constitution.

In response to the social, economic and linguistic chaos he perceived all around him, Brackenridge returned to his original belief in his own role, as an educator, an interpreter of the laws for the 'common people'. If people were to read, they ought to read the right things. Just as, in the earliest issues of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* in 1786, he argued that the newspaper ought to cultivate a more capable electorate by informing them 'what is going on in our state, particularly what our representatives are doing' ('Value of a Newspaper', *Brackenridge Reader*, 109-110), so he continued to write *Modern Chivalry* until his death, in an attempt to create more judicious readers, and better citizens.

Brackenridge found it almost impossible to explain the complex intersection of ideological beliefs which had led him to this conclusion. Almost all of his attempts to represent western interests, through representative public offices or private literary efforts, ended with a similar alienation of his frontier compatriots. The most spectacular example was the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, when Brackenridge was nearly convicted of treason for his apparent support of the uprising. In the eyes of the western rebels, however, he seemed a 'most artful fellow', and the suspicion lingered that he had saved himself from conviction by turning state's evidence.<sup>23</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising that his peers found it so hard to understand Brackenridge. Westerners did not share his classical training, nor did the majority of them comprehend the traditional strain of republican agrarianism that dictated his anomalous responses to the issues which shaped their lives.

---

population knew how to read. [...] Even in the back country counties of Pennsylvania, where Brackenridge was raised, the male literacy rate had reached 65 percent by mid-century.' This compares with literacy rates of 60 percent and 50 percent for England and France respectively.

<sup>23</sup> See Daniel Marder, *Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (Boston: Twayne, 1967), 111. Brackenridge, who opposed the insurrection on principle, nevertheless accompanied the rebels on their march against Pittsburgh and then towards Philadelphia, in the belief that his moderate voice might help to restrain them and prevent bloodshed. In the East, however, during the rebellion, he was considered to be one of its ringleaders, and he rightly came to fear for his life. He was able to prove his innocence sufficiently to Alexander Hamilton for a formal trial to be unnecessary, but rumours of some sort of wrong-doing persisted in both the West and the East. His own account, *Incidents of the Insurrection in Western Pennsylvania in the Year 1794*, written to exonerate him from public charges of treason, stresses his diplomatic efforts to control the passions of the rebels.

On the other hand, to easterners, his contributions to the debates discussed above aligned him too closely with the troublesome, uncivilized frontiersmen, who, in their brutality towards the Indians and unreasonable economic demands, were threatening to dismember the nation itself. Many of the anecdotes which proliferate about his life reflect this puzzlement, characterizing him as an eccentric devoted to principles his contemporaries struggled to comprehend, despite his repeated efforts to spell them out. He remained convinced, however, despite his personal disappointments, that the West ought to play a vital role in the future of the United States, and that it was frequently undervalued and ill-treated by the remote federal government.

#### *4. Acculturation in the Fiction of Charles Brockden Brown*

---

In *Wieland* (1798), the first published novel of Charles Brockden Brown, the author is powerfully engaged with the question of how to inhabit and relate to the American scene. The opening paragraph positions the events of the novel in a liminal region, in which social transition is configured in environmental terms. Clara Wieland, the narrator, informs us that,

The storm that tore up our happiness, and changed into dreariness and desert the blooming scene of our existence, is lulled into grim repose; but not until the victim was transfixed and mangled; till every obstacle was dissipated by its rage; till every remnant of good was wrested from our grasp and exterminated.<sup>1</sup>

The language here is quite insistently reminiscent of the language of frontier transformation, but in reverse. Unlike in *Filson*, for instance, in which scenes of extreme violence are a grim but necessary prologue to the establishment of American civilization in the wilderness, in *Wieland*, Clara informs us, civilization is the starting point from which the participants will degenerate. Like Bleeker, Brown presents the invasion of a rural paradise by violent forces beyond control. ‘Desert’, a term often used by Brown as a substitute for ‘wilderness’, replaces the ‘blooming’ pastoral garden which used to exist. The ‘mangled’ victim echoes the physical imagery of Indian atrocities from captivity narratives, and ‘exterminat[ion]’, more commonly offered as one of the potential fates awaiting the Indian nations, introduces the undercurrent of racial conflict to the text. Here, as in *Maria Kittle*, elemental savagery has the upper hand, and peaceful, civilized repose is wiped out.

According to Jane Tompkins’s reading of the novel, *Wieland* is deeply pessimistic about the potential for American society in a world shorn of patriarchal authority. It works, Tompkins argues, to undercut the Jeffersonian idyll of a harmonious rural society, presenting instead an apocalyptic vision of what may occur when the traditional framework of society — such as a social hierarchy based around a monarchy and institutionalised religion — is

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland; or, The Transformation*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, 6 vols., Vol. I, ed. Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), 3. All further references will be to this edition.

removed. She sees the novel's concerns as consistently political, characterising Brown's approach as specifically Federalist:

Brown's picture of the disintegration of the Wielands' miniature society is a more or less direct reflection of Federalist skepticism about the efficacy of religion and education in preparing citizens to govern themselves. [...] It is not Carwin who murders his wife and children, but Wieland, the devout, well-educated farmer, the very epitome of the man on whom Jeffersonians staked their vision of Republican order. Because he lives in a world where authority is not vested in particular institutions of a visible and external sort, Wieland has no satisfactory way of classifying and interpreting his experiences. The 'wilderness' in which he lives, as Alan Axelrod observes, 'offers nothing to check a misguided leap of faith,' for in a world already devoid of 'the tempering influence of city civilization,' the democratic revolution removes not only the social controls that might have prevented Wieland's crime, but stable structures of perception and judgment as well. (Tompkins, 53)

The figure of Carwin, Tompkins suggests, is such a powerful catalyst because he represents the destabilising social mobility characteristic of the new republic. He is

the quintessential child of revolution, a self-made man who changes his religion, his nationality, his occupation, his social position at will. [...] Carwin's successive identities, like his assumption of the voices of others, are the logical outcome of the social situation the Wielands inhabit, one in which the insignia of social stratification have been stripped away in the name of equality, and all sources of authority are potentially suspect. (Tompkins, 52)

Although I share Tompkins's conviction that the 'the key to *Wieland*'s meaning lies in the historical situation that the novel itself attempted to shape' (Tompkins, 43), I disagree in my interpretation of precisely *how* Brown wished to shape that situation, through the text. *Wieland*, I will argue, should be read as a plea to restrain the divisive influence of political parties on the one hand, and as a guide to how best to perceive and inhabit the American landscape on the other. Reading *Wieland* through the lens of two further Brown texts, 'The Memoirs of Carwin' and *Edgar Huntly*, I wish to suggest that the author had a consistent vision of American expansion which required European tradition to acculturate itself to American terrain. To become a *successful* American (which Wieland manifestly is not), Brown suggests, one must immerse oneself in a quintessentially American experience, and come

through it. For Brown, as for most other writers of the period, the imaginative focus for that experience was the wilderness of the American frontier.

### I. THE EVILS OF PARTY

Many attempts have been made to trace the development of Brown's political beliefs as his career progressed. The general critical consensus has been that Brown went through a period of youthful radicalism, during which he was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Rousseau and Godwin. It has likewise been assumed that during this period, his sympathies naturally gravitated to the Jeffersonian Republicans; and that some time around the turn of the century, his allegiances shifted to the more conservative Federalism of Washington, Hamilton, and Adams.<sup>2</sup>

Various reasons for this alteration have been postulated: the influence of the largely Federalist Friendly Club in New York; the commercial failure of his novels, which forced him to take an active interest in the mercantile activities of his family; the death of Elihu Hubbard Smith, his close friend and fellow radical; and his marriage, in 1804, to Elizabeth Linn. More recently critics have begun to question the timing of his apostasy — Robert Lawson-Peebles suggests that a personal antipathy towards Thomas Jefferson may have taken seed in the mid to late 1790s; while Jane Tompkins, as we have seen, has argued that *Wieland*, which Brown must have started writing at the latest in early 1798, contains a powerfully Federalist message.<sup>3</sup>

I wish briefly to suggest two things about Brown's political development: that he was never really a Jeffersonian in his early career, despite his engagement with radical ideas borrowed from French and English Jacobin intellectuals; and that, conversely, he never moved very far towards Federalist sympathies in his later life. In fact, Brown was vehemently and consistently opposed to factionalism, and his criticism of Adams' or Jefferson's administrations was motivated by his individual response to discrete political issues. The motivating factor in Brown's politics was always a patriotic

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Charles C. Cole, Jr., 'Brockden Brown and the Jefferson Administration,' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 72:3 (July 1948), 254.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 241, 247-248.

concern for national interests, rather than obedience to any particular party line.

The case for Brown as a radical writer rests largely on his acknowledged admiration of Godwin, and on the content of his first significant publication, *Alcuin: A Dialogue* (1798), in which he articulates an argument for divorce reform, influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792. Brown's indebtedness is signalled by the title he gave to the serialized version of *Alcuin* in the *Weekly Magazine*: 'The Rights of Women'. The question of women's rights was a common ingredient of late eighteenth-century revolutionary rhetoric. In America, however, it began to be marginalized after independence, in favour of a more traditional vision of domestic female virtue. By the mid-1790s there can be little doubt that support of female suffrage and divorce reform was considered radical; indeed, after Brown's death, his conservative friends and biographers, Paul Allen and William Dunlap, took pains to dissociate his general character from 'the arguments which ingenuous sophistry might urge against any existing establishment'. Allen flatly declares, 'Had the proposition thus advanced by this writer been stated to him as a substitute for the ceremonial solemnities now in use, he would have been the first to have anathematized the introduction of such dangerous novelties [...] But following his own speculations, intent only on finding fault with existing establishments, in order to make himself consistent in the sequel, he is compelled to plunge headlong into the very difficulty he would have wished most sedulously to avoid'.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the anxiety of Dunlap and Allen that Brown's opposition to 'existing establishments' laid him open to charges of immorality, *Alcuin* is not quite as radical as it first appears. As Cathy Davidson has argued, this early text displays Brown's simultaneous impulse to express and restrain transformative socio-political opinion. It reflects his belief that by expressing alternate potential outcomes for the nation in fictional form, he can moderate between them, directing his readers into a more balanced path. Stephen Watts has noted that, at this early stage of his career as an author, Brown was

---

<sup>4</sup> William Dunlap, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown: Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts Before Unpublished*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: James Parke, 1815), I, 105-106. Allen's manuscript was incomplete; Dunlap finished the work with minor changes, but much of the first volume, which contains the bulk of the biographical information, is Allen's.

confronted with a choice between the profession selected for him by his family — the law — and his own desire, even need, to write; and that his anxiety over his personal destiny found an analogue in the splintering of public life. As Davidson suggests, *Alcuin* is Brown's first response to these contending impulses, initiating a trend which can be found in most of his later writing:

*Alcuin* seems to be precisely [a] balancing act between responsibility and radicalism. That balancing act necessarily leaves many major questions unanswered, which is perhaps just what the author intended. For in *Alcuin*, Brown begins his long consideration of the ways in which human beings can interact and communicate (or fail to communicate); of the strengths and weaknesses of both radicalism and conservatism, rationality and sentimentalism, intellect and emotion — a debate he continued, in various forms, throughout all of his later major work.<sup>5</sup>

Brown attempted to carry his non-partisan approach into his journalistic endeavours. He was determined that *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, which he edited between 1799 and 1800, should not bow to pressure from either party, and remain aloof from political rivalry; but such a stance was not easy to maintain. An article signed 'Candidus', probably written by Brown, but certainly expressive of his point of view as it appeared in his magazine, bemoaned the perils of neutrality:

If you aim to shun the evil by studying a medium between opposite opinions, or, as mediums are hard to hit, content yourself with stating mere facts, and suppress all reflections, you will gain the repute of a time-serving, equivocal, or luke-warm wretch. If you drop politics altogether, matters will be worse still; you will not be criticised indeed, but then you will not be read.<sup>6</sup>

Again, a year later, in another *Monthly Magazine* article, he stated that 'The mind of a candid reader, on either side of the great political question which now agitates the public, can feel little pleasure in the extravagant effusion of *pure party spirit*'.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as Brown also argued, in the same forum, the attribution of names to the different political factions was actually deceptive,

<sup>5</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, 'The Matter and Manner of Charles Brockden Brown's *Alcuin*' in *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Bernard Rosenthal (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981), 83.

<sup>6</sup> 'On Periodical Publications', *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, 1 (April, 1799), 2; quoted in David Lee Clark, *Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1952), 150.

<sup>7</sup> 'Article L', *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, III (Nov., 1800), 378; quoted in Clark, 151.



and masked the many similarities between them. Calling one party 'republican' falsely implied, to the ignorant, that 'the federalist had discarded *republican* principles'. The truth of the matter, according to Brown, was that *both* parties were relatively conservative compared to the disruptive forces of radicalism associated with the Jacobins:

[T]he friends of government, of order, and peace, whether monarchical, aristocratical, or republican, arrange themselves on the side of the supporters of the present government and its administration, though they may essentially differ in the most fundamental principles of government. On the other hand, the true *democrat*, the Jacobin, the discontented opposer of all law and government, as well as the sound republican, are found united with those who are in the opposition to the ruling power.<sup>8</sup>

This veil of studied neutrality makes it virtually impossible, on the evidence of Brown's explicit statements on political subjects, to lock him into a specific party allegiance, at least in the period up to about 1803.

## II. LANDSCAPE AND IDEOLOGY IN *WIELAND* AND 'MEMOIRS OF CARWIN'

Brown's public opinions regarding economic strategy strike an equally balanced note, acknowledging the mutually dependent relationship of agriculture and commerce in ensuring the future prosperity of the nation. In 1799, nearly a year after *Wieland* was published, Brown commented that

the United States, as well from their colonial origin and progress, as their maritime situation, seem unavoidably destined to be a great commercial nation. But the state of their interior, and the extent of rich and cultivable soil which it comprehends, at the same time, indicate that the great majority of the people must be powerfully impelled to become cultivators of the earth.<sup>9</sup>

But if this really was Brown's opinion of what the future held for the United States, then it begs the question which Tompkins's argument is designed to explain: why does he choose to portray in *Wieland* the disruption and ultimate destruction of an agrarian community? Where do the *Wielands* go wrong?

<sup>8</sup> 'Article LVI', *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, III (December, 1800), 452; quoted in Clark, 152.

<sup>9</sup> 'Article XXVI', a review of '*Essays and Notes on Husbandry and Rural Affairs*, by J.B. Bordley', *Monthly Magazine and American Review*, I (August, 1799), 439-442. In the attribution of this article to Brown I have followed Clark, 147.

It has frequently been noted that the Wielands' neoclassical estate, in many ways, mirrors Jefferson's Monticello, and Wieland himself, as Robert Lawson-Peebles has remarked, is a similarly impractical and bookish farmer to Jefferson himself (Lawson-Peebles, 240). We are told that,

His fortune exempted him from the necessity of personal labour. The task to be performed by him was nothing more than superintendence. The skill that was demanded by this was merely theoretical, and was furnished by casual inspection, or by closet study. (*Wieland*, 21)

But whatever his resemblance to the future president, Wieland is clearly not the *beau ideal* of Jeffersonian agrarianism. 'Those who labour in the earth', to quote Jefferson in the *Notes*, may be 'the chosen people of God', but Wieland refuses to get his hands dirty.

When Wieland's father decided to emigrate to America, his aim had been to 'disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations' of the Indians. However, he was dissuaded from his intention by 'a nearer survey of savage manners', and turned instead to cultivating his farm on the banks of the Schuylkill (*Wieland*, 10). Despite a later attempt to resume his missionary calling, the elder Wieland becomes convinced that he has failed in his duty to his Deity, a failure that, in his mind, was the direct cause of his spectacular explosive demise. Emory Elliott has noted that 'this new American Wieland becomes an allegorical type for another cultural heritage in America — the Puritan sacred mission'.<sup>10</sup> The real mistake of both Wieland and the Puritans lies in their attempt merely to import European ideas and expect them to function in an American setting. As a result, Wieland meets with nothing but 'insult and derision' in his dealings with the Indians. His response to this repulse is a step in the right direction, in that he abandons the doctrines and forms of European religion and personalises his faith according to his peculiar needs. It is a form of accommodation reflected in the composition of his temple, with its synthesis of old world aesthetics and new world terrain:

At the distance of three hundred yards from his house, on the top of a rock whose sides were steep, rugged, and encumbered with dwarf cedars and stony asperities, he built what to a common eye would have seemed a summer house. The eastern verge of this precipice was sixty feet above the river which flowed at its foot. The view before it consisted of a transparent

---

<sup>10</sup> Emory Elliot, 'Introduction' to Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), xvii.

current, fluctuating and rippling in a rocky channel, and bounded by a rising scene of corn-fields and orchards. The edifice was slight and airy. It was no more than a circular area, twelve feet in diameter, whose flooring was the rock, cleared of moss and shrubs, and exactly levelled, edged by twelve Tuscan columns, and covered by an undulating dome. (*Wieland*, 11)

We have here a juxtaposition of ‘rugged [...] stony asperities’ with ‘a rising scene of corn-fields and orchards’, of untempered wilderness with cultivated arable land. Moreover, the temple itself is both part of the landscape — its ‘flooring was the rock’ — and an artificial Europeanised construct. However, this move towards reconciling the European and the American is undermined by his fixation on the past, and his obsessive reverence for an Old World god.

The temple remains an important location in the novel, as it is the only place on the Wielands’ estate, Mettingen, which makes any kind of concession to the American terrain. Theodore and Clara use their father’s place of worship for more secular purposes, as a ‘place of resort in the evenings of summer’, but they are no more successful in adapting their behaviour for the American scene. The temple, formerly a half-way house between wilderness and cultivation, becomes a kind of European salon: ‘Here we sung, and talked, and read, and occasionally banqueted. Every joyous and tender scene most dear to my memory, is connected to this edifice [...H]ere the social affections were accustomed to expand, and the tear of delicious sympathy to be shed’ (*Wieland*, 24). The former austerity of the temple is ameliorated by the addition of a harpsichord and a bust of Cicero, and as Emory Elliott has noted, their ‘shift in perspective from religion to reason and art is symbolized’ by this secular icon (Elliott, *Wieland*, xvii).

Cicero is ‘the chief object of veneration’ for Theodore Wieland, who aspires to emulate the rhetorical clarity of his classical master:

He never tired of conning and rehearsing his productions. To understand them was not sufficient. He was anxious to discover the gestures and cadences with which they ought to be delivered. He was very scrupulous in selecting a true scheme of pronunciation for the Latin tongue, and in adapting it to the words of his darling writer. His favorite occupation consisted in embellishing his rhetoric with all the properties of gesticulation and utterance. (*Wieland*, 24)

Cicero is not merely an emblem of the Enlightenment reverence for classical law and government (shared by Jefferson and most of the Revolutionary

leaders and framers of the Constitution), but also of the means by which this rational order is maintained. In his role as lawyer and statesman, Cicero established himself as the greatest classical orator, and was still a model for rhetorical excellence in Brown's time. As such, he exemplifies not only rigorous and ordered ideas, but the public expression of those ideas, an ideal that the American government had absorbed in its formation. Brown seems to be anxious, however, about the performative element of public speaking. Wieland's determination to 'embellish' Cicero's words prefigures the distorting effects of Carwin's ventriloquism. *Wieland* — like *Modern Chivalry* — questions the capacity of American society to function when 'embellishment' is not regulated by such 'scrupulous' selection; when the open, clear communication of ideas and information is subverted by deliberate imposture.

Carwin, as Tompkins points out, is remarkable for the flexibility of his identity, giving him a dangerous social mobility. Greater light is thrown on his position in *Wieland* by an examination of its companion-piece, an incomplete fragment called 'The Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist', in which Brown expands on the history of this mysterious figure. The fragment was serialized in the *Literary Magazine*, of which Brown was editor, between 1803 and 1805, but it was probably largely written immediately after the novel from which it derives, with additional material being composed at the time of its publication. In it, Carwin narrates his early life on a small farm in 'a western district of Pennsylvania', telling us of his distaste for farming caused by his perpetual hunger for knowledge and books.<sup>11</sup> His father attempts to limit his education, to fit him for the life he is likely to lead, but Carwin defies his authority in the pursuit of learning. We learn how the youth discovers and perfects his capacity for ventriloquism and imitation; how he goes to live with a rich aunt in Philadelphia; how he is disappointed not to receive an inheritance from that aunt when she dies; and how he falls into company with a wealthy and mysterious Irishman called Ludloe, who takes him to Europe, and eventually invites him to join a secret society. The fragment ends as Carwin is trying to decide whether to comply with the society's two inviolable

---

<sup>11</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, 'Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist', in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, 6 vols, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), 1, 247.

rules: a complete confession of everything in his past life, withholding nothing, and perpetual secrecy, on pain of death, regarding the society's existence and nature.

The incident which first prompts Carwin to experiment with his vocal talents suggests his symbolic significance in *Wieland*. One day, he discovers that his father's cattle have broken a fence and escaped from a nearby field. He spends so much time trying to solve the mystery of their escape that he realises his father will beat him for wasting time when he returns with the news. While attempting to find a short-cut home he discovers a previously unknown 'narrow pass':

I had frequently skirted and penetrated this tract, but had never been so completely entangled in the maze as now: hence I had remained unacquainted with a narrow pass, which, at the distance of an hundred yards from the river, would conduct me, though not without danger and toil, to the opposite side of the ridge. ('Memoirs of Carwin', 249)

Significantly, it is only by becoming 'completely entangled in the maze' that the direct route becomes apparent. Carwin's willingness to expose himself to the 'danger and toil' of the wilderness actually brings him home more quickly; but it will bring him home in a changed form, having discovered the potential for manipulating sound. As we will see again in *Edgar Huntly*, the plunge into the wilderness results in profound changes. Moreover, for both Carwin and Edgar, being lost or entangled is ultimately productive of positive consequences, despite the creation of momentary anxiety, because it requires the moral and physical effort of self-direction. Being enlightened or directed in some way only leads Carwin into greater moral difficulty — later in the text, for example, he often comments on the way Ludloe's capacity for reasoned argument makes matters, which he instinctively knows to be morally complex, seem extremely clear and uncomplicated. Similarly, Edgar's faith in the education he has received from Sarsefield constantly misleads him, whereas his impulsive reaction to circumstances in the wilderness repeatedly results in success. This pattern also emerges in *Wieland*, in which the 'revelation' received by Theodore is productive of anything but clarity. Brown questions 'revelation' of any kind, whether secular or religious. By locating the springs of action outside the individual self, it results in a

misplaced and complacent sense of security. Brown constantly suggests that an individual must regulate his or her own actions.

While traversing the pass, Carwin discovers the remarkable echo which first makes him aware that sound can be distorted and controlled. As he enters the darkness of the pass, he tells us that 'by a defect common in everyone's education, goblins and spectres were to me the objects of the most violent apprehensions'. To distract himself from his superstitious fears,

I [...] began to amuse myself by hallowing as loud as organs of unusual compass and vigour would enable me. I uttered the words which chanced to occur to me, and repeated in the shrill tones of a Mohock savage ... 'Cow! cow! come home! home!' These notes were of course reverberated from the rocks which on either side towered aloft, but the echo was confused and indistinct. ('Memoirs of Carwin', 250)

Instinctively, Carwin recognises that the education he has received from books, or from a European folk tradition, will not serve his purpose here. To facilitate his passage through this hazardous and frightening terrain he must do two things: invoke a native presence, enabling him to integrate with the environment; and project this adopted persona orally, asserting his controlling human authority over the landscape. This act of role-playing enables Carwin to traverse the pass safely. Rejecting the impulse to impose an inappropriate, European 'reading' on the scene, he Americanises the experience, absorbing the essence of the wilderness as he masters it with his voice. Carwin here achieves the immersion in the American landscape which the elder Wieland had shied away from, a level of acculturation — of white to red, civility to savagery — that empowers him.

Returning to *Wieland*, it is evident that this attunement with the American landscape is an integral part of Carwin's character here, too. Clara's first glimpse of Carwin makes it clear that she cannot fit him into her narrow view of the world. According to surface appearances, to which she attaches great importance, Carwin seems to be nothing but an ignorant rustic: he had 'none of that gracefulness and ease which distinguish a person with certain advantages of education from a clown'. She notes that there was 'nothing remarkable in these appearances,' other than the direction and place in which Carwin was walking: 'This lawn was only traversed by men whose views were directed to the pleasures of the walk, or the grandeur of the scenery'

(*Wieland*, 50). Carwin, because of his appearance, is deemed by Clara to be an inappropriate observer of the view; she clearly believes that it is impossible instinctively to relate to the landscape, that one must be educated in picturesque aesthetics to make sense of what one sees. According to a European, eighteenth-century notion of the picturesque, the landscape took on beauty when shaped by human hands, and therefore the ‘view’ of Mettingen — the ‘grandeur of the scenery’ — very much included the situation of the house itself, in relation to its grounds. Carwin, however, shows no interest in the habitation of the Wielands: ‘He passed slowly along, frequently pausing, as if to examine the prospect more deliberately, but never turning his eye toward the house, so as to allow me a view of his countenance’ (*Wieland*, 50). Clara is confused by his indifference to the building, since she cannot conceive what he is doing there if he does not want to look at what she thinks of as ‘the view’.

Brown, here, is inviting the reader, along with Clara, to question his or her conception of what comprises an American landscape, and in doing so, importing some of the more modern notions of natural sublimity he had imbibed from European romantic writers and artists, and which would come to exert such a powerful influence on nineteenth-century American notions of landscape. He is also establishing Carwin as an integral part of the natural scene, almost a force of nature. Clara, watching *from* the house, therefore cannot see it; her point of view is aligned with Carwin’s, with the important difference that he is also a part of the landscape she views. Carwin is both the observer and the observed.

Clara is also determined to classify Carwin according to her conviction of the correlation between appearance and reality, and reveals her rather uncertain investment in the Jeffersonian vision:

I continued in the same spot for half an hour, vaguely, and by fits, contemplating the image of this wanderer, and drawing, from outward appearances, those inferences with respect to the intellectual history of this person, which experience affords us. I reflected on the alliance which commonly subsists between ignorance and the practice of agriculture, and indulged myself in airy speculations as to the influence of progressive knowledge in dissolving this alliance and embodying the dreams of the poets. I asked why the plough and the hoe might not become the trade of every human being, and how this trade might be made conducive to, or, at least, consistent with acquisition of wisdom and eloquence. (*Wieland*, 51)

Carwin looks like a farmer; therefore he is a farmer; therefore he is ignorant. Having reasoned thus far, Clara then congratulates herself for her generously 'progressive' notion that one day this irrefutable logical sequence might lose its force. Full-blooded republicans (such as Benjamin Rush) believed that an agricultural way of life would enrich the cultural fabric of the nation, but Clara herself calls her speculations 'airy', suggesting their insubstantiality. We are further led to query her speculative agrarianism by its juxtaposition with her catastrophic faith in her ability to draw conclusions 'from outward appearances'.

This brings us to the heart of the problem with Tompkins's insistence that the novel is a Federalist attack on a Jeffersonian vision. There is an inconsistency in her argument: if Carwin is 'one of the "new men" the Federalists feared, who suddenly appeared out of nowhere', then why would he have so catastrophic an effect on the *Republican* society of which he is a product? The answer is, I think, relatively simple: Carwin is an embodiment of the 'social and epistemic voids [that] the Wielands confront', but the society which they inhabit is *not* a Republican paradise. Indeed, Jeffersonians would have as much reason to fear Carwin as Federalists. The Federalist desire to preserve class distinctions, and to have a government run by an educated social elite, is threatened by Carwin's extraordinary social mobility, his endlessly mutable identity. But although Republicans advocated a more democratic society, they too, depended upon some kind of division between social groups — a *geographical* distinction, as we have already seen, between urban and rural spaces, corresponding to a moral opposition between corruption and purity. Carwin is as geographically mobile as he is socially — 'a wanderer', as Clara terms him. He traces an inverted Jeffersonian trajectory, abandoning the 'perfect' lifestyle of farming, heading to the city, travelling to Europe, and eventually becoming so acclimatised to European culture that he is, as Henry Pleyel informs Clara, 'indistinguishable from a native, when he chose to assume that character' (*Wieland*, 67). Having returned to America, despite his rustic garb, he continues to oscillate between the country, where Clara first sees him, and the city, where Pleyel meets him.



The literal mobility of Carwin finds a symbolic expression in the flexibility of his voice. His peculiar vocal ability has two ingredients, one social, one spatial: he can sound like anyone or anything, from a Mohock savage to Wieland's wife Catharine; and can make his voice come from any direction. Carwin thus has a destabilising influence on both Republican and Federalist constructions of society, inviting Brown's readers to question the necessity of the social or geographical, and hence political, schisms in American society. In doing so, Carwin revives the unifying imagery of the pre-factional revolutionary era, in which Indian imagery was used to signify a quintessentially American identity (the Boston Tea Party being the most obvious example), and 'acquiring a voice' was a commendable democratic goal.

Some justification is needed for this attempt to position Carwin, the instigator of appalling violence and mayhem in Mettingen, as an ideologically unifying force. This may be done by recalling that *Wieland*, for all the contemporary relevance of its concerns, is an historical novel. According to the 'Advertisement' it is set 'between the conclusion of the French and the beginning of the revolutionary war' (*Wieland*, 3), the very period in which the compatibility of Old World patterns of government with the requirements of American life was being questioned. In 1800, Brown carefully defined what he perceived to be the difference between writing history and writing 'romance' — or historical fiction:

The observer or experimentalist, therefore, who carefully watches, and faithfully enumerates the appearances which occur, may claim the appellation of historian. He who adorns these appearances with cause and effect, and traces resemblances between the past, distant, and future, with the present, performs a different part. He is a dealer, not in certainties, but probabilities, and is therefore a romancer.<sup>12</sup>

In *Wieland*, Brown, by his own definition 'a romancer', traces these 'resemblances' between the period just after the French and Indian War, and the present, post-revolutionary era. He expected his readers to search for and recognise the analogies between the world of the novel and their own society — but it was not the same world. Contemporary readers of the novel would

<sup>12</sup> 'The Difference Between History and Romance', *Monthly Magazine*, II.4 (April 1800), 251-53, reprinted in Charles Brockden Brown, *Literary Essays and Reviews*, ed. by Alfred Weber and Wolfgang Schäfer (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992), 83.

certainly have seen in the destruction of Theodore's family an analogue for the internal convulsions and civil strife brought about by the Revolution, symbolic associations also present in Crèvecoeur and Bleecker; and they would have searched for the applicability of the novel's lessons to their own time. The absence of authority and empty social spaces which Tompkins locates in the novel are indisputably there; but contemporary readers would most probably have identified them with the absent monarch of the pre-revolutionary period, not with the socially pervasive political system initiated by the Constitution, in which government began locally, and could be perceived on a local as well as national scale.

The 'void' of the novel is filled by the figure of Carwin, with his many voices, which originate in the American land itself. His incursion into the idyllic but fragile society of Mettingen tears it apart, but for American readers at the time, this disintegration would have been mediated by a concomitant awareness of regeneration. On a certain level, Brown, in *Wieland*, as much as Cooper in the *Leatherstocking Tales*, was offering a narrative of national origins. The warning delivered by the novel, I would argue, is not an expression of Federalist anxiety over the disorientating absence of authority in a democratic landscape, but an anti-factional anxiety over the betrayal of republican ideals now independence has been achieved. The emptiness of a colonial American landscape has been replaced by a benevolent republican government; but Americans must not allow this new focus for belief to be torn apart — the 'double-tongued deceiver', of whom Clara utters a closing execration, is the divisive voice of party faction. Within this scheme, Carwin is not an embodiment of dispossessed Indians come to obstruct the process of Jeffersonian republicanism, but a foreshadowing of the revolutionary ideology which would uproot the complacent society of people like the *Wielands*, unapologetically appropriating Indian iconography as it did so.

### III. REPRESENTING 'THE SAVAGE'

Huan L. Hsu has recently argued that Carwin's 'nomadic wanderings and unlocalizable voice represent the displaced victims of colonial aggression' and that he 'returns eastward to Mettingen in order to displace the enlightened

Wielands from their own land'.<sup>13</sup> By this reasoning, Carwin represents 'the recoil of the frontier upon the democratic spaces whose stability depends upon expansion'. Hsu associates Carwin, as do I, with the wilderness, but in a different way. I do not see him as a harbinger of frontier savagery, but as a bridging figure. He has encountered the wilderness and been changed by it, becoming something new, neither savage nor European, but American. Moreover, in arguing that Carwin's visit to Mettingen functions as a critique of colonialism and American expansionism, Hsu ascribes to Brown a greater degree of ethnographic sensitivity than he actually possessed.

Brown was not overly worried about the fate of the Native Americans, and for the most part he had little contact with them. The best indication of his attitude towards the Indians is his translation of Constantin Volney's *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States* (1804). Although the work is mainly Volney's, Brown adds footnotes which occasionally reveal his own opinions, both of the Frenchman and his subject. Chapter VI is entitled 'On the Indians or Savages of North America', and contains some rather vague speculation on Volney's part, and a good deal of second-hand information, as he never penetrated very far into the wilderness in pursuit of his anthropological goals. The centrepiece is a conversation which took place in Philadelphia between Volney, a white man called Wells who had lived with the Miami Indians since the age of thirteen, and the Miami chief Little Turtle. Volney is generally little disposed to grant the Indians many redeeming characteristics, although he praises Little Turtle for his willingness to introduce agricultural practices to his tribe. He spends a good deal of time attacking Rousseau's notion of the natural liberty of man in a savage state, an aversion that Brown treats with tolerant amusement.

Brown's accompanying notes to this chapter have a striking peculiarity, as though he made his emendations as he was reading it through for the first time, without going back to correct those which were qualified by Volney's further comments. He expresses mystification, at one point, as to why Indian chiefs cannot be persuaded to introduce planting into their way of life:

Nobody would think of persuading Little Turtle or Corn-Planter to idle away his life in the streets of a city, which any Canadian trader or Ohio planter

---

<sup>13</sup> Huan L. Hsu, 'Democratic Expansionism in "Memoirs of Carwin"' in *Early American Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC) 35:2, 2000, 148-149.

would find as irksome and unnatural as he; but why he cannot, if in fact he cannot, be persuaded to use his influence and example to induce his tribe to provide against scarcity of game, or infirmity of age, by appropriating and cultivating a little ground, is the only mystery.<sup>14</sup>

Many Indian chiefs, of course, did just that, and Brown's qualification — 'if in fact he cannot' — is a tacit admission of his own ignorance of such matters. Two pages later, he comes across Volney's description of Little Turtle's efforts to introduce farming to his tribe, and remarks with apparently genuine surprise that he is 'an example that an Indian can abjure his habits, and adopt all the modes of the whites which are worthy of adoption' (Volney, 379, fn). A page later he struggles to reconcile this new discovery with a fact that he has clearly felt to be beyond question, that the Indians of North America are inevitably doomed to disappear:

They receive many useful, as well as some pernicious things, in the way of trade, and have already probably taken several steps towards a total assimilation to the customs of the whites, but they are hastening to extinction with a much quicker pace than to civilisation. (Volney, 381, fn)

Again, the 'probably' is revealing — Brown is on extremely shaky ground here. Although he tries to incorporate new ideas into his previous assumptions, ultimately he recapitulates the conventional belief in the incapacity of the Indians to assimilate with white culture.

Brown's translation of Volney appeared in 1804, and even if it did cause him to reassess his somewhat simplistic understanding of Indian affairs, he does not seem to have altered his fundamental conviction that the native population was 'hastening to extinction'. Furthermore, it was too late to have influenced him in the composition of his fiction. As I have suggested above, Brown was aware of the symbolic importance of Indian imagery in Revolutionary propaganda, deriving purely from the fact that they were not European. It is in this context that he associates Carwin with the 'Mohock savage', making him an agent of historical change, an indicator of the process of social transformation which will convert the white population of the continent from transplanted Europeans into Americans. However, as has been discussed in previous chapters, there was an alternative configuration of the

---

<sup>14</sup> C.F. Volney, *A View of the Soil and Climate of the United States of America*, transl., with occasional remarks, by C.B. Brown (Philadelphia: J. Conrad, 1804), 377, fn.

Indian, both in the Revolutionary period and in the early Republic, by which he became an incarnation of savagery, particularly associated with the British; and Brown was equally aware that for contemporary readers this level of meaning was never very far beneath the surface when dealing with the native population.

*Edgar Huntly* is the only one of Brown's novels to be set almost entirely on the western frontier, and the only one to feature actual Indian characters. The anonymity of these Indians — an indistinguishable bunch of 'tawny savages' invested with no defining characteristics — has often been noted, as has the striking absence of concrete detail in Brown's descriptions of the frontier landscape. Equally common in critical assessments of the novel has been a tendency to assume that this descriptive abstraction is an indication that the wilderness, and the Indians who are its physical incarnations, should be understood as 'representations of an essentially personal internal struggle', taking place within Edgar's consciousness (Gardner, 52). Edgar's psychological struggle is thus usually understood as the enactment of a universal conflict between the impulses of savagism and civilization inherent in the human mind.

Jared Gardner has given a compelling interpretation of *Edgar Huntly* as an 'importantly national' text in which 'the threat of the Indian has less to do with questions of what it means to be civilized than with the question — newly urgent in the United States in 1799 — of what it means to be American' (Gardner, 52-53). He points out that 'the tropes and metaphors of race serve the political and literary project of constructing national identity': because Americanness in the period is often defined in opposition to a racial other, an 'alien' presence in the landscape is a precondition of American national identity. The events of the novel, according to Gardner, exorcise the linked alien forms perceived to be inhabiting and contaminating the United States — the internal racial threat, figured here by the Indian, and the external, European alien. As he puts it:

To be an American is to be always almost an Indian, almost a European, and in this dilemma lies the solution: collapsing Indian and alien together and clearing both from the land, a unique national identity is born. [...] In *Edgar Huntly* it is not the frontiersman who becomes the Indian, as writers from Crèvecoeur to Dwight had prophesied, but the alien [...] Cleansing the nation

of aliens becomes a form of Indian warfare, and in his proclivity for the hunt Edgar proves himself an American. (Gardner, 80)

Here I wish to argue a different, though related point: that in *Edgar Huntly* Brown explicitly develops his theory of acculturation, which, as I have argued, is powerfully present in *Wieland* and 'Memoirs of Carwin'. In order to become a true American, he seems to posit, one must balance the conventional westward movement of colonial or imperial expansion with a controlling eastward movement. One must, like Edgar and Carwin, plunge into the wilderness, and then steadily work back towards civilized territory, resisting the temptation to regress completely into savagery, but also being tempered by the experience — having the European burned away, and emerging as a true American.

#### IV. ORDER THROUGH LANGUAGE

The address 'To The Public' at the start of *Edgar Huntly* makes clear Brown's belief that his novel offered readers something new, a specifically American fiction:

America has opened new views to the naturalist and politician, but has seldome furnished themes to the moral painter. That new springs of action, and new motives to curiosity should operate; that the field of investigation, opened to us by our own country, should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe, may be readily conceived [...] One merit the writer may at least claim; that of calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader, by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors. Puerile superstition and exploded manners; Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed for this end. The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness, are far more suitable; and for the native of America to overlook these, would admit of no apology.<sup>15</sup>

The narrative itself, apart from a short interchange of supplementary letters at the end, is contained within a long letter from Edgar to his fiancée, Mary, in which he looks back over the extraordinary events in which he has been embroiled. He begins by doubting his own ability to construct a coherent narrative at all:

---

<sup>15</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleep-walker in The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, 6 vols, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1984), IV, 3.

Yet am I sure that even now my perturbations are sufficiently stilled for an employment like this? That the incidents I am going to relate can be recalled and arranged without indistinctness and confusion? That emotions will not be reawakened by my narrative, incompatible with order and coherence? (*EH*, 5)

However, he is also aware that delaying the performance of his task may damage the integrity of the narrative that results:

Time may take away these headlong energies, and give me back my ancient sobriety: but this change will only be effected by weakening my remembrance of these events. In proportion as I gain power over words, shall I lose dominion over sentiments; in proportion as my tale is deliberate and slow, the incidents and motives which it is designed to exhibit will be imperfectly revived and obscurely pourtrayed. (*EH*, 5-6)

Having already informed the reader that the text would address ‘new springs of action, and new motives to curiosity’ unique to America, Edgar’s hesitancy forces the reader immediately to wonder whether a new *form* might be required to communicate this new content. This is not merely a transparent apology by Brown for the inconsistencies of his text, but an important acknowledgement that writing about American experience required a different set of narrative rules, just as living in America required an adjustment of a European mentality.

Edgar finally plunges into his narrative as he will later plunge in to the wilderness itself, beginning shortly after the seemingly motiveless murder of Huntly’s best friend, and Mary’s brother, Waldegrave, a mystery which Huntly resolves to unravel. Edgar emerges from these early scenes as a young man caught between the realities of his situation — he is a poor dependent on the benevolence of his uncle — and the intellectual and creative aspirations fostered by his European-style education. Like Carwin, he is dissatisfied with the prospect of life in a rural American backwater, and pushes against the restrictive nature of his position in every available way. He has, we learn, rather like Brown himself, experimented with radical and atheistic ideas, although he has come to reject them; and more importantly, he informs us that he has been instructed in aesthetic, moral and scientific practices by his surrogate father-figure, Sarsefield. Moreover, the classroom in which he has learned these lessons has been the wilderness itself:

When Sarsefield came among us, I became his favourite scholar and the companion of all his pedestrian excursions. He was fond of penetrating into these recesses, partly from the love of picturesque scenes, partly to investigate its botanical and mineral productions, and, partly to carry on more effectually that species of instruction which he had adopted with regard to me, and which chiefly consisted in moralizing narratives and synthetical reasonings. (*EH*, 97)

Sarsefield, a European, is teaching Edgar things which, however useful they might be to a leisured youth in a European setting, are quite inappropriate to Edgar's environment and position in life (a position that has been, in a sense, created and defined by the frontier, as his family were slaughtered and his house burned in an Indian attack when he was a child). This disparity is highlighted by the fact that Sarsefield imports his teaching into the uncultivated wilds of Norwalk, the wilderness in which Edgar lives. As the narrative will go on to demonstrate, these lessons are useless to his pupil: when faced with life-or-death decisions in the wilderness, he relies upon instinct, rather than his moral sense and 'synthetical reasonings'; and when required to make calm, rational and moral decisions, outside the wilderness, they have consistently disastrous results. Sarsefield is trying to make Edgar into a European, something he is not.

When Edgar pursues the missing Clithero into the woods, he discovers a scene of sublime natural beauty and concludes that he must be the first person ever to witness it:

A sort of sanctity and awe environed it, owing to the consciousness of absolute and utter loneliness. It was probable that human feet had never before gained this recess, that human eyes had never been fixed upon these gushing waters. The aboriginal inhabitants had no motives to lead them into caves like this, and ponder on the verge of such a precipice. Their successors were still less likely to have wandered hither. Since the birth of this continent, I was probably the first who had deviated thus remotely from the customary paths of men. (*EH*, 103)

Just as Clara Wieland cannot conceive why a rustic farmer would want to look at a prospect which only takes on meaning to an educated mind, so Edgar assumes that nobody would go here unless they wanted to 'ponder' over the view, something an Indian could not possibly wish to do. Edgar's education convinces him that he has privileged access to beauty in the American landscape, a way of framing and ordering what he sees. Brown, however,



punctures Edgar's arrogant complacency as effectively as he had Clara's. Almost immediately after his assertion that he is the first person ever to have seen this view, he suddenly notices 'an human countenance!' on the other side of the chasm. So great is his surprise, he tells us that 'Had my station been in a slight degree nearer the brink than it was, I should have fallen headlong into the abyss' (*EH*, 103-104). The challenge to Edgar's preconceptions quite literally unbalances him.

Brown's attitude towards landscape is worth discussing in more detail. He had no first-hand experience of life on the frontiers; although, as a young man, he was advised by friends and family to take long walks in and around Philadelphia, these rural rambles were far from either the harsh reality, or the spectacular scenery, of frontier existence, and he always returned to his books. Only imaginatively did he experience the extremes of life, as he commented in his early essay series *The Rhapsodist*: 'I have alternately spent my life in the wilds of Canadian woods, and in the seraglios of the East'.<sup>16</sup> The liberating effects of imaginative travelling were celebrated by Brown during his brief flirtation with the law, a profession he eventually abandoned, as he wrote to a friend: 'How miserable should I be were I not rescued from the tedious or distressful present, by the aid of excursive imagination'.<sup>17</sup> It was not that he had no interest in landscape, however — merely very little experience of viewing it. His early imaginative engagement with the far-off frontier was necessitated by the restricted horizons of his own life, rather than a straightforward privileging of the internal world over the external.

A well-known anecdote about Brown has given rise to a misconception about his attitude towards scenery. John Davis, a British writer who spent seventeen years travelling in the United States, and was a regular contributor to Brown's *Monthly Magazine*, provided what has been taken to be a very telling indication of Brown's indifference to landscape. Visiting him in New York, Davis described Brown's quarters as a 'dismal room in a dismal street'; and the Englishman naturally inquired 'whether a view of nature would not be more propitious to composition; or whether he should not write with more

---

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Clark, 47.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 233.

facility were his window to command the prospect of the Lake of *Geneva*. — Sir, said he, good pens, thick paper, and ink well diluted, would facilitate my composition more than the prospect of the broadest expanse of water, or mountains rising above the clouds'.<sup>18</sup>

The remark by Brown has often been taken to indicate his lack of interest in the physical reality of the American landscape, and his disdain for conventional picturesque celebrations of nature. However, Brown's retort to Davis's glibness betrays the bitterness of a writer for whom the practical necessities of authorship could not be taken for granted, and for whom the suggestion that he might be better off with a view of Lake Geneva was about as helpful as a proposed trip to the moon. Despite this, the comment does indicate that Brown did not feel a close attention to landscape was a *necessary* prologue to the act of writing, at least as he practised it, whether or not it might be a helpful one. The simple reason for this was that he was not writing in the picturesque mode, a decision he took more from necessity than desire.

In July 1800, Brown published an essay in the *Monthly Magazine*, of which he was the editor, entitled 'On a Taste for the Picturesque'. The article, like so much of Brown's writing, employs a kind of literary ventriloquism, placing its argument in the mouth of 'a gentleman, a friend of mine, who sometimes favours me with a visit'. His tendency to hide behind masks can make it difficult to attribute the ideas in his work, with any confidence, to Brown himself, but in this instance, as there is no contrary opinion put forward in the piece, it seems probable that the stance of the 'gentleman' was also that of the author. Brown expresses frustration with the tired vocabulary commonly employed in response to landscape, which is 'strangely meagre, jejune, and vague':

'Persons otherwise rich in words and combinations, have frequently but one or two trite and insignificant phrases to denote all the variety of kinds of scenery, and all the degrees of pleasure which the scenery produces.'<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America, during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801 and 1802* (London: R. Edwards, 1803), 149-150. Incidentally, the first edition copy of this book which I have used, in the British Library, is inscribed 'Wm. Wordsworth' on the inside cover, an indication of the latter's interest in the American scene.

<sup>19</sup> 'On a Taste for the Picturesque' (*Monthly Magazine*, III.1 (July 1800), 11-13), in *Literary Essays and Reviews*, ed. by Alfred Weber and Wolfgang Schäfer (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992), 88.

This problem, however, is not caused by the fashion for the picturesque, but by the inability of most observers to distinguish the subtle gradations of emotion provoked by different scenes, and a resultant tendency to respond to everything in the same way, thereby devaluing the linguistic currency:

‘This poverty and indistinctness of expression arises not from sluggish feelings, but from want of accurate conceptions. We discriminate too little between the peculiar character of different scenes. We are too seldom able to tell what it is that pleases us, or why it pleases. We distinguish not between the different emotions which scenes of different kinds produce. The gentlest impulses of pleasure are confounded with the most impetuous; and that black cloud which wreathes itself around a rugged pinnacle, and inspires us with solemn awe, is *pretty*, or *sweet*, or *fine*; just like the wide and undulating plain seen from a lofty summit whose intermingling woods, and cornfields, and orchards, sweetly, yet tranquilly, exhilarate the heart.’ (*Essays*, 89)

The solution to this difficulty, according to Brown’s gentleman, lies in careful application to ‘the study of landscape, or as some call it, *picturesque beauty*’, which ‘furnishes distinctness, and thus multiplies and renders accurate our language’ (*Essays*, 90).

Such a positive evaluation of the clarifying effects of applying a picturesque frame to the American landscape is perhaps surprising from the pen of an author who, in his own fiction, so conspicuously fails to apply these maxims. Even in *Edgar Huntly*, his language remains mostly abstract. The explanation for this apparent inconsistency lies, in part at least, in a recognition of his own strengths. Brown knew, to his apparent regret, that he could not write convincingly in a picturesque mode. In 1801, while travelling up the Hudson river with a friend, he recorded his impressions in a journal, later included in Dunlap’s biography. The journal entries reveal both Brown’s sense of how he *ought* to respond to the scenery, and his disappointment, almost anguish, at his inability to meet his own exacting standards:

I have gazed at the passing scene from Stony Point to West Point, with great eagerness, and till my eye was weary and pained. How shall I describe them. I cannot particularize the substance of the rock, or the kind of tree, save oaks and cedars. I am as little versed in the picturesque. I can only describe their influence on me. (Dunlap, II, 52)

The next entry is two days later, when he comments: ‘My friend is a very diligent observer, and frequently betakes himself to the pen. Heavy brows and languid blood has made me indolent, and I have done nothing but look about

me, or muse for the last two days' (Dunlap, II, 52). The implication is clear: far from inspiring Brown, landscape confronts him with a concrete reality he cannot encompass without resorting to cliché, and this inability frustrates him, leading to 'heavy brows and languid blood'. He is, to use his own phrase, 'otherwise rich in words and combinations', but there is something about American scenery which defies his descriptive powers.

On the other hand, as he also points out, he *is* able to describe 'their influence on me'; and through this, Brown strove to turn his 'failing' into a defining element in his own Americanness. His own response to landscape focuses on its impact on the observer, rather than the precise details of what is being described, and this instinctive, emotive response to the American terrain is precisely what Edgar Huntly has to learn, to replace his supposedly superior training in the picturesque.

The frustration Brown experiences when he cannot 'particularize' the scenery conveys his broader anxiety about the collapse of language when confronted with American experience; the same anxiety underpinning Edgar's nervousness about beginning his narrative. For Brown, however, it is imperative to overcome this reluctance, since, as we have already seen in 'Memoirs of Carwin', it is through language that American identity begins to take shape, and the acculturation of European ancestry to the American wilderness is mediated and controlled. Thus, however inadequate Edgar's narrative may prove to be, it must be set down to give textual authority to his experiences. There is a clear link here to Brown's repeated pleas for, and efforts towards creating, a native American literature. Reducing any event to a narrative, in a sense, historicizes that event, conferring upon it a degree of legitimacy and permanence. In an essay from September 1799, entitled 'Walstein's School of History', Brown suggests that the best form of history involves a degree of fiction. He suggests

that the narration of public events, with a certain licence of invention, was the most efficacious of moral instruments. Abstract systems, and theoretical reasonings, were not without their use, but they claimed more attention than many were willing to bestow. Their influence, therefore, was limited to a

narrow sphere. A mode by which truth could be conveyed to a great number, was much to be preferred.<sup>20</sup>

According to Brown, literature narrates the imaginative history of a nation, and has the same legitimising effect — in a recently created republic, the idea of representative language, of giving voice to the concerns of the people, gives the production of fiction a further, national degree of relevance.

In 1805 Brown published a short story entitled ‘Somnambulism’, although, as with ‘The Memoirs of Carwin’, it was almost certainly mainly written much earlier, during the period of the author’s greatest fictional productivity.<sup>21</sup> This story bears many similarities to *Edgar Huntly*, involving a hyper-sensitive young man somnambulistically chasing the woman he loves as she travels through a forest at night, and killing her — but it also features one fascinating character who has no counterpart in the novel. Miss Davis, the unfortunate victim, and her father, become aware that they are being followed by someone, and stop to ask a local farmer who it might be. He tells them of Nick Handyside, the deformed idiot son of another local resident, who roams about the woods frightening strangers, but who is in reality harmless, and also apt to be scared himself. Apart from a mischievous delight in terrifying strangers, Nick is mainly noteworthy for one special talent — his remarkable voice. His nocturnal howls are simultaneously expressive of bestial savagery and profound human emotion: they ‘reminded you at one time of a troop of hungry wolves, and had, at another, something in them inexpressibly wild and melancholy’ (*Somnambulism*, 19).

Nick, like Carwin, has spent some time developing his vocal abilities:

He had improved the flexibility of his voice, till his cries, always loud and rueful, were capable of being diversified without end. Instances had been known, in which the stoutest heart had been appalled by them; and some, particularly in the case of women, in which they had been productive of consequences truly deplorable. (*Somnambulism*, 19-20)

---

<sup>20</sup> ‘Walstein’s School of History. From the German of Krants of Gotha’ (*Monthly Magazine*, 1.5 [August 1799], 335-38, & 1.6 [September 1799], 407-11), in *Literary Essays and Reviews*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Alfred Weber argues that ‘Somnambulism’ was originally a part of Brown’s lost first novel, entitled ‘Sky-walk; or The Man Unknown to Himself’, which was cannibalised for *Edgar Huntly*; and that Brown later revised the old manuscript when he needed material for *The Literary Magazine*. See *Somnambulism and Other Stories*, ed. by Alfred Weber (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1987), 249-250.

For all these warnings, however, Nick is not really wild. He recently became lost in the wilderness and nearly died of hunger. It was only by his despairing shrieks that he was finally located and rescued. Having discovered these facts about Nick, Mr Davis and his daughter begin to speculate about how this unusual being might be used as a literary device:

The propensities of this being might contribute to realize, on an American road, many of those imaginary tokens and perils which abound in the wildest romance. He would be an admirable machine, in a plan whose purpose was to generate or foster, in a given subject, the frenzy of quixotism. — No theatre was better adapted than Norwood to such an exhibition. This part of the country had long been deserted by beasts of prey. Bears might still, perhaps, be found during a very rigorous season, but wolves which, when the country was a desert, were extremely numerous, had now, in consequence of increasing population, withdrawn to more savage haunts. Yet the choise [*sic*]<sup>22</sup> of Handyside, varied with the force and skill of which he was known to be capable, would fill these shades with outcries as ferocious as those which are to be heard in Siamese or Abyssinian forests. (*Somnambulism*, 20)

Nick Handyside exists in a delicate balance between the domestic and the savage; although constantly referred to by terms such as ‘reptile’ and ‘monster’, his savage howls are appreciated by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, as they form the basis of local gossip and folklore, and also by the Davises, whose imaginative use of Nick invests him with creative power. Nick is treated as though he is fictional creation — a ‘machine’ — particularly suited to the American terrain, because he is both tame and wild at once. He is a device perfectly adapted to provoke fear whilst offering no real prospect of harm — like a novel, which may be read in perfect security. At the same time, Nick also has an authorial function himself: the power and flexibility of his voice animates the woods, reinvesting them with their former romantic fascination. In effect, he makes the wilderness accessible to his civilized audience.

Pursuing the analogy between Nick Handyside and the author himself, it is apparent that Brown sees his own role as that of a mediator between the physical reality of the American landscape and the readers of his work. He wants to bring them close to ‘a region rude, sterile, and lonely’ without losing them in the ‘desolate tract’. For Brown, as for Nick Handyside, language both defines this imaginative wilderness and leads away from it, through it, to a

---

<sup>22</sup> Presumably a misprint of ‘voice’.

middle ground in which the degenerative impulses of savagery are held in check by the ordering power of language.

These concerns appear repeatedly in *Edgar Huntly*, where the fusion of the European and the savage into an American identity finds its external analogue in Edgar's efforts to define and control his surroundings with his voice, just as Carwin does. Norman Grabo has noted that from the point of Edgar's awakening in the darkness of the cave, the structure of the book gradually brings him back to civilization.<sup>23</sup> This progress is symbolised by Edgar's movement from house to house: from Old Deb's rude hut made of logs; to a house made of boards; to a 'model of cleanliness and comfort' (*EH*, 226). If one adds the cave itself to the start of this list, as the most basic form of wilderness accommodation, then it becomes possible to trace a similar progression in terms of Edgar's vocal and linguistic capacity. At his most desperate, when he wakes up in total darkness, Edgar's only tool for discovering his whereabouts is his voice, which he exerts in mere inarticulate cries: 'I now exerted my voice, and cried as loud as my wasted strength would admit. Its echoes were sent back to me in broken and confused sounds and from above' (*EH*, 163). These echoes inform him that he is in the pit he had visited, and sounded in the same fashion, the day before.

After his astonishing victory over the band of Indians at Deb's hut, Edgar and the girl he has rescued are apparently saved by a posse of townsmen, in pursuit of the Indians. But Edgar is incapable of talking to them, partly because of exhaustion, but partly, it would seem, through volition: 'I was not willing to expatiate on my story' (*EH*, 196). Edgar is punished for his silence when he wakes to find himself abandoned. Later on in the novel, after his increasingly bloody encounters with the Indians have physically transformed Edgar into the semblance of a savage, he is nevertheless distinguished from absolute savagery by his rediscovery of coherent language. Sydney J. Krause has noted the speechlessness of Brown's Indians — they are demonic figures of persecution, unable to articulate motives or thoughts, expressing themselves only through acts of violence. Edgar, in order not to be mistaken for an Indian when he returns to the settlements (a mistake which has already

---

<sup>23</sup> Norman S. Grabo, *The Coincidental Art of Charles Brockden Brown* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 63.

been made once), must 'trust to the speed with which my voice and my words should disclose my true character and rectify their mistake' (*EH*, 236-237).

Finally, having arrived at Inglefield's house, his journey to civilization is completed, on the one hand, by the discovery of Waldegrave's missing letters — the literal recovery of textual order — and the linear reconstruction of events which his conversation with Sarsefield facilitates. By combining Edgar's first-hand knowledge of his wilderness adventures with Sarsefield's 'civilized' account, they are able to form a coherent whole, explaining everything that has happened. Edgar, however, forgets the lesson he should learn here, by returning to his old epistemological model — prioritising rational order and benevolence — in his bizarre quest to redeem Clithero. However, by this point in the novel, Edgar has been wrong so many times, about so many different things, that the reader has learnt always to question his actions and conclusions; and although *he* may have failed to learn his lessons correctly, the reader cannot fail to acknowledge Brown's insistent point — that order and meaning emerge from the effort to balance contrary forces in society, not by succumbing to one or the other.

## V. UNITY IN ADVERSITY

The publication of *Edgar Huntly* marked a change in Brown's career. Despite its moderate success (it was the only one of his novels to receive a second imprint during his lifetime) he clearly decided that it was necessary to change direction as an author after this point. The second part of *Arthur Mervyn* appeared shortly afterwards, but apart from this, his energy for writing fiction seems to have evaporated — only two formulaic epistolary novels, *Clara Howard* and *Jane Talbot*, were to emerge from his pen in the final ten years of his life. His efforts were directed into different channels, a decision partly necessitated by his marriage in 1804, and the resultant need to secure a more regular income. He became involved in his family's mercantile business, but remained active in literary circles as the editor of two periodicals, *The Literary Magazine and American Register* (1803-1806) and *The American Register, or General Repository of History, Politics and Science* (1807 until his death). He also published his translation of Volney, authored three political pamphlets, and was embarking upon an ambitious



*System of Geography* when he died. Many commentators have seen a radical discontinuity between the early and late stages of his career, not merely in terms of the supposed sea-change in his political views, but also in the approach to writing, to fiction and language, which his later work manifests.

The first of his political pamphlets, *An Address to the Government of the United States, on the Cession of Louisiana to the French*, has been called by Alan Axelrod 'Brown's most ambitious piece of fiction', for its skilful use of his familiar fictive techniques.<sup>24</sup> Brown claims only to be 'the compiler' of the work, which consists mainly of an address to Napoleon by a French 'counsellor of state', advocating the immediate acquisition of Louisiana from the Spanish as the surest way of securing French colonial power and commercial interests. This document has supposedly fallen into the compiler's hands, and he reprints it in full, before attaching his own comments to the end. The device is well-judged, allowing Brown to advance heavily critical opinions of the United States in the voice of an enemy, while simultaneously advocating the obvious 'patriotic' course — immediate invasion of Louisiana to negate the threat from France, a much more powerful neighbour than Spain. Indeed, so adroitly does Brown handle the 'voice' of the Frenchman, that it raised something of a storm on its first publication, being taken as a genuine document by Federalist detractors of Jefferson's administration.

However, Brown's intentions in writing this unusual piece are extremely difficult to unravel. As Axelrod notes, Brown uses the Frenchman's persona to deliver 'a jeremiad against habits of self-interest' in the United States (Axelrod, 4). The points he makes are argued forcefully and reasonably, and are clearly not meant to outrage Americans as extravagant slanders, but to cut uncomfortably close to the bone. On the other hand, the appeal underpinning the whole text seems to be equally heartfelt, which complicates the supposedly Federalist imperative behind the pamphlet. Although the 'Frenchman' undermines the Republicans by suggesting that they are infatuated with the French, and blind to their own self-interest, he is equally scathing towards the Federalist opposition, whom he believes to be in thrall to England. Those Federalists who used the pamphlet as ammunition against Jefferson cannot have read it very carefully; consistent with the neutrality of

---

<sup>24</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Charles Brockden Brown: An American Tale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 3.

Brown's earlier work, he argues most vehemently against the divisive influence of faction. The weakness of the country, he believes, as much as his fictitious French counsellor, derives from the chronic discord of those who wish to rule it:

Their form of government, and the state of the country, is an hot bed for faction and sedition. The utmost force of all the wisdom they possess, is exerted in keeping the hostile parts together. These parts are unlike each other, and each one has the individualizing prejudices of a separate state; all the puerile jealousies of the greatness of others; all the petty animosities which make neighbours quarrel with each other without cause. How slight an additional infusion is requisite to set this heterogeneous mass into commotion? to make the different parts incline different ways, on the great question of war?<sup>25</sup>

To factionalism, Brown here adds sectionalism, divisions between geographical regions of the nation with different interests. He notes, in an echo of Imlay's *Topographical Description*, that the nation is divided down the middle, between East and West, a geographical fact productive of inevitable social and political divisions, which may be exploited by the French, and result in secession:

Nature has divided this nation, by the hills that turn the great waters opposite ways. The interests of those who shall occupy the two slopes of the great valley are the same. Mountains separate mankind; rivers draw them together. The maritime and *fluvial* states are combined by accident. The constant tendency is to part, while the tendency is no less strong in the states divided by the river, to coalesce. These different tendencies it is the easy province of France, in her new colony, to manage so as to make their enmity or rivalry harmless to us. (*Cession*, 42-43)

The similarity with Imlay is clear, but Brown, unlike his secessionist predecessor, sounds a warning note, rather than encouraging westerners to break away from the Union. Indeed, a careful reading of this text reveals a fear of internal disunity and secession as profound as the fear of the French. The text constructs a non-American threat to national security, and does so in the most familiar of ways, by aligning Europeans with racial 'others' —

---

<sup>25</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, *An Address to the Government of the United States, on the Cession of Louisiana to the French; and on the Late Breach of Treaty by the Spaniards: including the translation of a memorial, on the war of St. Domingo, and cession of the Mississippi to France, drawn up by a French Counsellor of State* (Philadelphia: John Conrad, 1803) [2<sup>nd</sup> edition, from which the sections on New Holland, or Australia, have been omitted], 42.

blacks and Indians. The compiler of the document describes blacks as ‘a bane in our vitals, the most deadly that ever nation was infested with. They are indeed a train of powder, so situated as to make it not impossible for the French in Louisiana, to set fire to it’ (*Cession*, 48). The Frenchman, meanwhile, has already identified the Indians as the most ‘dangerous inmates’ of the continent, equally easy to ignite: ‘We shall find, in the bowels of the States, a mischief that only wants the touch of a well-directed spark to involve in its explosion, the ruin of half their nation’ (*Cession*, 46). Despite the mixed metaphors, Brown consistently invokes the Indians and blacks as threats to the ‘body’ of the United States — they are invading the nation’s ‘bowels’ and ‘vitals’. The use of the body metaphor, of course, immediately imposes an image of unity over the discord the Frenchmen is hoping to exploit; although the regions of the States are disparate, Brown is saying, they are indivisibly joined like parts of the same body.

Simultaneously, by linking the threat of a race-war with an external invasion, Brown recalls the previous occasion when such metaphors were used and such anxieties existed — during the Revolution. He develops this parallel explicitly, refuting the French accusations that Americans are incapable of acting in unity in support of an abstract ideal which has no monetary value, against overwhelming odds, by citing the glorious example of ‘the American war’ (*Cession*, 47). He advances an opinion that effectively puts paid to any attempt to read this pamphlet as propaganda for the Federalist party:

By unity of manners, laws and government, is concord preserved, and this unity will be maintained, with as little danger of interruption, as the nature of human affairs will permit, by the gradual extension of our own settlements, by erecting new communities as fast as the increase of these settlements requires it, and by sheltering them all under the pacific wing of a federal government. (*Cession*, 49)

This expansionist agenda anticipates, in the long term, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, and in the short term, Jefferson’s justifications for the Louisiana Purchase, which was made later in the year of this pamphlet’s publication. It recalls James Madison’s argument in *The Federalist* #10, in which he suggests that the efficacy of a republican government would not be undermined by the enormous distances between communities in an expanding

republic, but buttressed by the obstacle such dispersion would provide to the creation of faction. Brown shows himself to be a ‘federalist’ in the original meaning of the word, merely in the sense of being a powerful advocate for a united government. The continued expansion of the nation will provide the opportunity for commerce (this is why securing navigation of the Mississippi is so crucial), but also provide a common enemy. So long as there is a frontier, with racially configured enemies ranged along it, Americans will be obliged to remain unified. In a sense, Brown is arguing that Americans require adversity to maintain a coherent national identity, just as Benjamin Rush had observed to John Adams during the Revolution: ‘Our republics cannot exist long in prosperity. We require adversity and appear to possess most of the republican spirit when most depressed’.<sup>26</sup>

This position is consistent with the action of *Edgar Huntly*. Edgar, plunged into the wilderness, is forced to rely on his instinctively American virtues to work his way back to civilization, and Brown is advocating a similar plunge for the United States, on a continental scale. Although the French counsellor suggests that Louisiana is largely settled and Europeanised, Brown knew that it was not — indeed, it contained more uncharted territory than comprised the whole United States. By invading or acquiring the western part of the continent, the people of the United States would immerse themselves in the American wilderness as surely as Edgar in his cave, or Carwin in his ‘narrow pass’.

Such an analogy between the individual and the national was symptomatic of Brown’s thinking. It was possible, he claimed, to extrapolate conclusions about the one from an understanding of the other. As Stephen Watts puts it,

the impulse to interpret himself led the young writer to propose a strong correlation between stages of personal development and stages of social development. Analysis of ‘the vicissitudes of individuals or of nations from their hour of birth to their hour of extinction’ promised to yield great insight into ‘the mechanisms of human society and the laws of human action’.  
(Watts, 75)

The national and the individual cannot be separated in Brown’s work; his plans and hopes for one are intimately related to the other. He wrote with a

---

<sup>26</sup> ‘To John Adams’ – Philadelphia, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1780’, in Rush, *Letters*, I, 253.

reformative zeal which forced him continually to readdress the very form in which he was writing, the efficacy of his language as a vehicle for his ideas. When it became clear that, despite the approval of his peers, not many people read his novels, he could not continue preaching his ideas to deaf ears. His abandonment of the novel form is perfectly consistent with his desire to exert an influence on the national stage; to preserve the unity of the United States; to encourage the government to be as effective and harmonious as possible; and to guide individuals in the difficult business of being American.

***Part II: The Jacksonian Era, 1815-  
1837***

---

## 5. *Andrew Jackson, Indian Removal, and the Interior Frontier*

---

### I. PATERNALISM AND EXPANSIONISM

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1813, the Tennessee militia, commanded by General Andrew Jackson — approximately one thousand men — destroyed the Creek village of Tallushatchee. It was the first battle of the Creek War, a crucial internal subplot to the War of 1812; Jackson's men killed every single Indian brave in the village (a total of 186 men), and made 84 women and children captive. In the words of Davy Crockett, who was present, 'We shot them like dogs'. In the midst of this carnage, a ten-month old baby was discovered in the arms of his dead mother, and brought back to camp with the other captives. Jackson asked some of the surviving Indian women to care for him, but they refused; all his relations were dead, they said, so he should be killed too. The General's response to this situation was surprising: he adopted him. Lyncoya, as the child was named, remained with Jackson and his wife, Rachel, throughout his life, as their adopted son. Despite being raised in white society, he apparently retained certain 'Indian habits' throughout his childhood: 'At the age of five he fashioned a bow "after the manner of the Indians," and with his face smeared with warpaint he would jump out from behind bushes to frighten other children'. Lyncoya died at the age of only sixteen, probably from tuberculosis.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Lyncoya, though usually only a curious footnote in the career of one of America's most influential presidents, encapsulates many of the attitudes and contradictions which characterise both Jackson the man, and the period which bears his name. We have already noted Anthony F.C. Wallace's suggestion that in Jefferson's account, the story of Logan functions as an 'epitomizing event' — 'a narrative that encapsulates, in an account of a single, salient happening, the attitudes, values, feelings, and expectations of a community about important, complex, ongoing historical processes' (Wallace, *Jefferson*, 2). For the Jacksonian era, I would like to suggest, the surprising history of Jackson's Indian son has exactly this status. In the contradictions it

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert V. Remini, *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, condensed edn (New York: Penguin, 1990), 73, 138.

embodies, the preconceptions it perpetuates, and the tragedy with which it ends, it distills the historical attitudes which ultimately resulted in the passage of the Indian Removal Act, and the decimation of Indian culture East of the Mississippi.

The contradictions in the story are obvious. Jackson's act of mercy emerges out of an act of butchery; the tender-hearted adoption of the helpless orphan, who reminded Jackson so much of himself, would, of course, not have been necessary had the General not ordered the systematic slaughter of the boy's parents. The refusal of the Indian women to look after him seems to embody the fatalistic refusal of Indian culture to adapt to the conditions imposed on them by whites. For them, an early death is preferable to life outside the traditional Indian family and culture, which Jackson had destroyed. In taking Lyncoya under his wing, however, Jackson is trying to force the Indians into the filial relationship with their 'white Father' that had been the rhetorical goal of Indian treaty-making for many years. The disobedient Indian children are ruthlessly dispatched; the helpless but obedient child is protected. This choice, between extermination and obedience, is exactly that offered by Jackson to numerous Indian tribes over the next twenty-five years.

But the story does not end with the adoption of the boy, and the establishment of Jackson's paternal authority over him. For the Indian child, despite his white upbringing, cannot shed his intrinsic 'Indianness'; his ambushment of white children microcosmically encapsulates contemporary stereotypes about 'the Indian'. The account of Lyncoya's wildness fits exactly with the white insistence that Indians cannot be civilized; that whatever advantages of education they are provided with, they will always want to smear their faces with warpaint and hide in the bushes. The opinion frequently voiced by Jackson and his supporters — in the face of any and all contradictory evidence — that Indians are essentially savage, was the intellectual foundation of the doctrine of Indian removal. And of course, the death of Lyncoya in adolescence, from a white man's disease, brings this epitomizing narrative to its inevitable conclusion. Despite Jackson's benevolent attempt to civilize the Indian child, he fails to make the transition into maturity. In the contemporary language of white-Indian relations, the



Indians were often configured as children, and the whites as adults. Lyncoya's death in adolescence therefore signals his failure to make the transition from one culture to another. By the logic of Indian removal, prolonged contact with white society will result in extinction for the Indians as surely as it did for Lyncoya.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of Andrew Jackson to the cultural landscape of America in this period. Between his famous victory over the British at New Orleans, in 1815 — which established his pre-eminent status as *the* American hero of his generation, and gave him enormous political influence — to the end of his presidency in 1837, Jackson redefined the political and geographical composition of the United States. His influence can be seen everywhere, not only in the political events which distinguished his term of office — the Bank War, the Nullification controversy, and, of course, Indian Removal — but also in the evolution of America's sense of identity, destiny, and self-belief. After New Orleans, as one of Jackson's nineteenth-century biographers put it, 'the Union had less of the character of a temporary experiment'; by the time he left office, Americans were convinced as never before that possession of the whole continent, from East to West, was their national destiny.<sup>2</sup> In Jackson's youth, as Michael Paul Rogin has noted, expansionism 'promoted sectional particularism at the expense of American nationalism. It had a divisive rather than a unifying thrust. [...] It was his genius that, early identified with frontier particularism, he ultimately harnessed expansion to American national solidarity' (Rogin, 110).

In order to do this, of course, Jackson had to resolve an issue which had haunted American leaders since the nation's inception — the status and future of the Native American population within the United States. The concept of physically removing the Indians beyond the current boundaries of the States was not new — it had been floated as a possibility by almost every administration prior to Jackson's — but it took Jackson's single-minded conviction to force the policy through Congress against its many opponents, and to compel its implementation by Indian tribes whether they liked it or not. Again, as Rogin puts it,

---

<sup>2</sup> William Graham Sumner, *Andrew Jackson as a Public Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882), 51.

he was the single figure most responsible for Indian destruction in pre-Civil War America. He won battles, signed treaties, and forced removal not simply over Indian resistance, but often over the recalcitrance of his own troops and the timidity of settlers and civilian politicians. Indian elimination was not the smooth by-product of mass westward expansion. Jackson's monomania powered westward expansion; his psychology had large historical significance. (Rogin, 13)

The appalling human cost of Removal has proved to be Jackson's most enduring memorial; he is now reviled by many for the decimation of Indian culture which he initiated and oversaw. However, in asserting Jackson's guilt we must not lose sight of the fact that his policies were, to a degree, forced upon him by the political and economic demands of his countrymen; and that far from reviling him, the majority of Americans loved 'the old Hero' more than ever after Removal had been implemented. Jackson's racism and authoritarianism, whatever else it may be, was of his time and of his people.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in American fiction of the Jacksonian era. There are self-evident dangers in relying so heavily on the biography of one man to represent the concerns and values of a diverse population over a relatively long period; but, as Rogin puts it,

to pick Jackson to represent ante-bellum America [...] is to make the same choice as his contemporaries. Jackson was no ordinary President. He captured the American imagination as no figure had since Washington. His life became [...] a symbol for his age. The men of the Age of Jackson made archetypal American biography from 'the old Hero's' personal history. (Rogin, 14)

Jackson, of course, was not politically unopposed; in fact, the extensions of executive power during his presidency led to the formation of the Whig Party, the principal opposition to the Democrats for the next twenty years. But his influence was palpable even beyond the circle of loyal 'Jackson men'. In fiction as in politics, he was the pivotal figure against whom all others had to define themselves.

The fiction of this period — a principal outlet for, and reflection of, 'the American imagination' — was shaped by the dominating presence of Jackson. This is particularly true of writers who choose the frontier as a setting for their books (and there were many who did so, in this age of the historical romance), since that frontier was being redrawn, under Jackson's guidance, more rapidly

than ever before. Moreover, the legends which surrounded Jackson, and the ideology he and his Democratic supporters expounded, dovetailed neatly with the aims of historical fiction. In the wake of Scott and Cooper, American writers turned to their own history, to the colonial and Revolutionary eras, for their subjects. They sought to reanimate the heroic aims of a glorious period in America's past; to bring the ideals of the Founding Fathers to a generation in danger of drifting too far from the republican values on which the nation had been founded. As Philip Gould has put it, they 'reinvented historical continuity between heroic origins and the present generation'.<sup>3</sup>

Andrew Jackson was the personification of this effort. He was the only hero to emerge from the somewhat inglorious War of 1812, and he seemed a living link to the golden age of the Revolution. More than a decade later, Jackson rode into the White House on the back of this association with the Founding Fathers, built upon tales of his own exploits as a young boy in the Revolution. He promised to wipe out the corruption so rife in American public life, which had polluted the ideals of the Revolutionary generation; and Jacksonian ideology tried to reconcile the eighteenth-century investment in the family as the cornerstone of American virtue, with the increasingly anti-domestic impulses of a burgeoning capitalist market economy.

Perhaps even more importantly, the writers of historical frontier fiction were appealing to a reading audience, primarily based in the East, ever more removed from the actuality of frontier existence which they described so sensationally. Reading about the heroic deeds of pioneers vicariously gratified the thirst for excitement in an urban, settled society; and gave readers a reassuring sense of the progress that had been, and was continuing to be, made. Looking up from the latest volume by Cooper or Paulding, the figure of Andrew Jackson seemed to drive home this point. Everyone knew the frontier legends which clustered around 'Old Hickory', tales of Indian-fighting, duelling and soldiering.<sup>4</sup> In Rogin's words, 'Jackson's life gratified a softer generation leading prosaic lives'; like the most popular novels of the day, he 'symbolically perpetuated heroic patterns' (Rogin, 50). His career epitomised

---

<sup>3</sup> Philip Gould, *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

<sup>4</sup> The nickname 'Old Hickory' was given to Jackson by his troops during the War of 1812, to reflect his toughness.

the same sense of national progress which formed so crucial a part of the historical romance. As far as most Americans were concerned, Andrew Jackson had gone from a log cabin to the White House; and there could be no clearer demonstration of progress than that.

The period's many fictional incarnations of the frontiersman owe as much to the extraordinary popularity and political dominance of Jackson, the first westerner to gain the presidency, as they do to earlier prototypes such as Daniel Boone. Moreover, the extraordinary impact of Jackson's policies on the boundaries of the nation meant that Indian relations and the acquisition of land — the themes which dominate historical fiction of the 1820s and 1830s — were issues of immense contemporary importance. It is impossible fully to understand the complexity of Jacksonian frontier fiction without taking this into account. This chapter is therefore intended to provide a context for reading the work of three such authors — Paulding, Simms, and Bird, all openly partisan in their political expressions — who wrote historical fiction about the frontier during the Jacksonian era.

## II. OLD HICKORY: THE JACKSON LEGEND

Jackson's life links the two periods on which this thesis is focused. He was born on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1767, in the Lancaster district of South Carolina, his father having died several months earlier. Raised by his mother, he received a scanty education, before the eruption of war in South Carolina, in 1780, altered his life profoundly. Although only thirteen years old, he enlisted in a colonial regiment, and participated in the Battle of Hanging Rock. Both of Jackson's elder brothers died in the course of the war, as did his mother, who contracted cholera whilst nursing American soldiers. The end of the Revolution left Jackson a solitary orphan, with an implacable resentment of the British.

Having completed his rudimentary schooling, Jackson decided to become a lawyer, learning his trade in Salisbury, North Carolina, and gaining admission to the bar in 1787. In the spring of 1788, feeling that prospects for advancement were limited in the East, Jackson headed across the Allegheny Mountains to the relatively new settlement of Nashville, to take up the post of public prosecutor for the Western District of North Carolina, in what is now

the state of Tennessee. At the time of Jackson's arrival, Nashville existed under the perpetual threat of Indian attack. Like Brackenridge in Pittsburgh, he quickly imbibed the prevailing frontier hatred of the 'savages', and the sense of outrage at the indifference of Congress to the sufferings of western settlers. 'What Motives Congress are governed by' Jackson wrote to a friend in 1794, 'with respect to their pacific Disposition towards Indians I know not; some say humanity dictates it; but certainly she ought to Extend an Equal share of humanity to her own Citizens; in doing this Congress would act Justly and Punish the Barbarians for Murdering her innocent Citizens'(quoted in Remini, *Life*, 28). In fact, Jackson's sectional feelings were so strong that, while serving as Tennessee's first representative to Congress in 1796, he was one of only four Congressman to vote against giving the outgoing President Washington a formal vote of thanks. In Jackson's opinion, he had failed to earn such thanks from the people of Tennessee, because he and his administration had done nothing to solve the 'Indian problem' which was their primary concern.

Jackson's political career continued to progress in his adopted state, however, and he was elected to the Senate in 1797, aged only thirty. Although he did not relish the role, and resigned after only a year, he made an impression on Thomas Jefferson, who remarked in later life that Jackson — whose 'passions are terrible' — 'is a dangerous man' (Remini, 40). Jackson's relations with Jefferson were briefly cordial; he hailed the acquisition of Louisiana as 'an event which places the peace and happiness and liberty of our country on a lasting basis, an event which generations yet unborn on each revolving year, will hail the day, and with it the causes that give it birth' (Remini, 49). This cordiality ended, however, when Jackson was passed over for the governorship of the new Louisiana territory, a post he coveted. Indeed, Jackson narrowly avoided being tarred with the brush of treason for his part in Aaron Burr's alleged conspiracy to detach Louisiana from the United States and invade Mexico.

After resigning from the Senate, Jackson served as a judge for the state superior court, was elected major-general of the Tennessee militia, and developed his plantation home, The Hermitage. The outbreak of war with Great Britain in 1812, however, again altered the course of his life. Having

been passed over for active commands due to political rivalry, Jackson's opportunity for military glory finally arrived thanks to an Indian uprising. In the two years before the outbreak of the war, the Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, inspired by his half-brother, the religious prophet Tenskwatawa, had united the tribes of the Ohio valley into a pan-Indian alliance, a final role of the dice to try to drive the encroaching whites back into the sea. Tecumseh himself (who was half-Creek) had travelled to the South in 1811, and, though he failed to bring the whole Creek nation into his alliance, he successfully recruited a splinter group of Creek warriors called the Red Sticks (their name referring to a red pole which was erected in Creek villages as a call to arms).

In August, 1813, the Red Sticks attacked Fort Mims (now in Mississippi), massacring some four hundred men, women and children. In response to this atrocity, the Tennessee legislature authorised Jackson to mobilise his forces. The vengeful slaughter of Tallushatchee quickly followed, and a decisive victory over the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend, terminated their resistance. As a reward for defeating the Red Sticks, Jackson was appointed a major general in the regular army of the United States, and he went on to 'negotiate' terms for peace in the Treaty of Fort Jackson, in July 1814. The proceedings at Fort Jackson provided something of a model for subsequent treaties negotiated by Jackson with Indian tribes, and ultimately for the Removal Act itself. Most of the surviving Red Stick chiefs had fled south to Florida; so Jackson summoned friendly Creek chiefs instead, who had actually helped him in his campaign. Refusing to distinguish between hostile and friendly Indians, Jackson insisted that they pay compensation for all the expenses of the United States during the campaign, and that they pay it in land. By Jackson's calculations, that meant that the Creek nation as a whole had to cede an astonishing 23 million acres of land — three-fifths of the present state of Alabama, and one-fifth of Georgia. He also demanded that all intercourse between the Creeks and both the British and Spanish cease entirely, that the United States be permitted to build roads through any land retained by the tribe, and that the instigators of the war be surrendered to him. This monstrously unreasonable treaty was signed under duress by thirty-five Creek chiefs, only one of whom had been a Red Stick.

The illegality of this treaty was acknowledged even by the Secretary of War, William Crawford, a political enemy of Jackson. The terms of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war with Great Britain, stated that the land taken from the Creeks at Fort Jackson should be returned to them, and Crawford issued Jackson with an order to this effect. An infuriated Jackson ignored him, and since he was *in situ* with an army of loyal troops, there was little Crawford could do. The government had little choice but to appoint Jackson as one of the commissioners for treating with the southern Indians over the next six years. The hero of New Orleans naturally dominated all these negotiations, and in series of treaties with the Creeks, Cherokees and Chickasaws over the next few years, Jackson was almost single-handedly responsible for the acquisition of a truly vast area of land for the United States. According to Wallace, 'these cessions took in about half the territory that had been held by the Southern Indians at the beginning of the war and [...] opened on the order of 50 million acres to white settlers and speculators'.<sup>5</sup>

Jackson's position was unassailable following the War of 1812. His defeat of the Creeks had been followed by his victory at New Orleans over the British, and he had been elevated to the status of national hero, and a major political player. Despite the disapproval of Crawford and many other senior figures in Washington, Jackson's public stature, and the unswerving loyalty of his troops, meant that, in reality, there was little the government could do to discipline him. More to the point, perhaps, although personal rivalries led some politicians to oppose him, Jackson was in fact achieving exactly what the government wanted — the acquisition of valuable Indian lands. His position became slightly more tenuous when he led an unauthorised invasion of Spanish Florida in 1819, but even then he escaped official censure for his extraordinary actions.

---

<sup>5</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Long Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 53.

### III. REASONS AND JUSTIFICATIONS FOR INDIAN REMOVAL

There were numerous reasons for Jackson's thirst for Indian land. Publicly, he declared that his primary interest was the security and future prosperity of the nation. He wrote to President James Monroe, on the day of the latter's inauguration, that 'the lower country is of too great importance of the Union [...] for its safety to be jeopardized'. By acquiring Indian land and building roads across their territory, he was effectively seeking to negate the potential for the kind of pan-Indian alliance so nearly achieved by Tecumseh. More fundamentally, as he told Monroe, he thought the whole notion of Indian treaty-making was absurd:

I have long viewed treaties with the Indians as an absurdity, not to be reconciled to the principles of our government. The Indians are the subjects of the United States, inhabiting its territory and acknowledging its sovereignty, then is it not absurd for the sovereign to negotiate by the treaty with the subject. [...] I have always thought, that Congress had as much right to regulate by acts of Legislation, all Indian concerns as they had of Territories; there is only this difference, that the inhabitants of Territories, are Citizens of the United States [whereas] the Indians are Subjects.<sup>6</sup>

Jackson's conviction that the Indians were 'subjects' of the United States dictated his treatment of them. His earlier, rabidly anti-Indian stance had evolved, by the end of the War of 1812, into an attitude of paternalistic authority, exemplified by his adoption of Lyncoya. As Remini points out, the paternalism with which Jackson behaved towards the Indians distinguished almost all of his personal relations — with his family, his political allies, his troops, and his slaves — and followed the same pattern: if he was obeyed, he acted as a benevolent 'father', but if he was crossed, then he was 'savage and vindictive' (*Legacy*, 46).

The Indians, in his view, were incapable — unlike 'citizens' — of making decisions for themselves, because 'avarice and fear are the predominant passions that govern an Indian'. Therefore they had to be guided and, if necessary, coerced, into making the 'right' choices. But as he told his nephew John Coffee (a long term political and military ally), 'an Indian is fickle, and you will have to take a firm stand and support it and you are sure of success'.

---

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Jackson to President James Monroe, March 4, 1817, quoted by Robert V. Remini, *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on Democracy, Indian Removal, and Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 47-48.



Thus, every time a tribe attempted to reject a treaty on any grounds — and this was very common — Jackson merely took it as further evidence of Indian ‘fickleness’ (Remini, *Legacy*, 49-50). As he viewed all treaties as a ‘farce’ anyway, Jackson had no compunction about securing them by any means possible, usually through bribery or threats. That such underhanded tactics worked, he took as evidence that the Indians did not know what was best for themselves.

The fact that Jackson was a slave-owning southerner no doubt contributed to his assumption of a paternal model as the most natural response to a racial ‘other’; and it informed his advocacy of removal in several other ways. Indian territories confronted southerners with a source of racial anxiety which could not have been felt or appreciated by a northerner (such as John Quincy Adams), as Ronald Satz points out:

A large number of southerners viewed the presence of fugitive slaves or stolen slave property in Indian country within their state or territory as a serious threat to internal security. Such havens for discontented blacks posed the danger of possible Indian-black cooperation against adjacent white communities at a time when northern abolitionist propaganda was causing great concern among segments of southern society. The extension of state law over tribes residing in the South would permit strict control of the Indians and, according to some politicians, would enable the region to increase its representation in Congress, thereby helping to offset northern antislavery votes.<sup>7</sup>

This political agenda was thinly veiled by the provocative prophecies of race-war. Southern politicians knew that settlers would pour into the region if the Indians could be relocated; and more white people meant more votes.

Jackson also had a personal financial stake in the acquisition of Indian land. He was particularly interested in a part of northern Alabama, on the Tennessee river, known as Muscle Shoals. The first treaty he negotiated to purchase this land was accused of fraud, and the Senate refused to ratify it, but it was only a matter of time before Jackson squeezed the cession he required from the Cherokees. He had Coffee appointed chief surveyor of the Alabama land cessions, enabling them to identify the best land in the area and buy it at one-tenth of its real value. That Jackson feathered his own nest is unsurprising; in this period, it would have been unusual for a man of his

---

<sup>7</sup> Ronald M. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 4.

background and position to behave differently. Indeed, land speculation provides another link to the generation of the Founding Fathers, and on a personal level, Jackson was no more land hungry than, say, Washington, Franklin or Jefferson.

However, the real imperative behind Indian removal — more than national security, more than personal gain, more than the fear of an internal race-war or of upsetting the balance of power in Congress — was the need for land. By the time Jackson became president, there were very few Indians left in most of the states on the eastern seaboard, only a few thousand on reservations dotted between Maine and the Carolinas. They posed no threat and were under no real pressure to move. In Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, however, despite Jackson's efforts a decade earlier, much of the agricultural land was still occupied by the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Creeks; and unfortunately for them, their land was prime cotton acreage.

Cotton manufacturing was central to the Industrial Revolution in Britain and in the northern states of the USA, and as the technology for spinning and weaving cotton improved, demand escalated proportionately. The war with Great Britain had obviously impeded the growth of the cotton market. However, after the conclusion of the conflict, as Paul Wallace Gates has noted, 'with English manufacturers again actively bidding for cotton, the price of the staple doubled between June of 1814 and June of 1816. Planters and farmers, working strenuously to meet this demand, more than doubled the nation's yield of cotton between 1814 and 1819'.<sup>8</sup> But American farmers did not achieve this staggering increase in productivity by employing sophisticated farming methods, or by careful husbandry of the soil on their existing plantations. Agricultural practices in America generally were primitive; there was no crop rotation, no use of manure to preserve the fertility of land. If cotton or tobacco was the most profitable crop for a southern plantation to grow, then it would be grown until the soil was exhausted. American farmers were convinced that, in their naturally bountiful country, there was always more land to be had. This improvident attitude to the land shocked European observers, and was a major contributing factor to westward

---

<sup>8</sup> Paul Wallace Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 59.

expansion in the nineteenth century, since by that point much of the land along the eastern seaboard had been farmed to the point of exhaustion.

Jackson's predecessor as president, John Quincy Adams, noted with distaste that there 'the thirst of a tiger for blood is the fittest emblem of the rapacity with which the members of all the new States fly at the public land'.<sup>9</sup> The enormous land cessions secured by Jackson in Alabama and Mississippi in the aftermath of the war temporarily fed this insatiable hunger, and the economic panic of 1819 sufficiently dampened agricultural acquisitiveness to allow the fate of the remaining Indian lands in the East to rest undecided (though certainly not undebated) throughout the 1820s. However, by the 1830s, the American South accounted for two-thirds of all the cotton produced for export in the world, and cotton-farming was immensely profitable: a 500-acre plantation 'could expect to make a profit on the order of \$6,000 a year' (Wallace, *Jackson*, 7). The benefit of new cotton lands could be felt in all classes of society, throughout the nation:

Americans of all sorts, in all kinds of places, were obsessed with Southern cotton. The hunger for new cotton lands affected all classes of Southern society. Not merely prospective growers of plantation cotton caught the "Alabama fever," but also land speculators, and settlers who expected to make their fortunes in subsidiary activities on which the plantations depended — millwrights, blacksmiths, and other artisans of all kinds, doctors and lawyers, teamsters and steamboat captains, storekeepers and small farmers and railway workers. (Wallace, *Jackson*, 8)

The Indians stood in the way of what had become the most crucial economic activity of the United States. They never really stood a chance.

#### IV. INDIAN REMOVAL VS INDIAN REFORM

Until the 1820s, the federal government had pursued two concurrent policies with regard to the Indian population. The first worked towards the gradual purchase of Indian land by ratified treaties; its aims were purely territorial and economic, rather than cultural, and demonstrated no interest in the fate of the Indians once they had ceded the desired areas. The second

---

<sup>9</sup> John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795 to 1848*, ed. by Charles Francis Adams, 12 vols (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1874-1877), X, 19. Adams recorded this comment in his diary on 14th June 1838, during the Congressional debates on the public lands.

policy encouraged the gradual civilization and conversion of the Indians, seeking to bring them into the fold of white American society by educating and Christianising them, teaching the men to farm and the women to weave and sew. To this end, the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1802 had set aside \$15,000 a year to fund agents and missionaries who would live with the Indians, teach them, and provide 'useful domestic animals and implements of husbandry'.<sup>10</sup>

Ironically, it was not only Indian resistance to the former policy, but the progress made by the latter, which immediately precipitated the presentation of the Indian Removal bill to Congress. The state of Georgia had surrendered its western lands to the federal government in 1802, in return for a promise that the government would rapidly secure the voluntary removal of the Indian populations remaining within the state. By the late 1820s, however, the bulk of the Cherokee nation were steadfastly refusing to leave their ancestral homes. Even worse, it was clear that the willingness of the Cherokees to adopt a white way of life was making them even less likely to sell their lands. They had developed an alphabet and published their own newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*. In 1817, they had established a legislature, a chief executive, a judiciary, even a small army. Finally, in 1827, with white trespass on Indian land becoming ever more frequent and flagrant, and pressure increasing from Georgia on the Cherokees to remove, and the government to enforce that removal, the Cherokee legislature adopted a written constitution modelled on that of the United States itself. The move provoked a constitutional crisis in the States. It asserted that the Cherokee nation was 'sovereign and independent', and by Cherokee law, the sale of land to the United States was declared a crime. This was too much for the Georgia legislature; in December 1828, immediately after Jackson had been elected president, it passed a state law extending its jurisdiction over the Cherokees, deferring the enactment of this law for eighteen months to give the new president (whom they knew to be sympathetic to their cause) and Congress time to endorse their actions.

The situation in Georgia forced Jackson's hand. He was already confronting a major constitutional crisis in the form of the Nullification controversy, the root of which lay in the protective tariff passed by the

---

<sup>10</sup> 'Trade and Intercourse Act, March 30, 1802', in Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 19.

Democrat-controlled Congress in 1827. Although it was instituted before Jackson was elected, the tariff was associated with his administration because it had been specifically designed to capture crucial electoral votes for the Democrats in areas of the northeast and northwest, in the run-in to the presidential election of 1828. The measure increased protective rates on items of economic importance to the northern states, such as molasses, hemp, distilled spirits and wool. High import duties protected these items from outside competition, thereby encouraging the northern economy. Because there was no equivalent protective tariff on cotton, tobacco and rice — the staples of the southern economy — the tariff was labelled a ‘Tariff of Abominations’ by many southerners. The tariff laws were particularly damaging to the economy of South Carolina, whose political leaders, including Jackson’s vice-president, John C. Calhoun, began to agitate for nullification — the right of individual states to nullify federal laws which were not in the interest of that state — or, if necessary, secession from the Union. Georgia, however, was prospering in the 1820s, and therefore unlikely to support South Carolina’s position; without support from other states, the threat of secession, though serious, was limited in its efficacy. Jackson, therefore, had powerful political reasons for appeasing Georgia by supporting calls for Indian removal, quite apart from his own predisposition.<sup>11</sup>

In his 1817 letter to Monroe, Jackson, though he expressed contempt for treaty-making, actually endorsed efforts to civilize the Indians. They might remain on their land, he suggested, if they learned to farm it using white farming methods. An agricultural lifestyle, of course, required less land than their former ‘savage manners and customs’, and they would naturally surrender all the territory that they did not strictly need. The civilization of the Indians he viewed as inevitable: ‘In a short time they will be civilized, and by placing them near an industrious and virtuous population you set them good examples’ (quoted in Remini, *Legacy*, 49).

---

<sup>11</sup> My summary of the relationship between Jackson, the Cherokees, and the State of Georgia, is synthesised from the more detailed discussions provided by Rogin, Satz, Wallace, and Remini, in the works already cited; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noonday, 1990); and Clyde N. Wilson, ‘John C. Calhoun’, in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. by Joel Myerson (Detroit: Brucoli Clark, 1979), III, 44-55.

In the course of the 1820s, however, Jackson's opinion shifted towards removal as the only solution to the Indian problem. The rhetorical position adopted by Jackson and his supporters emphasises that the Indians, intractably devoted to their primitive 'hunter state', have proved themselves incapable of adopting a civilized way of life. Lyncoya's behaviour exemplifies this position, implying that their cultural habits are ingrained and instinctive rather than learned. Even a child who has been brought up amongst the whites cannot unlearn old manners; by extension, the Indians can never truly learn new ones. Civilized Indians presented more of a threat to white expansion than savage ones. The latter could be reviled and displaced according to the 'natural law' argument that the land was divinely intended for cultivation. Once the Indians began to cultivate the land and conform to civilized standards, that argument broke down; but pro-removal commentators dealt with this difficulty by bluntly refusing to adapt their 'Indian-as-savage' preconception. The Indians were quintessentially hunters, they said (a preconception which Anglo-Americans had been repeating for hundreds of years), and in the nineteenth century, as Jackson put it, it was 'visionary to suppose that [...] claims can be allowed on tracts of country on which they have neither dwelt nor made improvements, merely because they have seen them from the mountain or passed them in the chase' (Prucha, *Documents*, 48).

The clearest and most public expressions of this position were provided by Lewis Cass, in two articles appearing in the *North American Review* in 1826 and 1830. Cass, the governor of the Michigan Territory from 1813 to 1831 and later Jackson's Secretary of War, had had considerable contact with Indian tribes in the Northwest, and was consequently considered an expert on Indian affairs; indeed, he had been elected to membership of the American Philosophical Society in 1826 on the basis of his 'considerable knowledge of the habits, manners, customs, and languages of the Aborigines of this Country' (quoted by Wallace, *Jackson*, 41). Because of this status, Cass, a staunch Democrat, exerted considerable influence, providing a moral and

intellectual justification for removal which Jackson clearly adopted and exploited when he became president.<sup>12</sup>

Cass asserted that the Indians were intellectually incapable of adopting the habits of civilization:

The range of thought of our Indian neighbors is extremely limited. Of abstract ideas they are almost wholly destitute. They have no sciences, and their religious notions are confused and circumscribed. They have but little property, less law, and no public offences. They soon forget the past, improvidently disregard the future, and waste their thoughts, when they do think, upon the present.<sup>13</sup>

The 1826 article does not openly advocate removal, although Cass's objections are practical rather than moral. In the 1830 article, however, Cass adopts a stronger, pro-removal stance, maintaining that the attempts by missionaries to improve the Indians — 'a cause as holy as it has proved hopeless' — had manifestly failed: 'Year after year sanguine anticipations have been formed, to be succeeded by disappointment and despondency'.<sup>14</sup> Nor were the Cherokees an exception to this rule, since the improvements which the missionaries had claimed for them were actually, according to Cass, limited 'to some of the *half-breeds* and their immediate connexions', whereas 'the great body of the population are in a state of helpless and hopeless poverty. [...] We doubt whether there is, on the face of the globe, a more wretched race than the Cherokees, as well as the other southern tribes, present. Many of them exhibit spectacles as disgusting as they are degrading' (*NAR*, 1830, 71). Thus, Cass concludes, removal of the eastern Indians to lands West of the Mississippi 'is evidently the only means in our power or in theirs, which offers any probability of preserving them from utter extinction' (*NAR*, 1830, 112).

In his first Annual Message to Congress, in December 1829, Jackson echoed Cass's arguments:

---

<sup>12</sup> Jackson rewarded Cass for his support by making him his Secretary of War in 1831, in which capacity he was responsible for the implementation and administration of Indian removal until 1836.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis Cass, 'Indians of North America', *North American Review*, L [new series, XXV] (January 1826), 79.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Cass, 'Removal of the Indians', *North American Review*, LXVI [new series, XLI] (January 1830), 68.

Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay, the fate of the Mohegan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware is fast overtaking the Choctaw, the Cherokee and the Creek. That this fate surely awaits them if they remain within the limits of the States does not admit of a doubt. Humanity and national honor demand that every effort should be made to avert so great a calamity. (Prucha, *Documents*, 48)

Jackson's choice of tribes to exemplify the gradual decay of Indian culture is certainly not accidental. 'The Mohegan, the Narragansett, and the Delaware' are, of course, the 'noble' Indians of Cooper's tales, which the novelist had borrowed from Heckewelder. Jackson is deliberately exploiting the sympathy generated for the Indians by these popular novels, and skilfully enlisting it in the cause of removal. The interrelation between fiction and contemporary Indian affairs was never clearer.<sup>15</sup>

Cass and Jackson had fastened upon a paradigm which allowed them to represent Indian removal as a moral responsibility incumbent upon the American people. These arguments seemed to many of the opponents of removal, as they seem to us now, to be transparent attempts to disguise a political and economic policy as a moral necessity. The missionaries whose efforts were dismissed by Cass responded forcefully, rallying a considerable amount of support for the Indians in the North. Chief amongst these campaigners was the secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Jeremiah Evarts. During 1829, Evarts published twenty-four articles in the *National Intelligencer*, using the pseudonym William Penn, in which he severely called to task the immorality of the government position. The religious revivalism which had swept America after the War of 1812

---

<sup>15</sup> In actual fact, Cass was rather contemptuous of the picture of the Indians in the work of 'our eminent novelist', as he refers to Cooper, stating that 'the last of the Mohegans' is an Indian of the school of Mr Heckewelder, and not of the school of nature', in 'Indians of North America', *NAR*, L [new series, XXV] (January, 1826), 67. That this comment, which indisputably refers to Cooper and his famous novel, is present in an article apparently published in January 1826 is somewhat puzzling, as *The Last of the Mohicans* itself was not officially published until 7<sup>th</sup> February 1826, with retailing beginning on the 4<sup>th</sup>. One can only speculate that the *North American Review*, despite being dated for the start of the year, was actually written and printed later; or that Cass had somehow seen a draft version of the novel. The latter is not improbable, since there had been considerable delay in the American publication of the novel due to Cooper's switch of publishers from Charles Wiley to Carey & Lea. The novel had been completed considerably earlier, and proofs of the first volume had been sent to Cooper's British publisher by 23 September 1825 (see James Franklin Beard, 'Historical Introduction', in *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative Of 1757*, ed. by Beard and others [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983], xxv-xxviii). It is quite likely, therefore, that Cass could have seen an early review copy sent to the *NAR*.



created a receptive audience for such appeals, and the suggestion made by Evarts and others that national prosperity was linked to national morality, was taken seriously.

An anonymous response to Cass's articles, published in the *American Monthly Magazine*, and reprinted in pamphlet form in Boston in 1830, accuses him of allowing 'the clear dictates of reason and conscience to be warped by the motives of personal avarice and party selfishness' and of promulgating 'the hard and crooked maxims of an irreligious, selfish, abominable state policy':

His mind gives way, like that of multitudes of others, to the false faith that the Indians never can be civilized; and his habits of weighing too often, and too exclusively, the good and the happiness which might accrue to the nation, if these stumbling blocks were out of the way, makes him write of them as if they were neither human, nor endowed with the rights nor the capabilities, which their more fortunate neighbours possess; to be treated, indeed, like so many stubborn animals, and to be sacrificed without scruple, whenever the interests of the whole United States seem to require it.<sup>16</sup>

The progress made by the Cherokees is not deceptive, he argues, but seems rather to have been providentially designed 'to tell the world that there are none, however singularly ferocious, whom he [i.e. God] cannot reclaim from their savage barbarity'. It would be a shocking dereliction of duty 'when a whole people have emerged from their darkness, and are rapidly advancing to the possession of the glorious light and hopes of Christianity, and to the enjoyment of the blessings of domestic life, [to] shut them up to all future progress, and return them to their original barbarity' (*AMM*, 10-11). Obviously, the relocation of all Indians to a territory thousands of miles from the centres of white society would seriously impede missionary endeavour.

The author of this article seeks to counteract the indifference of a public which, 'at the very moment in which [the question of removal] is to be made the subject of debate in our halls of legislation, [is] in almost total ignorance of its true nature, and its real importance' (*AMM*, 12). The 'agitation of this question' is

---

<sup>16</sup> Anon., *The Removal of the Indians: An article from the American Monthly Magazine – An examination of an article in the North American Review; and an exhibition of the advancement of the Southern Tribes in Civilization and Christianity* (Boston: Pierce and Williams, 1830), 1, 5.

a crisis of greater importance to this whole country — (not to the Indians alone; that, though it be the business of humanity to weigh it even in the hair's estimation, is perhaps the least of the matter) — than any other era has presented since the first moment of our national existence [...] It is so, *because it far more deeply involves our moral and religious character, by bringing us, in that capacity, to the very eve of the commission of a great and dreadful crime.* (AMM, 7)

Despite the efforts of both sides, however, to make the issue a moral one, 'the spirit of party' inevitably became a factor. Evarts and the advocates of Indian reform were supported by anti-Jackson politicians in the Senate and the House, and, to a certain extent, at a congressional level, opposition to removal was simply a politically expedient means of unsettling the administration. That it did not stem from genuine conviction is perhaps indicated by the fact that when the Whigs eventually came to power in 1841, they continued to pursue exactly the same policy of relocation as the Democrats.

## V. THE IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT OF REMOVAL

The Indian Removal bill was debated in Congress in April and May of 1830, and eventually passed in the Senate by 28 votes to 19, and in the House by 102 votes to 97. Jackson signed it on May 28, 1830.<sup>17</sup> The actual wording of the Act gave neither the federal government nor individual states the right to force Indian tribes to sell their land and remove to the West; it merely made it lawful for the President of the United States

to cause so much of any territory belonging to the United States, west of the river Mississippi, not included in any state or organized territory, and to which the Indian title has been extinguished, as he may judge necessary, to be divided into a suitable number of districts, for the reception of such tribes or nations of Indians as may choose to exchange the lands where they now reside, and remove there.

But in practice, Jackson and his loyal team of assistants sought to induce removal by any means possible. Principally, this took the form of non-intervention — simply refusing to intervene between the Indians and the individual states, no matter how valid, in legal terms, the Indians' complaints were. In the South, the state legislatures immediately abolished tribal

---

<sup>17</sup> The following summary and discussion of the Indian Removal bill and its aftermath is indebted principally to Rogin, Remini, and particularly Wallace, *Jackson*, 64-94.

governments, making it illegal for tribes to maintain their own laws or punish lawbreakers. Indians became subject to state taxes and militia duty. Most importantly, as Wallace tells us,

the Indians were denied the right to vote, to bring suit, even to testify in court (as heathens all — despite the evidence of the conversion for many — they could not swear a Christian oath). Intruders were encouraged to settle on Indian territory; lands were sold even before they had been ceded. (Wallace, *Jackson*, 75)

Missionaries working to persuade Indians not to cede their land were arrested unless they agreed to swear an oath of allegiance to the state. In one famous case — that of Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler — Chief Justice John Marshall found in favour of the imprisoned missionaries, and thus negated Georgia's claim to authority over the Indians and missionaries. But it made no difference, since Jackson refused to enforce the ruling with federal intervention. 'Justice Marshall has made his decision,' Jackson is said to have remarked when the ruling was made known to him, 'now let him enforce it'.

It was only a matter of time before, one by one, the so-called Five Civilized tribes of the South — the Choctaws, Cherokees, Chickasaws, Creeks and Seminoles — were forced to move. The abuses of federal law by white settlers and state governments were connived at by the federal government, and tribal populations forced and bribed into signing removal treaties. By the end of 1836, the Choctaws and Creeks had mainly gone, the Chickasaws by the end of 1837. The Cherokees resisted until 1839, when they were forced to remove; and the Seminoles in Florida, after a protracted war, remained until 1842.<sup>18</sup> The various federally supervised emigrations of the Five Civilized tribes were, for the most part, studies in incompetence. The first party of Choctaws to emigrate did so in the middle of an incredibly harsh winter, with inadequate provisions, thin summer clothing, and no proper

---

<sup>18</sup> The Second Seminole War, as it was called, lasted from 1835-1842, and cost the government an astonishing \$20 million dollars. The Seminoles had simply refused to move according to the terms of a 'fraudulent' treaty secured in 1832. After seven years of tortuous struggle in the malarial swamplands of Florida, four thousand of them had been removed to the West, a further one and a half thousand had died, and approximately five hundred Seminoles were allowed to remain in Florida. This was largely because the land they occupied was not cultivatable anyway, and the extended war had become widely unpopular. Around 1,500 federal troops had also died in the war, and many others were afflicted with malaria. The government, in effect, simply decided it was no longer worth the expense or the effort.

guides. Hundreds died on the way. Later parties tried to avoid this fate by travelling in the summer, but were caught up in the horrendous cholera epidemic of the summers of 1832 and 1833, killing some four thousand. In the Creek removal, which lasted from 1832 to 1838, and was particularly marked by an appallingly corrupt system of land sales, estimates for the total mortality have been as high as ten thousand. Of the Cherokees, approximately twenty-five percent of the eastern tribal population — four thousand people — died on the infamous ‘trail of tears’ in 1837-1839.

The implementation of the Indian Removal Act had a profound effect not only on the Indian populations which it displaced, but also on the white population which flooded into the newly vacated lands. Suddenly, after 1830, a vast region in the heart of the South became available for white settlement, and conditions in large parts of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida were very much the same in the 1830s as they had been in Kentucky fifty years earlier, or in the Northeast more than a century before — with the significant exception that the Indian population had already been removed. As Donald Davidson points out,

Throughout the quarter of a century preceding the Civil War the South colonized this ‘interior’ frontier. During this very period emigration was flowing into the Southwest and across the Great Plains to the Pacific Coast. A time map would show, accordingly, that a large belt of Southern territory, reaching in a crescent from the Southern parts of the Appalachians and on across Alabama and Georgia to the Delta lands of Mississippi, was, in chronology of settlement, as ‘Western’ as the new regions entered beyond the Mississippi River.<sup>19</sup>

The existence of this ‘interior frontier’ was enormously important, as it created the peculiar social conditions which ultimately drove such a wedge between North and South. The frontier was not merely to be found in the far West, but in the heart of southern territory. In the words of Frederick Jackson Turner, Georgia, despite being one of the original thirteen states, was ‘deeply touched by influences characteristically western’:

Because of the traits of her leaders, and the rude, aggressive policies of her people, Georgia belonged at least as much to the west as to the south. From

---

<sup>19</sup> *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 5 vols, ed. by Mary C. Simms Oliphant and others (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952-1982), I, xl.

colonial times the Georgia settlers had been engaged in an almost incessant struggle against the savages on her border, and had the instincts of a frontier society.<sup>20</sup>

Turner's remark unthinkingly perpetuates the very assumption — that the Indians were 'savages' — which had facilitated Georgia's final 'victory' over them; but it accurately suggests that in the South, a pioneer mentality persisted much longer than in the North, largely because of the tenacity of the Southern Indians.

With this in mind, the social relevance of frontier fiction needs partial reassessment. In choosing to write about the frontier, southern writers like Simms were engaging with a far more current social phenomenon than might initially be apparent. The regional shading of these frontier narratives seems yet more deliberate in the case of Paulding and Bird. If these writers are spoken of at all, it is usually in the same breath as Cooper. Paulding and Bird, like their more famous peer, were northerners, but they created southern fictional heroes, a decision that signals the contemporary context in which they wished their novels to be read.<sup>21</sup> It is to a discussion of these novels, in this context, that Part II of the thesis is devoted.

---

<sup>20</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (New York: Harpers, 1906), 57.

<sup>21</sup> Paulding did this in *Westward Ho!*, and Bird in *Nick of the Woods*.

## 6. History, Race and Nationalism: James Kirke Paulding

---

In a letter written in 1839, William Gilmore Simms told James Kirke Paulding that he regarded him as ‘among the most successful of our native authors; — as, indeed, one of the fathers of our first literature — a leading Pioneer; as solicitous of the national fame as of your own’.<sup>1</sup> If Paulding is remembered at all today, it is as one of Washington Irving’s collaborators on the satirical *Salmagundi*; but as Simms’s tribute indicates, at the height of his literary career, in the 1820s and 1830s, Paulding’s fame, reputation, and popularity, certainly in his native country, rivalled that of both Irving and James Fenimore Cooper. The reasons for such a dramatic decline in fortunes are varied. Even at the time of his death, in 1859, his work had been marginalized and superseded; he was perceived as too old-fashioned, too eighteenth-century in style and taste for the contemporary reading public. William Dean Howells, for one, wrote in 1867 that at the time of his death, Paulding had ‘survived all his readers’.<sup>2</sup>

Paulding deserves recognition, however, for his forthright championing of original American literature, in marked contrast to the Anglophilia of his lifelong friend, Irving. No other writer of the age, perhaps, had quite such a clear sense of the fundamental link between the geopolitical and literary destinies of the nation; and no other writer expressed this conviction so frequently and eloquently in print, or was so well connected and influential on both stages. His essays and critical writings develop a cogent and influential theory of American art; and if his creative writing fails to live up to his own critical ideals, it nevertheless exemplifies some of the difficulties besetting American authors as they tried to establish a literary tradition distinct from that of Europe.

To anyone tracing the development of a distinctive national literature in early nineteenth-century America, Paulding is a central figure, and his

---

<sup>1</sup> William Gilmore Simms to James Kirke Paulding, June 16, 1839, in William Gilmore Simms Papers, #6257-a through 6257-h, #6257-j, #6257-k, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.

<sup>2</sup> William Dean Howells, in an *Atlantic Monthly* (July, 1867) review of *The Literary Life of James K. Paulding*, ed. by William I. Paulding; cited by Louis D. Owens in ‘James K. Paulding and the Foundations of American Realism’ in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (Autumn 1975), 40.

nationalism, in turn, is crucial to understanding the way in which he represents the West in his work. A constant campaigner against what he perceived to be the enervating influence of European (especially English) models on American authors, Paulding also advocated the use of western themes and settings in American literature from an early stage of his prolific career, spanning some forty years. Although the geographical and literary landscape of the country changed drastically in that time, he consistently hitched his conception of the destiny of American letters to the drive westward across the continent. Along the way, his various works interrogated the relationship between history and fiction; anticipated the later works of realists such as Howells, and 'local colour' humorists such as Harte and Twain; and, more darkly, argued that the stability and progress of the nation depended on the continued subjugation of both slaves and Indians.

His first three novels, *Koningsmarke*, *the Long Finne* (1823), *The Dutchman's Fireside* (1831), and *Westward Ho!* (1832), are certainly worthy of rediscovery; taken together, they demonstrate the gradual emergence of the historical romance as the dominant fictional form of the 1820s and 1830s, as Paulding first struggles with, and then surrenders to, its generic strictures. These three novels argue that American character has been, and is continuing to be, defined by the opposition of two poles — the Anglophile, urban East, and the chaotically liberating wilderness of the West. For Paulding, 'frontier' is distinct from 'wilderness', representing a mediating zone between the pretentious sophistication of the city and the unchecked savagery of the far west. As such, it is the cradle of a perfect American society, neither corrupted by political ambition or commercial greed, nor trapped in backward cultural primitivism. The frontier, however, is in a state of fragile balance, under threat from both sides.

#### I. 'A VERY USEFUL MAN BY HIS PEN.'

Paulding's character and reputation, and his immersion in political and literary affairs, were well expressed by Irving, in a letter to the future president, Martin Van Buren, in 1833:

Paulding is a public man, known throughout the nation by his writings, which have ever inculcated the most patriotic and truly republican

sentiments. He is a staunch and sincere friend of the administration and to the old general [President Andrew Jackson]. He is a most honourable high minded man whose character gives dignity to office. He is widely connected by marriage &c and his connexions are all strong friends to the administration. He is moreover prized and beloved by a wide circle of friends of a class & standing and character to have an influence on society by their opinions. Such a man is valuable to a party by the very respectability of his character and conduct, but I know Paulding to be a very useful man by his pen, which he exerts anonymously, and merely for his own gratification, in the newspapers, on the administration side.<sup>3</sup>

Paulding had risen to this position of social eminence from humble beginnings, which afterwards informed his opinions, and in particular his devotion to Andrew Jackson and the Democrats, whom he believed to be champions of the underprivileged. He was born in the middle of the American Revolution, both geographically and chronologically, on August 22nd, 1778, in Pleasant Valley, New York. His family had fled from their family seat in Tarrytown, to avoid the threat from ‘marauding bands of Yagers, Cow Boys and Skinners, who roamed the “Neutral Ground” between the British forces in New York City and the American Army in the Hudson Highlands’<sup>4</sup> — a locale that would become the setting for the first American historical novel, Cooper’s *The Spy* (1821). His father served in the New York militia, and many other members of his family fought on the American side during the war. His first cousin, John Paulding, was one of three men who captured the British spy Major André, and foiled the attempt by General Benedict Arnold to betray secret plans to the British. Paulding thus grew up surrounded not just by stories but by examples of heroism within his own family, and tales of treachery and arrogance amongst the British. Although his father was bankrupted by his involvement in the War, it is nevertheless clear that Paulding absorbed a deep familial pride in being associated with some of the defining incidents of the Revolution, which fed his nationalistic fervour throughout his life and contributed to his resentment of the British.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Washington Irving to Martin Van Buren, January 2, 1833, Library of Congress, quoted in *The Letters of James Kirke Paulding*, ed. Ralph M. Aderman, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 148, fn.

<sup>4</sup> Larry J. Reynolds, *James Kirke Paulding* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), 1.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Reynolds, 3: ‘During the Revolution, Paulding’s father, responsible for supplying the American army in Peekskill, pledged his own property with the farmers of Westchester and Dutchess counties when they would no longer accept the worthless Continental money being issued by the new government. After the war, when he applied to the state legislature and then Congress for reimbursement, it was denied him. He had not had official authorization for his



Largely self-educated due to his family's poverty, Paulding developed a taste for eighteenth-century writers such as Addison, Swift, Dryden, Pope, and particularly Fielding and Goldsmith. Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* (1762) was a favourite in his youth, and gave him the model for many of his satirical works; whereas he several times in his letters and novels espouses the opinion that Fielding's *Tom Jones* is the most perfect example of the novelist's art. During his lonely and idle adolescence, Paulding imbibed an abstract love for nature and the outdoors which stayed with him through his many years of urban dwelling. In the words of Larry Reynolds, this accounts,

not only for the prominence of natural description in his works, but also for the conservative agrarianism at the center of his social and political thought. He would always believe in the moral superiority of the rural life even while living some forty-eight years in the cities of New York and Washington, and the belief in turn led him to praise the small farmer, the southern planter, the frontier settler and to criticize speculators, abolitionists, reformers, and advocates of progress in general. (Reynolds, 6)

Paulding moved to New York in his late teens, where he quickly established himself as part of the literary circle that would become known as the Knickerbockers. He remained in New York until 1815, when he was appointed secretary of the Board of Navy Commissioners by President Madison, and moved to Washington. The intervening years had seen the genesis of his literary career: a series of journalistic contributions to the *Morning Chronicle* led to the conception of *Salmagundi*, written mainly by Paulding and Irving, with contributions from Irving's brother William. Running in a series of twenty pamphlets between January 24, 1807 to January 25, 1808, the popular success of *Salmagundi* provided the bedrock for the careers of both Irving and Paulding. However, unlike Irving, Paulding took an increasing interest in national politics in this period, culminating in his enlistment during the War of 1812. His long held dislike of the British manifested itself, too, in his literary productions. A series of major, anti-British satirical works appeared between 1812 and 1815, the patriotic

---

actions, he was told. Consequently, he lost all he owned and was confined as a debtor in a log prison at White Plains, while his wife and nine children were forced to fend for themselves.'

sentiments of which attracted Madison's attention and resulted in his government post.<sup>6</sup>

## II. AMERICAN LITERARY AUTONOMY AND THE WEST

In a letter of 1835 to a Western acquaintance, who had criticised the accuracy of Paulding's own fictional depiction of the frontier, the author accepted his faults, and set out his belief in the centrality of the frontier and the West to the development of American literature:

I have always looked for something new and original in the literature of the West, and have seldom been disappointed. It seems to me that if we are ever to have a national literature, characterisk [*sic*] and original it will grow up far distant from the shores of the Atlantic where every gale comes tainted with the moral, political, and intellectual corruption of European degeneracy [...T]he new Republics rising up in such vigorous grandeur in the vast regions of the Mississippi Valley, are teeming with a new and primitive race, which while it possesses all the natural strength and energy of mind to think for itself, at the same time cherishes the love of literature and the Arts.<sup>7</sup>

Paulding advocated a brand of realism he termed 'Rational Fiction,' grounded in observation, which would eschew the fantastic trappings of romance, and celebrate the achievements of human reason. This vision, as Louis D. Owens has noted, anticipates the realism of writers such as Howells and Hamlin Garland in the later nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> He remained convinced, simultaneously, that the history of the western pioneers offered the appropriate material for indigenous American writers to create a distinctive literature. In the same letter, he states that

I do not think authentic History a proper basis for a novel. Tradition, or that species of History which belongs to the fabulous ages, or at least to a very remote period of obscurity, I should think much better. It would allow of alterations, additions and embellishments, without violating the sanctity of truth for what nobody believes, and suffer no injury by being combined with fiction. [...] A writer of fiction may avail himself of historical characters and events, but I think the prevalence of Historical novels of late years, has impaired the dignity of history, and injured the cause of truth. (*Letters*, 159-160).

---

<sup>6</sup> *The Diverting History of John Bull and Brother Jonathan* (1812); *The Lay of the Scottish Fiddle* (1813); *The United States and England* (1815).

<sup>7</sup> Paulding to Daniel Drake, 'Jany. 1st 1835', *The Letters of James Kirke Paulding*, ed. by Ralph M. Aderman (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 158-160.

<sup>8</sup> Louis D. Owens, 'James K. Paulding and the Foundations of American Realism', in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (Autumn 1975).

Paulding wrote this at a point at which he had himself produced two straightforward historical novels, *The Dutchman's Fireside* and *Westward Ho!*, despite his reservations about the form. They followed his first experimental, satirical novel, *Koningsmarke*, which remains hard to classify. He found it hard to accept the conventions of the historical romance established by Scott, believing that the Scotsman's influence was restraining the emergence of American genius. Although his critical tenets led him to believe that the romance was not the right form to produce a national literature to rival that of Europe, he was unable to synthesise this belief with his own literary products. Paulding's career as a novelist sees him struggling to reconcile his faith in realism and rationality, with the prevailing literary mode of the historical romance; to balance his principles with his commercial sensibility. His ultimate capitulation to historical romance, despite the damage he felt it was doing to 'the dignity of history' and 'the cause of truth', signals his failure to find another genre so well-suited to representing the 'new Republics' of the West.

Paulding's perception of the need for American literary autonomy is stated most forcibly in the essay 'National Literature', first published under the title 'The Wreck of Genius', in the second series of *Salmagundi* (1819), and revised in 1835.<sup>9</sup> This far-sighted and influential exposition of the link between national identity and frontier experience can be seen as a bridge between Brockden Brown's preface to *Edgar Huntly*, and Cooper's preface to *The Pioneers* (1823).<sup>10</sup> It also stands as a counterpoint to Irving's pro-English sentiments in the *Sketch-Book*. Paulding begins the essay by refuting the oft-repeated claim that the United States are deficient in the materials for romantic fiction:

Wherever there are men, there will be materials for romantic adventure. In the misfortunes that befall them; in the sufferings and vicissitudes which are everywhere the lot of human beings; in the struggles to counteract fortune, and in the conflicts of the passions, in every situation of life, he who studies

---

<sup>9</sup> Paulding wrote *Salmagundi: Second Series* (1819-20) without help from either William or Washington Irving.

<sup>10</sup> When he revised the essay in 1835, Paulding added two concluding paragraphs celebrating the under-valued works of Brockden Brown as 'a class of fictions standing alone by themselves; they are the product of our soil, the efforts of one of our most blameless and esteemed fellow-citizens, and they would do honour to any country.'

nature and draws his pictures from her rich and inexhaustible sources of variety, will always find enough of those characters and incidents which give a relish to works of fancy.<sup>11</sup>

Although he goes on to acknowledge that America lacks a folklore filled with the supernatural — ‘Fairies, giants and goblins are not indigenous here, and with the exception of a few witches that were soon exterminated, our worthy ancestors brought over with them not a single specimen of Gothic or Grecian mythology’ — he protests that the history of the country’s pioneers amply fills that void. According to Paulding,

there is that in the peculiarities of their character; in the motives which produced the resolution to emigrate to the wilderness; in the courage and perseverance with which they consummated this gallant enterprise; and in the wild and terrible peculiarities of their intercourse, their adventures, and their contests with the savages, amply sufficient for all the purposes of these higher works of imagination which may be called Rational Fictions (‘National Literature’, 268-269).

Railing against the critical fashion of praising foreign or imitative writing over distinctively American productions, he protests that ‘we have cherished a habit of looking to other nations for examples of every kind, and debased the genius of this new world by making it the ape and tributary of that of the old’ (269). A predictably anti-British attitude emerges in his rejection of ‘the exhausted treasury of our impoverished neighbours’. The American writer can only hope to create truly original literature, he declares, ‘by dwelling on scenes and events connected with our pride and our affections; by indulging in those little peculiarities of thought, feeling, and expression which belong to every nation; by borrowing from nature, and not from those who disfigure or burlesque her’ (270). Paulding concludes by offering a rallying cry to his literary compatriots that explicitly states the co-dependency of American literature and the growth and prosperity of the nation:

This country is not destined to be always behind in the race of literary glory. The time will assuredly come, when that same freedom of thought and action which has given such a spur to our genius in other respects, will achieve similar wonders in literature. It is then that our early specimens will be sought after with avidity, and that those who led the way in the rugged discouraging path will be honoured, as we begin to honour the adventurous spirits who first sought, explored, and cleared this western wilderness. (271)

---

<sup>11</sup> ‘National Literature’, in *Salmagundi, Second Series* (revised), II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 265-266.

The implication is clear — American writers are embarked on an undertaking as vital to generating a sense of national pride and identity as the pioneers who are settling the land. In time, they will be revered in literary history; meanwhile, it is incumbent on men like Paulding to honour the achievements of American society by immortalising them on the page.

### III. RACISM AND NATIONALISM

While living and working in Washington, Paulding had gone some way to putting his theory into practice, in a long narrative poem, *The Backwoodsman* (1818), his first fictional configuration of the frontier. In the address ‘To the reader’ at the beginning of the poem, Paulding justifies his choice of American subject matter, and qualifies the extent of his ambition, anticipating the negative reception it would be likely to receive:

That the author may not be charged with having failed in what he did not attempt, it may be as well, perhaps, to state the extent of the design of the following poem. His object was to indicate to the youthful writers of his native country, the rich poetic resources with which it abounds, as well as to call their attention home, for the means of attaining to novelty of subject, if not to originality in style or sentiment.<sup>12</sup>

The poem itself, consisting of six books and 3200 lines of rhyming couplets, is divided into two main parts. The first three books form a rather turgid account of the trials and tribulations of Basil, a poor eastern farmer who decides to head West in search of land, wealth and prosperity. Leaving their home in the Hudson Valley, despite the warnings and dire predictions of his neighbours, Basil and his family advance to Pittsburgh, where they join a band of pioneers, and head down the Ohio into the wilderness. Leaving Basil happily settled in his new ‘rustic village’, the second half of the poem examines the relationship between Indians and whites. Its main character is an old Indian referred to as the Prophet, ‘the last of all his race’, who, resenting the inroads made into his tribal lands by the whites, incites his tribe to war, in

---

<sup>12</sup> *The Backwoodsman: A Poem*, (Philadelphia: M. Thomas, 1818), 3. Cooper used a quote from *The Backwoodsman* for the epigraph on the title page of *The Pioneers* (1823), the first of his Leatherstocking tales, indicating that Paulding’s poem succeeded in alerting at least one ‘youthful writer’ to the ‘poetic resources’ of the frontier. Paulding’s influence on Cooper is generally unacknowledged.

particular a young chief called Shawanoe. In Book V, the Prophet visits the region of his childhood, now the location of a white village, and encounters an aged Pilgrim, intent on bringing Christianity to the natives. Their dialogue functions as a demonstration of both the truculent pride and injured dignity of the Indian, and the narrow-minded preaching of the Christian. Paulding puts into the mouth of the Prophet a powerful expression of Indian grievances, and disdain for Christianity:

‘And dost *thou* prate of mercy! O, full well,  
Of Christian mercies can our Indians tell!  
You spar’d their lives, to drive them from their home,  
Like scouting beasts in distant wilds to roam;  
You did not kill them, like a generous foe,  
And end their sufferings with one manly blow;  
You spar’d them for long exile, and disgrace.  
Spar’d them to see the ruin of their race.’ (*Backwoodsman*, 127)

To this accusation, the Pilgrim can only respond with a vague affirmation of God’s providential plan, and a far from Christian assertion that, ‘For so it is, alas! or right or wrong, / The weak are ever victims of the strong’ (*Backwoodsman*, 130).

To make sense of Paulding’s presentation of Indian-white relations in *The Backwoodsman*, it is essential to see the two halves in relation to each other. The establishment of Basil’s ideal rural community in the first half of the poem indicates Paulding’s Jeffersonian belief in the virtues of agriculture and the opportunity for the common man to better himself. The community hewn out of the wilderness is presented as an agrarian paradise, available to people who have been poor and underprivileged in the east. The Prophet and his allies threaten this idyllic, embryonic society from both sides, a fact that would have been particularly apparent to his original audience, reading the poem just three years after the end of the war with Britain.

In his address ‘To the reader’, Paulding states that, ‘the present work was begun more than five years ago’, dating the poem’s inception to 1813, in the midst of war. The Prophet is clearly modelled on Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee Prophet, with Shawanoe adopting the part of Tecumseh.<sup>13</sup> The Indians of *The Backwoodsman* therefore have an historical association with a period of both

---

<sup>13</sup> Tecumseh was finally killed at the Battle of the Thames, 5 October, 1813.

internal and external danger for the United States. The yoking of the Indians with the English, as representations of a non-American, alien threat, seems almost to have been an automatic mental step for Paulding, who repeatedly uses this symbolic alignment in his novels and correspondence. As in all his writing, the word 'frontier' connotes a 'neutral ground', a geographical range rather than a specific line drawn in the sand. In *The Backwoodsman*, Basil's community represents the imperilled frontier. Whatever the validity of the Prophet's claims, they cannot truly be countenanced, as their satisfaction would necessitate the disruption of the frontier settlement, an unthinkable act for Paulding. The moral question of whether the dispossession of the Indians is just, is subsumed in the larger necessity for protecting white American society.

Why, then, does Paulding give the Prophet such eloquent, persuasive arguments, if his intention is to discredit the Indian claim? The question is pertinent to much of Paulding's frontier writing, particularly in his earlier career, in which there are marked inconsistencies in his attitude towards the Indians. His work is frequently marred by a racist contempt for the 'savages'. In 1815, he published in the *Analectic Magazine* an account of his interview with Henry Bird, a survivor of Indian captivity and torture. This short, journalistic piece is restrained in tone, but Paulding cannot disguise his horror at the extreme suffering which Bird had experienced, or his admiration for Bird's phlegmatic retelling of his story. Describing Bird's mutilated arm, the result of Indian torture, Paulding remarks, 'I saw his hand and arm myself, or I could never have been brought to believe that human nature could have endured such long suffering'.<sup>14</sup>

Balancing the antipathy towards Indians generated by this experience was the sympathetic approach taken by his friend Irving, who maintained a strong influence on Paulding, and who had written, with admirable candour, that,

It has been the lot of the unfortunate aborigines of America, in the early periods of colonization, to be doubly wronged by the white men. They have been dispossessed of their hereditary possessions by mercenary and frequently wanton warfare: and their characters have been traduced by bigoted and interested writers. The colonist often treated them like beasts of the forest; and the author has endeavoured to justify him in his outrages. The former found it easier to exterminate than to civilize; the latter to vilify than

---

<sup>14</sup> 'The Adventures of Henry Bird', *Analectic Magazine*, 6 (October 1815), 301.

to discriminate. The appellations of savage and pagan were deemed sufficient to sanction the hostilities of both; and thus the poor wanderers of the forest were persecuted and defamed, not because they were guilty, but because they were ignorant.<sup>15</sup>

Paulding's awareness of such contrary opinions, held even by his friends, forced him to reflect the complexity of the issues involved in the displacement of the Indians on the frontier, and adopt a more circuitous means of propounding his personal animosity. He does this by allowing his Indian characters, in this case the Prophet, to articulate their case in a reasoned dialogue with a white counterpart. The intent is not to discredit the Indians by logical argument, or to demonstrate the inherent flaws in their position, but merely to show the fundamental incompatibility of white and Indian societies. The inability of the Prophet and the Pilgrim to find any common ground in conversation confronts the reader with a microcosmic vision of Indian-white integration; the picture is one of discord and clashing values, with an undercurrent of violence always on the point of erupting. The Pilgrim's attempts at Christianising and civilizing the Indians are shown to be futile, more incendiary than conciliatory; and the conventional 'nobility' of the savage, his cultural integrity, is used by Paulding as evidence for the inevitability of his displacement. Paulding thus twists the question, asking the reader not 'Is it right to exterminate or remove the Indians?' but 'Is it possible not to, without compromising white society?'

*Koningsmarke* makes this point even more explicitly, and again, Paulding employs a dialogue between an Indian and a white to bring out their fundamental incompatibility. About halfway through the novel, *Koningsmarke* and Christina, the hero and heroine, are captured by Indians. Although several other captives are tortured and killed, the couple are integrated into the tribe — Christina as the adopted sister of the squaw Aonetti, and *Koningsmarke* first as a slave, and later as a full warrior. Although ill-equipped by education and experience to live as Indians, they adapt well, Christina learning the requisite domestic skills, and *Koningsmarke* proving himself an able warrior and hunter. In his idle moments, *Koningsmarke* discusses the different opinions and philosophies held by the

---

<sup>15</sup> Washington Irving, 'Traits of Indian Character', *Analectic Magazine*, 3 (February 1814), 145.



white and red men with an elder of the tribe, Ollentangi. It is in these conversations that Paulding ironically brings his agenda to the surface, and it is noticeable, again, that his satire operates at the expense of Christian missionaries as well as the savages themselves. Koningsmarke initially adopts a proselytising attitude, but he is constantly frustrated by the old man's logical reasoning:

Koningsmarke endeavoured to explain the mystery of the Trinity to Ollentangi; but without effect. It was beyond the comprehension of the man of nature, who continued obstinately to affirm, that if the Great Spirit was composed of three Great Spirits, they must have a plurality of spirits, and that if it was not so composed, then his doctrine could not be true. Such is the utmost extent to which human reason can carry the man of nature.<sup>16</sup>

Paulding, following a brief flirtation with evangelical religion in his teens, entertained a particular scorn for such beliefs for the remainder of his life, viewing fanaticism as a dangerous and growing influence in society. The double-edged nature of his attack here is apparent. Ollentangi presents an inverted scenario, in which he envisages the attempted conversion of white society by Indian priests:

“But,” said Koningsmarke, “your conjurers don't understand our language.”  
“Oh, that is easily got over. They shall teach your people ours,” replied Ollentangi. (128-129).

Koningsmarke's response, that ‘we can't be taught such things’, of course, cuts both ways. Paulding's dismissal of the efficacy of missionary endeavours, and his assertion that the two races are simply incompatible, pre-empt the arguments of Lewis Cass several years later.

Underpinning the dialogue is a further, subliminal fear, of the greater likelihood of the savage way of life infecting the civilized portion of American society. It is a fear articulated in American literature from early settlement onwards, in Puritan tracts and captivity narratives, by Crèvecoeur, and by post-Revolutionary European commentators, who saw in the move away from recognised political models the potential for an equivalent social

---

<sup>16</sup> *Koningsmarke, the Long Finne: A Story of the New World*, (1823), ed. by Daniel A. Wells (Schenectady: Union College Press, 1988), 128.

shift, a 'degeneration' from patterns of civilized life.<sup>17</sup> In Paulding's time, opponents of racial integration could still raise the spectre of this anxiety to suggest the incongruity and danger of large populations of Indians dwelling in the midst of predominantly white, civilized states. As Ollentangi puts it, 'I have known several white-men become Indians, but I never saw an Indian turn white-man' (129). By this reasoning, the Indians have nothing to gain from the prolonged attempts of missionaries to civilize them; but the United States have much to lose by this continued association. In the novel, Koningsmarke quickly comes to the somewhat radical conclusion that religions are specific to culture, a notion that would be appalling to proselytising Christian missionaries:

The more, in fact, that Koningsmarke conversed with the old Indian, the more he became sensible that it was impossible to make him comprehend the most simple elements of our social and religious systems. Long before the winter set in, the Long Finne became unalterably convinced that all religions must be accommodated to the state of society, as well as the progress of intelligence; that religion is an integral portion of both; and that the attempt to propagate a system of faith at war with either, must necessarily entirely fail, or, if partially successful, be productive of great *moral evil*. (132)

The preceding discussion indicates some of the complexities present in *Koningsmarke*, a novel shot through with contradictions and flaws, which resists the imposition of a coherent reading. The curious inversion of values whereby the very admission of Indian integrity, and the demonstration of Indian reason, are the means by which their fate is sealed, is a characteristic which recurs at various points throughout the novel, with a disorientating irregularity. Its most forcible manifestation is in the character of Bombie of the Frizzled Head, the black slave. On one level meant as a parody of Norma of the Fitful Head from Scott's *The Pirate* (1822), Bombie emerges as the novel's most memorably eloquent figure. She is given to uttering prophecies, and is treated with a certain reverential awe by the other characters, and though her comments, particularly regarding a mysterious secret in Koningsmarke's past, are usually cryptic, she delivers a series of powerful

---

<sup>17</sup> In 1824, the year after *Koningsmarke* was published, *The Narrative of Mrs Mary Jemison* and Child's *Hobomok* both provided accounts, non-fictional and fictional respectively, of inter-racial marriage, in which a white woman adopted the life of an Indian.

speeches towards the end of the novel, when her grandson, Cupid, is about to be executed for treasonously assisting the Indians.

As with Ollentangi, it is hard to know what to make of Bombie. Her passionate denunciations of slavery give her a real dignity — they are reminiscent, even, of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And yet Paulding opposed abolition so strongly he could publish a book setting out his case, and, even though that case was based on constitutional rather than moral issues, he could not fail to see the moral questions involved.<sup>18</sup> In the preface to *Westward Ho!*, indeed, Paulding wrote:

The author yields to none in respect for the motives of those who are sincerely anxious to rid this country of the embarrassments of slavery; and none more heartily wishes the thing were possible, at less risk to the happiness of both master and slave.<sup>19</sup>

However, the clue to his intent for Bombie can, I think, be found in her final speech before her death, in which she denounces the white race, and forecasts a future in which they will be overthrown by a combined uprising of slaves and Indians:

Yes! yes! ye proud, upstart race, the time shall come, when the pile of oppression ye have reared to the clouds shall fall, and crush your own hands. Black-men and red-men, all colours, shall combine against your pale, white race; and the children of the master shall become the bondsmen of the posterity of the slave! (*Koningsmarke*, 211-212)

The racial tension generated by the geographical movement of white settlers was triangular, not polar. It not only resulted in the opposition between white civilization and Indian 'savagery', but on a political level, it also gave rise to a further, internal threat, which frontier romances reflect. The notion of civilized white society degenerating into savagery had been a real concern in the early years of the republic, but its resurrection now was primarily for political purposes. The vision of race war conjured up by Bombie, however, was a genuinely current anxiety when Paulding was writing, three years after

---

<sup>18</sup> *Slavery in the United States* (New York: Harpers, 1836). Although Paulding was appalled whenever he encountered mistreatment of slaves, he typically attempted to gloss over the inhuman nature of slavery. On its publication, he sent a copy of *Slavery* to Van Buren, and wrote: 'It is a difficult question for anything but declamation, as almost every argument in mitigation of the atrocity of slavery — if there be any atrocity in it, — goes directly in the teeth of the fundamental principles of our government. I have endeavoured however to get over this difficulty' (Paulding to Martin Van Buren, '16th Decr. 1835', *Letters*, 172).

<sup>19</sup> *Westward Ho!: A Tale* (1832), 2 vols., (New York: Harpers, 1832), I, 4.

the Missouri Compromise, when the issue of race and abolition had become a real threat to the stability of the Union, and would continue to be so for as long as westward expansion continued. If the delicate political balance between pro- and anti-slavery states was susceptible to disruption, so too was the very fabric of American society itself. Thomas Jefferson, whilst advocating abolition, had been unable to envisage freed slaves integrating successfully with the white population of the United States after so long in subjugation. Cooper, meanwhile, in *Notions of the Americans* (1828), tried to reassure his readers about the threat posed to white American society by the black population, in terms strikingly familiar from years of debate on Indian relations:

I do not think that slavery under any circumstances can entail a very serious danger on the dominion of Whites, in this Country, for at least a century or two. Districts might be ravaged beyond a doubt, but the prodigious superiority of the Whites in every thing that constitutes force is the pledge of their power.<sup>20</sup>

Paulding is engaged in a similar act of reassurance in *Koningsmarke*. By putting the prophecy in the mouth of Bombie, Paulding raises the threat, and then quashes it. Bombie is given the stature of a genuine prophetic, or 'sibyl', as she is frequently described. She exercises a morbid power, it seems, over the minds and imaginations of Christina and Koningsmarke. The happy ending, in which Koningsmarke and Christina marry, although it is probably intended as part of the generic satire, also serves to puncture this aura, as all her prophesies and curses come to nothing. Though she believes in herself, she is still a fraud, and the reader's belated understanding that, in this novel, the supernatural is merely a product of the gullible mind, lends, simultaneously, an extra degree of tragedy to Bombie's situation (her 'power' is merely a construct, an attempt to exert control over a life circumscribed by her slavery, to exercise power over the whites) and asserts for the reader the primacy of the rational and the sensible — the grounding on which, in Paulding's opinion, fiction should be based. We are meant to realise, like the old men who terrify each other with ghost stories elsewhere in the novel, that

---

<sup>20</sup> See Jefferson to Edward Coles, 'Monticello, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1814', in *Portable TJ*, 546; James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor*, ed. by Gary Williams (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 481.

by believing the artificially imposed suggestions of fate and the supernatural which Paulding sprinkles over the narrative, we are regressing — in the nineteenth century, there is no need for such credulity, and hence no need for Gothic romances. And by classing Bombie's predictions of the disintegration of American society on the level of superstitions, he is effectively dismissing them.

That Paulding was able, through Bombie, so convincingly to express the emotive sense of degradation inherent in slavery, and yet preserve his opinion that slavery must not be abolished, shows the strength of his conviction that there were *moral* grounds for supporting slavery. Naive and blinkered though such a position necessarily is, it is one he also expounds in *Westward Ho!*, in which the slaves of the benign Colonel Dangerfield beg him not to go West and leave them in Virginia, and two of them, Pompey Ducklegs and his nephew, Pompey the Little, refuse point blank to accept their freedom. As the family leaves their ancestral Virginian home, the slaves are described dancing together, and Paulding observes that,

They seemed to be happy, and we hope they were; for it is little consolation to know, or to believe, that a mode of existence of which millions of beings partake is inevitably a state of wretchedness. (*WH*, I, 58)

Here, amazingly, Paulding seems to be arguing that one should assume that slaves are generally happy, because to do otherwise would be unpleasant. He also adopts the more familiar, patronising attitude, common amongst Southern slaveholders, that blacks are like children, and cannot look after themselves. The prospect of black violence against whites, and the supposedly inevitable degradation of blacks once they have been freed, is raised when the Dangerfield party pass through Philadelphia, and a 'well-meaning gentleman', clearly a Quaker, informs Pompey Ducklegs that he is free if he wishes to be. As he is contemplating the offer, a succession of free blacks pass by, begging and swearing, and finally, 'a ferocious bewhiskered caitiff, dark as ebony, gallanted by two peace-officers; he had been guilty of robbing and almost murdering a white woman' (*WH*, I, 64-65).

Ultimately, though, Paulding's continued opposition to abolition rested upon his unshakeable belief that the Union could not survive such a step. For Paulding, the preservation and stability of the United States, the political and

moral system which he valued above all else, was always, in the end, the most important issue. When he came to defend slavery later in his career, he wrote

That no beneficial consequences to any class of mankind, or to the whole universe, can counterbalance the evils that will result to the people of the United States from the dissolution of the Union, and that, therefore no project ought ever to be tolerated by them which places it in jeopardy. Whether this principle accords with the nice metaphysical subtilties or abstract dogmas of fanaticism, he neither knows nor cares. (*Slavery in the United States*, 7-8)

The advocates of abolition were ‘fanatics’, the ultimate condemnation in Paulding’s vocabulary. Again, we see Paulding’s remarkably overt assertion that he simply does not care about any of the ‘subtilties’ of the slavery debate, beyond the threat it poses to the Union. The same overarching concern with maintaining a delicate state of national stability dictated his response to the ‘Indian question’.

#### IV. WRESTLING WITH THE ROMANCE

Paulding had clearly discovered, in *Koningsmarke*, the difficulties presented by his instinctive wish to keep history and fiction as discrete disciplines. Philip Gould has noted the critical tendency to see in historical novels of the period an ‘analogue for the early republic’:

Under the influence of Sir Walter Scott, the argument goes, American novelists pursued a “mixed mode” of documentary mimesis and imaginative liberation that inevitably led to problems fulfilling antebellum critics’ demand that fiction show a fidelity to historical fact. (Gould, 6)

Paulding seems to have perceived this problem at the time he was writing, due to his own critical beliefs, and his antipathy for Scott’s work. Gould pertinently comments that ‘anyone who carefully reads historical fiction of the 1820s soon sees that these texts speak a language of anachronism, one fraught with immediate social, political and ethical concerns’. In the case of *Koningsmarke*, the anachronism is accentuated. It does not merely rest on the fact that the novel, though set in the past, addresses contemporary concerns; the setting itself is, deliberately, historically ‘incorrect’. The action of the novel takes place in the short-lived Swedish settlement of Elsingburgh, at a time when it had actually long since ceased to exist. William Penn, the

Quaker founder of Pennsylvania, though belonging to a later time-frame, is an important peripheral figure. The novel is clearly meant to cast light on the contemporary socio-political environment not through analogy, but by refracting it through the prism of literary and social satire. At best it can be seen to offer, to use Gould's terms, 'a protean metaphor for the early republic', rather than a 'stable analogue' (Gould, 7-8).

If Paulding's novel deserves praise as an attempt to undermine the already solid conventions of the historical novel, it must also be admitted that it is not altogether a success. Its downfall is that it tries to achieve too much. Adopting a structure borrowed from Fielding, Paulding intersperses the narrative with chapters in which he directly addresses the reader, in the manner of *Tom Jones*. These sections are initially written in the parodic voice of a Scott-like romancer, who makes such claims as

In short, we are fully determined, by the example of a certain Great Unknown, that so long as we hold the pen, we will never be deterred from seizing any romantic or improbable adventure, by any weak apprehension that people will quarrel with us because they do not follow on in the natural course, or hang together by any probable connexion of cause and effect. (*Koningsmarke*, 2)

Paulding states in a letter that he wrote the book to 'pass the leisure hours of about six weeks that I was left alone at Washington', his family being on a trip to New York. So pressed was he for time, apparently, that 'in order to have the opportunity of correcting the sheets, I commenced the printing before the book was finished'. Furthermore, he contracted the 'intermitting fever' whilst writing it, and the later part of the book was written between bouts of illness (Paulding to Washington Irving, 'March 20, 1824', *Letters*, 68-69). All of these circumstances no doubt contributed to the maddening inconsistencies and weak plotting of the novel, but they were certainly compounded by Paulding's difficulties with the form and genre in which he had chosen to work.

In line with his own critical theories, which disdained the improbabilities of romance writers such as Scott, he sets out to parody the historical romance at the same time as writing a novel with a distinctive American feel.<sup>21</sup> As a

---

<sup>21</sup> Paulding is rather unfair to Scott, who, as Gillian Beer has noted, roots his novels in a closely observed historical setting: 'The accuracy of Scott's historicism, his sense of the temper of precise periods and their relationship to the time at which he writes, separates most

result, Paulding is gradually sucked in to using all the conventions of the romance, and, though it starts out as parody (and Paulding's authorial interjections sporadically remind us of this), for long stretches, as Thomas F. O'Donnell has remarked, 'the satire, if there is any at all, is almost unrecognizable'.<sup>22</sup> Having introduced a deliberately exaggerated set of stock scenes and characters, intending to mock them, Paulding has nowhere to take them, and so starts to write in the form he professes to despise. His use of 'tradition' rather than history unfortunately robs the novel of a sense of place — the action feels like it is taking place in a nebulous 'nowhere', because we know that it has no historical basis; and Paulding uses his satirical intentions to excuse his contrived plotting. As with much of Paulding's work, an interesting idea fails in its execution.

However, by probing the limits of the historical novel in this way, Paulding generates a beneficial side-effect, which becomes apparent in his treatment of characters on the margins of society, in particular Indians and slaves. Carolyn Karcher has observed that the frontier romance of this period was

a medium for drawing lessons from the past, imagining the future, and forging a nationalist consciousness [...] By restaging such events as the Pequot War and the French and Indian War and by letting their fictional characters test possibilities that might have arisen had history made them available, these novelists raised vital questions about the ongoing westward drive and its consequences for Indians.<sup>23</sup>

Although this is certainly true to an extent, in Paulding's case, I think, writing in the genre of historical fiction was more constraining of his imaginative reconfiguration of the past than it was liberating. Writing an historical novel forces the author to conceive a coherent sense of national history, and of the modern society whose history is being fictionalised. Historical fiction always

---

of his work from the romance tradition. (When that accuracy is missing, as in the work of many later novelists, the historical novel does become a lax type of romance.) Scott makes it clear that periods of the past, whether the period of Cœur de Lion in *Ivanhoe* or of seventeenth-century Scotland in *Old Mortality*, were unideal. Though they differ from our own time they exist on an equivalent scale' (Gillian Beer, *The Romance*, [London: Methuen, 1970], 66). Clearly, such an approach chimes with Paulding's notion of 'Rational Fiction'; but unfortunately, Scott's many imitators were not so rigorous in their attention to historical detail or plausibility, thus provoking Paulding's satire.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas F. O'Donnell, 'Koningsmarke: Paulding vs. Scott in 1823', in *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 24, part 1 (Fall 1974), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Carolyn Karcher, introduction to *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, by Catharine Maria Sedgwick (Middlesex: Penguin, 1998), xix.



begs a question: to what present state, of society and nation, does the historical action function as a precursor? Thus, the author controls participation in fictionalised history according to his or her conception of who and what constitutes contemporary American society. Gould notes that,

in the absence of a school of revisionist historiography, historical romance provided an outlet for cultural dissent. Without overestimating the radical politics of historical romance, one should recognize that the genre engaged, subverted — sometimes participated in — the dominant ideologies of status quo historiography. Indeed, the cultural role of historical fiction as a mediator between novels and histories marks its liminal political position. (Gould, 13)

He then qualifies this position, however, by commenting that, despite its flexibility and the opportunity it provided for cultural dissent, historical fiction remained essentially nationalistic. He argues that ‘if nationalism itself is a cultural construct, early-nineteenth-century creations of the “imagined nation” reinvented historical continuity between heroic origins and the present generation’ (Gould, 13). To a writer such as Paulding — a man of strong political and nationalistic feelings, acutely conscious of the interplay between history and fiction — participation in ‘the dominant ideologies of status quo historiography’ was synonymous with writing a historical romance. Thus, though he states early on in *Westward Ho!* that ‘the story professes no connection with history and aspires to no special chronological accuracy’ (*WH*, I, 4), he also prefaces the main action of the novel with a survey of the historical changes which have taken place between the period in which it is set, and the time at which Paulding is writing:

The wild exuberance of nature has given place to the rich products of human labour, the wild animals of the forest have been superseded by peaceful flocks and herds; and the wild Indian has retired before that destiny which pursues him everywhere. (*WH*, I, 7-8)

Thus, despite the disclaimer, we are immediately made aware of the continuity we are meant to feel between *then* and *now*; a causal link is established between the events of the novel and the society to which Paulding belongs, a link which *Koningsmarke*, by contrast, is careful to avoid.

A further comparison of *Koningsmarke* with *Westward Ho!* and *The Dutchman's Fireside* illustrates more clearly the formal differences between

them. It is no coincidence that only in the former, the only one of the three significantly to resist the conventions of romance, is he able to create both Indian and black characters who avoid conventional patterns of stereotyping. That he manipulates these creations, as already noted, in order to reinforce his specific conception of the preferable social system, is, in a sense, besides the point. The mere fact of their existence marks the novel out as unusual. He is enabled to do this by the very factor which renders *Koningsmarke* unsatisfactory as historical romance — the lack of a recognisable sense of place. As the action belongs outside history, Paulding has the freedom to suggest potential alternatives to the status quo, even if he does not finally ratify them. To such a category belongs Bombie's portentous denunciation of the white race, a warning of possibly dangerous rifts in the fabric of American society. But because the society of *Westward Ho!* and *The Dutchman's Fireside* are firmly located in an historical continuum with contemporary society, such subversive voices are more threatening and therefore more thoroughly silenced.

#### V. THE MODERATE FRONTIER

The period between the publication of *Koningsmarke* in 1823 and *The Dutchman's Fireside* in 1830 witnessed other crucial changes which profoundly influenced the nature of Paulding's literary output. As already noted, he was a staunch supporter of the Democratic administration, and idolised Jackson, whose rise to power enabled him more fully to invest in a literary endorsement of the 'status quo'. By his own admission, his political ardour had waned in the early 1820s:

We are just on the eve of a mighty election here, in which to Say the truth, I feel little interest. Parties seem to have lost sight of their Old Landmarks, and to be so jumbled together, that a man can now play the Scoundrel in politics with perfect impunity, provided he only talks sufficiently loud about his Conscience, the watch word of rogues all over the world, in all ages. In this state of things, I can take no part; for though *you* know very well that I dont much affect the Yankees, Yet I dont know but Mr Adams is as good as any of those who are likely to be his competitors. ('To John Rodgers, New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> Novr. 1826', *Letters*, 85)

The arrival of Jackson on the political scene, however, filled Paulding with a renewed political vigour — his admiration for 'the old General' knew no

bounds. To Jackson's Vice-President Van Buren he avowed his intention to support the administration through his journalistic writings, and his correspondence from the period is alive with political speculation and opinion.

Jackson's character conformed to what Paulding believed a true American to be. He was a war hero and a westerner, with a straightforward, blunt manner — in Paulding's words, 'there is no pettifogging about him, and he smacks more of the true game than any public man I have ever known'. Politically, he reaffirmed Paulding's own beliefs — expansionist and yet socially conservative, their vision of American society was a rural, agrarian dream. Jackson's political dominance derived from the appeal of his personal image to the common people. Paulding writes approvingly of his impeccable republican credentials:

General Jackson, I perceive, Knows, in what consists the distinction between a Government of the whole, and a Government of one. He is aware that the former is instituted to protect the poor against the encroachments of the rich, and that in the latter, the great object is to encourage and maintain their usurpations, by exclusive privileges, and an extensive System of Monopolies. This is what constitutes the only radical distinction between the Republican, and monarchical principle of Government. (Paulding to Francis Blair, '24<sup>th</sup> February 1834', *Letters*, 141)

Jacksonian principles loom large in the two novels Paulding wrote during the general's presidency. With a government whose policies dovetailed neatly with his own opinions, Paulding had more reason than ever to reaffirm the status quo, and he abandoned the loose satirical approach of *Koningsmarke* and attempted the historical novel proper. To do so was to depart from his critical tenets once again, for he had never visited the West, the scene for the majority of both novels, and hence could not base his writing on observation. And yet both *The Dutchman's Fireside* and *Westward Ho!* still differ quite markedly from the model Cooperian romance, and although more conventional, they are in many ways more fully realised, skilfully constructed novels than his earlier attempt.

Following the passage of the Indian Removal Act, Paulding wrote to Richard Henry Wilde, a congressman who had spoken in its favour, to express his approval:

I have read your speech with particular attention and pleasure, and if I had not been already convinced, it would have satisfied me of the necessity as well as the humanity of removing the Indians from the bosom of Georgia and Alabama. But the absurdity & impossibility of a Community of Savages residing in the centre of a civilized state, to whose laws they will not submit, is in itself so glaring, that nothing less than the madness of Fanaticism or the wilfulness of Hypocrisy could shut their eyes to it. I rejoice that the measure was carried against the combined forces, & that the Holy Alliance of Folly, Fanaticism & Political interests was defeated. (Paulding to Richard Henry Wilde, '16<sup>th</sup> August 1830', *Letters*, 110-111)

Paulding was engaged in the composition of *The Dutchman's Fireside* when he wrote this, and the sentiments expressed here feed directly into the concerns of the novel.

*The Dutchman's Fireside* follows the adventures of a scholarly young man named Sybrandt Westbrook, raised in rustic simplicity at his guardian's Hudson river estate, and given to over-contemplation of how others perceive him, particularly his beautiful cousin, Catalina Vancour. This hypersensitivity makes him feel embarrassment and take offence where there is none intended, a tendency crippling his natural ability for decisive physical action. The narrative follows him on a trading voyage into the wilderness, in which he confronts hostile Indians and meets Sir William Johnson, a real historical figure, who teaches him the value of action, and the benefits of an outdoor life, and goes some way to countering his naturally inward-looking nature. He then returns to the family seat, where he impresses Catalina, and foils the plot by a 'civilized savage' to assassinate her. Even though they become engaged, she travels to fashionable New York at her mother's instigation, where she is courted by gentlemanly British suitors. Sybrandt follows her, and is embarrassed by his lack of sophistication. Following a misunderstanding, he breaks from Catalina and joins the British army in the French and Indian War, where he distinguishes himself under Johnson, finally returning home to sort things out with Catalina and get married.

The basic structure of the book reveals its predominant themes. The action is governed by several major movements: from Sybrandt's frontier home into the wilderness, and back; to New York; to the wilderness again in the war; then finally back to the settled environment of the Vancour family estate. Leland S. Person has noted that the transitions between contrary worlds in the novel enact a 'compromise between the too often exclusive claims of the

wilderness and civilization'.<sup>24</sup> He summarises the novel's primary concern thus:

Typical of his moderating vision, Paulding's fictional world exists in a problematical, but not apocalyptic period of transition in which the claims on human character of savagism and civilization are roughly equal. Occupying a middle ground, his characters seem able to move freely between these traditionally opposed worlds. (Person, 43)

The point is reiterated throughout that character is, to a large degree, formed by environment, and that the most successfully 'American' character is a moderation of the sophistication of the city and the savagery of the wilderness, a compromise that results in a way of life devoid of urban corruption:

Undoubtedly simplicity of manners is one of the great pillars of morality. It circumscribes our wants, and thus diminishes those besetting temptations to extravagance and dishonesty which originate in and receive their power from the love of dress, splendour, display, and luxury [...] That our own high feelings of independence are rapidly fleeing before the quick steps of ostentation and luxury, and that the love of wealth, as the means of attaining to these gratifications, is becoming the ruling passion, must be obvious to all observers.<sup>25</sup>

Sybrandt is initially out of place in both city and forest, but under the tutelage of William Johnson, he proves his worth to himself and Catalina, through dynamic physical action, as a woodsman and then as a soldier. As Robert Winston has indicated, Paulding incorporates the familiar patterns of a romance for Sybrandt's journeys into the wilderness: 'In each, Paulding utilizes the image of knight with squire to confirm the mythic nature of the quest'.<sup>26</sup> On a very simple level, the novel functions as an allegory for the American experience, of forging a national character distinct from, but moulded by, the contrary influences by which the nation was bounded. Sybrandt learns, as Paulding wants the American people to learn, that value resides in a sense of personal worth, not in how one is perceived by the outside world (and certainly not the British); and that the unique, defining

---

<sup>24</sup> Leland S. Person, Jr., 'James Kirke Paulding: Myth and the Middle Ground', in *Western American Literature*, 16:1 (Spring 1981), 39.

<sup>25</sup> *The Dutchman's Fireside: A Tale* (1831), 2 vols. (New York: Harpers, 1837), I, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Winston, 'Paulding's *The Dutchman's Fireside* and the Early American Romance', in *Studies in American Fiction*, 11:1 (Spring 1981), 50-51.

experience of the American people was found on the frontier, in contact with an untamed wilderness which the British, as they demonstrate by their deficiencies in frontier warfare, are unable to understand or negotiate.

The vagaries of fashion and the unnecessary deference for all things European are savagely satirised, in a clear analogue for Paulding's tireless literary campaign:

Among the most prominent of the foibles of Mrs Aubineau was an idea at that time very prevalent among both English and American women. This was an undisguised and confirmed conviction, that the whole universe was a nest of barbarians, compared with old England, and that there was as much moral and physical difference between being born there and here, as there was space between the two countries. (*DF*, I, 18-19)

Equally, the Indian occupants of the wilderness — the inverse threat to the stability of the ideal frontier community represented by the Vancours' family home — are also given short shrift. The novel has no articulate Indian character like Ollentangi; instead, we have two demonic incarnations of the treacherous savage, the one-eyed Paskingoe, and the duplicitous Hans Pipe. Both are shown to be naturally malicious, but they have been made worse by contact with the whites, a process Paulding summarises thus:

There are birds and quadrupeds that may be tamed, and others which retain deep traces of their native wildness to the last. So does it seem with the race of man. As the Indian orator once said to President Monroe, "The white man is born for the sunshine, the redman for the shade." The white man, the black man, and the man of every colour but the red, may be tamed, and improve by taming. He alone seems, indeed, born for the woods; it is there the virtues he possesses can alone be exercised to the benefit of himself and his tribe. Place him in the sunshine, in the haunts of social and civilized life, — and sad is the experience, and woful the truth — he becomes, ninety-nine times in a hundred, the most mischievous of mongrels; a compound of the ferocity of the savage, and the cunning, deceit and sensuality of the civilized scoundrel. (*DF*, I, 151-152)

Paulding's familiar message of the impossibility of the integration of white and red men is spelled out with greater clarity than ever before. The historical reality of Indian removal lends a kind of validity to his 'prediction' here; he no longer needs to approach the issue with any sense of balance, as the counter-arguments have lost their power in the light of recent history.

The irredeemable malignity of the only two Indians to be developed in any detail in the novel inflects our interpretation of William Johnson. He is unique in Paulding's fiction, being a dominant white character whose ambition is

“To bring the Indians into the circle of civilized life. I cannot but see that if they remain as they are, a distinct, discordant ingredient in that great frame of social life which is now spreading itself in every direction, and will one day, I believe, comprehend the whole of this vast continent, they must perish. Nothing can save them but conforming to the laws, and customs, and occupations of the whites. I have endeavoured to prepare them gradually for this, and for that purpose have endeavoured to gain their confidence, and establish an influence over them.” (*DF*, I, 117)

Johnson is the novel's most powerful figure, although he is 'presented not so much as a complex but as a "great" man' (Winston, 50). He, too, embodies the mediation between the European and the savage that figures prominently in Paulding's vision of the frontiersman. He was born in England, but came to America because, in Daniel Boon fashion, "the thought struck me that I should have plenty of elbow-room in the new-world, and plenty of exercise for my ungovernable propensity to activity in hunting deer, wrestling with bears, skirmishing with the Indians, and other rural amusements" (*DF*, I, 108). He holds a government position; he is a knight; he has the capacity to move between the wilderness and civilization; he outstrips the Indians in hunting, tracking and fighting, and has an Indian wife. Johnson epitomises the compound nature of the frontier American, but Paulding has even him admit that his dream of integration, in the long run, is doomed to fail. His efforts to civilize the Indians have foundered, despite his influence over them:

“[T]he truth forces itself on me every moment of my life, and I cannot shut my eyes to it — this influence is founded not on my superiority in the qualifications of a civilized man, but on my capacity to excel even the Indians in war, in hunting, in fatigue, privations and endurance of every kind. This is the secret of my power. In proportion as I become a savage the savages respect me — no more.” (*DF*, I, 117)

Johnson's values are a crucial element in steering Sybrandt, the wavering, indecisive hero, on the path to heroism and the fulfilment of his potential; but they cannot reclaim the Indians from, in Paulding's authorial words, 'that instinctive, insurmountable wildness of character which rendered and yet renders the labour of winning this race into the fold of civilization, so dear to

humanity, an almost hopeless task, which even the ardour of faith and the zeal of philanthropy is sometimes tempted to abandon' (*DF*, I, 117). These words are almost certainly a sly thrust at the 'zealots' whose attempts to oppose Indian removal had failed.

Person is right in his assertion that Johnson differs from the Leatherstocking model of the frontiersman both in the extent of his integration (his Indian wife) and his ability to re-enter white society; but he is wrong, I think, to suggest that Johnson is offered to the reader as the archetypal American. That accolade is given by Paulding to Sybrandt, because Johnson cannot remain in the neutral zone at the book's conclusion, and returns to the woods. True, his departure has none of the finality of the disappearances of Leatherstocking or, as we shall see, of Nathan Slaughter in *Nick of the Woods*; he is not exiled forever from white society. Indeed, within the novel, Johnson stands in sharp contrast to Timothy Weasel, the Indian-hater whom he uses as a scout, and who exhibits the customary brutality of his type.

Johnson's choice of an Indian wife, however, in Paulding's conception, means he can never fully return to white society. Although he has avoided the descent into savagery which is ironically the fate of the Indian-hating Weasel or Bird's Nathan Slaughter, he has allied himself to a vision of the future which cannot come to fulfilment. Like Bombie in *Koningsmarke*, he offers a glimpse of (a somewhat less radical) alternative history, which is then rejected by the author. Johnson has travelled too far down the path into the savage way of life, adapting so well to the wilderness that he has become part of it. His avowal to Sybrandt earlier in the novel, when deep in the wilderness, that "You might as well bring a dancing master here as a fine lady", also works the other way around, and disqualifies Johnson from the settlements. Sybrandt, on the other hand, has no intention of inhabiting the wilderness, rather of adapting the skills he learns there to a more moderate way of life.

*The Dutchman's Fireside* implies that the correct way of life for the modern American is one that draws from the uniquely American habitat by which he or she is surrounded, without ever moving too far towards the extremes suggested by these influences. Thus Sybrandt and Catalina travel between city and wilderness, and learn from them, but finally choose the rural middle ground as their home. Characters whose affiliations with any one



sphere of existence are too strong, including the sedate Vancours in their ancestral home, do not represent the future of American society.

In Paulding's scheme of things, the American character thrives on change and variety, but remains at heart conservative. He drives this home in *Westward Ho!*, when the Dangerfields, a family of old Virginia stock, rise to the challenge of migrating to Kentucky:

We have been sometimes led to believe that the natives of this land of emigration inherited from their ancestors that fearless wandering disposition, which brought them to the western world, and which, operating in a region of boundless space, is however it may be the subject of ridicule or censure, the habit, or the quality, which has made this country what it is, and will make it what it is destined to become. It is founded in the love of independence, associated with, and supported by courage and enterprise. Like the young partridge, the American is scarcely hatched, ere he sets out, with the shell still clinging to his downy wing, in search of a new region where he will no longer be a burthen to himself or others. (*WH*, I, 54)

Again, Paulding celebrates the peculiar combination of diverse qualities that are found in the West, and that give it its unique strength and character:

Nowhere else will be found that union of apparent incongruities which exists in this remarkable region. Nowhere else do we find in log cabins, in the midst of primeval forests, and beyond the reach of all social intercourse, women whose manners were formed in the drawing-room, and men who have figured in the great world as warriors, statesmen and orators. (*WH*, I, 9-10)

Colonel Dangerfield, though from a very different social background to *The Backwoodsman's* Basil, nevertheless shows the same laudable flexibility, in his successful reinvention of himself: from the profligate Virginia gentleman, so hidebound by stubborn pride and honour that he cannot economise even to save his estate, to the prudent, patriarchal head of a flourishing rural community, much in the mould of Cooper's Judge Temple. On either side of the Colonel, stand the novel's two other figures of interest, the frontiersman Ambrose Bushfield, and Dudley Rainsford, the bookish Easterner who acts as the novel's romantic 'hero'.

Bushfield is the very model of the fictional frontiersman, clearly based quite closely on Daniel Boone. Like Boone and Leatherstocking, so intense is his love of independence and solitude, that he can no longer tolerate the society of other people. Like the Indian-hater Timothy Weasel in *The*

*Dutchman's Fireside*, and even William Johnson to a lesser extent, Bushfield's skills and experience, though valuable for survival in the wilderness, disqualify him from contributing to the life of the community.

Rainsford, by contrast, has an internal handicap which is equally crippling when it comes to interacting with other people, including the Colonel's beautiful daughter Virginia, whom he comes to love. He is convinced that hereditary insanity will rob him of his senses when he reaches a certain age, a presentiment which, as the novel progresses, becomes self-fulfilling, as his fears slowly drive him mad. Up to the writing of *Westward Ho!*, Paulding had used a fictional frontier environment as the medium for expressing a variety of concerns: his nationalistic preoccupations, both literary and political; his anxieties over racial tension within the nation; and his conception of the complex interaction between history and fiction. In this novel, he gives 'the West' yet another potential meaning — as a metaphor for the American psyche. If the character of Bushfield derives from the various incarnations of the Boon myth, Rainsford's fictional genealogy seems to go back to Brockden Brown; his inherited madness strongly echoes *Wieland*, and his self-imposed retreat into the wilderness, an exculpatory ostracism from society, mirrors that of Clithero in *Edgar Huntly*.

The symbolism is by no means subtle, and, to a certain degree, it has been anticipated in both Paulding's previous novels. Koningsmarke, Sybrandt Westbrook and Dudley Rainsford are all over-contemplative young men carrying a guilty secret of one kind or another; and they each express this guilt by going on long, solitary walks into the woods. The wilderness holds out to them the hope of relief from the anguish which torments them, which is rooted in a past they cannot escape. Instead, they find in the frontier only an all-pervading metaphor for their own divided mental state. Like the virgin wilderness, Rainsford's teetering sanity can inspire both awe and terror in Virginia:

She trembled at the dizzy heights to which he sometimes soared, and her fearful anticipations pictured him as just shivering on the verge of the almost imperceptible line, the very hairbreadth space which, in the sensitive empire of the brain, separates the fruitful region where the elements act in sweet accord and all is universal harmony, from that of chaos, where nothing but shapeless monsters and jarring atoms abide. (*WH*, II, 50)

The 'verge' of an 'almost imperceptible line', on one side of which is 'harmony' and the other 'chaos', is a palpable analogue for the frontier.

Rainsford's family illness dates back to the conduct of his grandfather, who, during the War of Independence, fought on the British side, and refused to show mercy to a colonial opponent who had once been his neighbour. The head wound he inflicted, though not fatal, left him as a wandering maniac, who eventually cursed his enemy's family. Thus, Paulding explicitly links Rainsford's mental instability with opposition to republicanism, and callous disregard for social connections; and his final descent into total madness is precipitated by his contact with an evangelical preacher. He is rescued from this state by the intervention of a moderate, rational priest, and the love of Virginia, both of whom enable him to perceive that his madness was a projection of his own unhealthy obsession with the past.

*Westward Ho!* invites the reader to draw the parallel between the physical and the psychological. The expansion of the country westwards, Paulding implies, needs to be matched by an equally progressive intellectual outlook; dwelling on the historical connection with Britain, or reverting to outmoded religious fanaticism, will only hold back the development of a nation founded on republican and rational principles. He deplores extremists of all kinds, even those, such as Bushfield, who helped to open up the country to settlement, because they do not work towards the good of society at large. As he wrote in a letter in 1836,

Fanaticism indeed seems the characteristick of the age. Mankind have become Fanatics in Religion, morals, politics, everything; and I think I may safely predict that the great impulse given by the example of this Country to the progress of human freedom, will one day react most terribly on ourselves. (Paulding to James H. Hammond, '8<sup>th</sup> March 1836', *Letters*, 177)

It is the fear of such a perversion of American values and institutions, and the need to combat it with reason and moderation, that most clearly animates Paulding in writing his frontier fiction. He chose to write of the West and its history because it was the zone in which the history of the United States had been, and would continue to be, determined, and hence, in political, social and literary terms, the area over which it was most valuable to exert imaginative control. When Paulding wrote to Van Buren in 1834 that he would 'lay aside

all other literary projects for a time, and do something worthy of the good cause' (Paulding to Martin Van Buren, '8<sup>th</sup> July 1834', *Letters*, 147), he overlooked the fact that *all* his 'literary projects' were, in some way, engaged in creating and fostering the very vision of American society which dominated the socio-political landscape of the period.

## 7. William Gilmore Simms, the Old South and the New Southwest

---

### I. BOOMING OFF FOR THE NEW CANAAN

In 1825 and 1826, the young William Gilmore Simms twice visited his father in Mississippi, travelling extensively in the frontier regions of the Southwest. During the later trip he wrote journalistic letters back home to Charleston, to be published in *The Album*, 'a Weekly Literary Miscellany' of which he was the co-founder. Although not particularly detailed, the letters clearly show how unimpressed the young author was with the state of western society. Accustomed to a certain level of gentility and refinement, the raw, uncivilized frontier lifestyle disgusted him.

New Orleans in particular was a sore disappointment. 'Of New Orleans I have little to say,' he wrote from Mobile, Alabama, 'and would deem it a relief could I say less'. The principal city of the Southwest, he wrote, was a 'vile reservoir of infamy and baseness'. He was equally unimpressed by a visit to the theatre at Mobile, where he found 'the lights bad and the smoke intolerable; as well as the frequent interruption arising from those backwoodsmen who had never seen such queer things before'. On the streets he was shocked to encounter naked Indians: 'The Choctaw Indians, or those mixed stragglers, who are not tolerated in the nation, throng in immense numbers to this city, lying almost in a state of nudity in every angle or turn; a public nuisance and offending forever the eye of delicacy'.<sup>1</sup>

Having formed such an unfavourable impression of New Orleans, Simms could barely believe his eyes when he returned to the town four years later, writing a similar series of letters to the *Charleston City Gazette*, of which he was now editor:

New Orleans has grown prodigiously — perhaps its increase in wealth, population and business generally, since 1825, is without parallel in these United States. Its population, in that year, was, I believe about 10,000. I should not hesitate, now, to consider it, at the least calculation, 65,000. By some, it is estimated, including transients at 70 and 75,000. It is destined probably, in the period of twenty years hence to become the greatest city, in a

---

<sup>1</sup> James Everett Kibler, 'The First Simms Letters: "Letters from the West" (1826)', *Southern Literary Journal*, 19:2 (Spring, 1987), 87 — Letter II, 'Mobile, Feb. 13. [1826]', and Letter III, 'Columbus, March 1, 1826'.

commercial and trading point of view, in our country — New York, not excepted. The resources of the Mississippi are incomputable — population, without limit to its increase; and its advantages, over any other single section of territory, without any comparison or rivalry.<sup>2</sup>

The ‘reservoir of infamy’ now dwarfed his native Charleston. The astonishment in this letter is complemented by a distinct note of excitement at the prospect of a *southern* city — albeit a southwestern one — being able to compete with New York, Philadelphia or Boston for national pre-eminence. However, Simms’s enthusiasm at this possibility is qualified by his anxiety about the effect of such a powerful population-magnet on the social fabric of the Old South. Indeed, throughout his early life, Simms seems to have been torn between the culture and sophistication of the Southeast and the untried potential of the Southwest. His literary career, I would argue, was shaped as much by these contrary impulses of East and West, as by the sectional rift between North and South.

Simms was the pre-eminent man of letters of the ante-bellum American South. Looking back over his career in 1860, a contributor to *De Bows Review* declared that it was Simms who

reflects, in sentiment and character, the moral and intellectual attributes that distinguish the spirit and temper of Southern civilization; announces its opinions, illustrates its ideas, embodies its passions and prejudices, and betrays those delicate shades of thought, feeling, and conduct, that go to form the character, and stamp the individuality of a people.<sup>3</sup>

In the thirty-four novels and assorted short-stories Simms produced in a career spanning some forty years, from the late 1820s to his death in 1870, he depicted the evolution of the Southern frontier — and by extension of ‘Southern civilization’ as a whole — from the colonial eighteenth century to

---

<sup>2</sup> Simms to the *City Gazette*, [April-May, 1831]; ‘Notes of a Small Tourist — No. 10’, in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, 5 vols, ed. by Mary C. Simms Oliphant and others (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952-1982), I, 35.

<sup>3</sup> J. Quitman Moore, ‘William Gilmore Simms’, *De Bow’s Review*, 29 [old series], 4:6 [new series] (December 1860), 708. *De Bow’s Review*, originally entitled *The Commercial Review of the South and West*, was established in 1846 by James Dunwoody Brownson De Bow (1820-1867). It was largely devoted to statistical information on the agriculture, commerce and finance of the South, but after 1850 featured a literary section and also championed Southern arts and culture. De Bow, like Simms a native of Charleston, was an ardent Southern nationalist, who became one of the loudest voices advocating secession and defending slavery in the years before the Civil War.

the mid-nineteenth century. In so doing, he produced by far the largest body of work that deals with the frontier issues this thesis has attempted to outline, eclipsing in quantity even that of Cooper. However, in the aftermath of the Civil War, Simms was doubly damned. Not only was he a practitioner of the historical romance in an age which increasingly demanded realism, he was the chief literary apologist of the defeated, slave-holding South.

Born on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1806, in Charleston, South Carolina, Simms remained a resident of the city or its environs for the rest of his life. Shortly after his birth, his mother and two brothers died, and the family business failed. William Gilmore Simms Sr., the novelist's father, left Charleston in grief and despair, heading for Tennessee, and then for Mississippi, where he would settle and prosper. Simms remained with his maternal grandmother, Jane Singleton Gates. When he was ten years old, his father sent for him from his new home, but Simms, to whom the decision was ultimately left, chose to remain with his grandmother in the familiar and secure environment of Charleston. In later life, he claimed, with regret, that the choice he made when he was ten years old had deprived him of the opportunities for personal advancement that life in the West might have offered. However, when his father tried to persuade him to reverse his decision as an adult — guaranteeing him 'a fortune, and, in 10 years, a seat in Congress' — Simms again chose Charleston over the untried potential of the West.

The Charleston into which Simms was born was a wealthy and important city, 'the jewel in the South's crown, in much the same way that Boston was the jewel in New England's crown'.<sup>4</sup> Although it was the nation's fifth largest city, its population of twenty-four thousand was relatively small. Its influence as a social and economic centre, however, belied its size. In the course of his life Simms witnessed a decline in the splendour and significance of his native town, as newer, more westerly towns grew and prospered, leaving Charleston only the twenty-second largest American city by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

In the eyes of many Southerners, of course, the main causes of this downturn in Charleston's fortunes were the rapidity of urban growth in the industrial North, and, later, the oppressive economic policy of the federal

---

<sup>4</sup> John Caldwell Guilds, *Simms: A Literary Life* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 1992), 3.

government. But Simms himself knew perfectly well that the open territory of the Southwest was largely responsible for draining people away from Charleston, Savannah, and other tidewater cities. Migration of the white population from the Southeast to the Southwest peaked in the 1810s, when Simms was still a child, but it continued at a very high rate in the 1820s and 1830s, while the population of Charleston, despite the arrival of large numbers of immigrants, did not increase at all. The city had become a way-station on the route from the Old World to the Mississippi Valley. It would remain so until the 1840s, when lands were not so freely available, and the Southwestern frontier finally began to shrink.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, when Simms arrived in New Orleans in 1831 and witnessed the extraordinary transformative power of western expansion, he was comparing it directly with the declining glory of his home-town. While he could not fail to be impressed, his response was tempered by the knowledge that while one region of the South was thriving, others were suffering. In the same letter in which he describes the metamorphosis of New Orleans, he narrates a far less promising experience. After leaving the city, Simms travelled on to Mississippi, and undertook a round trip of seventeen days through the Yazoo purchase, on horseback. His observations there filled him with foreboding:

Innumerable little villages are springing up in every quarter, averaging in population about three hundred, and stagnating at that. The great rage at this time in Mississippi, is the possession of the new Indian purchase, the Choctaw lands. Many of the Choctaws have already gone to the Arkansas, and more are upon the go. I cannot but think the possession of so much territory, greatly inimical to the well being of this country. It not only conflicts with, and prevents the formation of society, but it destroys that which is already well established. It makes our borderers mere Ishmaelites, and keeps our frontiers perpetually so. Scarcely have they squatted down in one place, and built up their little "improvements," than they hear of a new purchase, where corn grows without planting, and cotton comes up five bales to the acre, ready picked and packed — they pull up stakes and boom off for the new Canaan, until they hear of some still better, when they commence the same game — death not unfrequently stopping them on the road, before they have had time to hew their burial stone from the quarries which surrounded them. (*Letters*, I, 37-38)

---

<sup>5</sup> For further details see David Moltke-Hansen, 'Between Plantation and Frontier: The South of William Gilmore Simms' in *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier*, ed. by John Caldwell Guilds and Caroline Collins (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 3-26.



It was apparent to Simms that the same rapid movement of people that had retarded the development of Charleston was taking place in Mississippi and Louisiana too. The irony of the situation was that, in his view, the very process which had transformed New Orleans so rapidly from a squalid frontier town to a great city — namely, the endless hunger of settlers for new horizons and opportunities — would also be the downfall of the region. The potential he clearly saw in the city would amount to nothing if the growth in population was not consolidated and balanced by genuine social progress. The ‘formation of society’, he argues, takes time and work; people are naïve to move on unnecessarily, merely at the rumour of some ‘new Canaan’.<sup>6</sup>

Despite his concerns about the shiftless lifestyle of southwesterners, Simms knew that the future of his beloved South depended on the maintenance of strong ties with the newly settled territories. Traditionally, of course, the South and the West had been political and economic allies. The majority of early settlers in Kentucky and Tennessee had come from southern states, and the regions were linked by their agricultural economies, which gave them common interests against the manufacturing centres of the Northeast. However, in Simms’s youth and early manhood, this traditional axis of the South and the West was beginning to weaken, undermined by the expanding network of transport and communication (such as canals and railroads) which increasingly tied the agricultural producers of the West to the consumers and manufacturers of the Northeast.

Simms responded to these issues by creating an imagined past which sought to re-establish the mutual dependency of South and West. As his repeated imaginative return to the history of the ‘border regions’ demonstrates, Simms believed that ‘the South’ had come into being on the frontier, and would continue to be defined there. This chapter will focus on *The Yemassee* (1835), an early work in which the structure of life in the South is shown to be ideally suited to the encounter with Indian culture and an uncultivated terrain. At the same time, the novel reflects his own lifelong ambivalence to the West — on the one hand convinced that the South’s future

---

<sup>6</sup> These anxieties are not peculiar either to Simms or to the Southwest. The fear of such an itinerant and consequently lawless population, expressed in strikingly similar language, seems to have informed Cooper’s creation of the ‘squatter’ Ishmael Bush and his family, in *The Prairie* (1827).

would be determined by its connection to the western territories, he was, on the other hand, deeply attached to the hierarchical social system epitomised by urban Charleston, and nervous about the detrimental effect of expansionism on southern culture. *The Yemassee*, I will argue, instructs its readers in how to encounter the frontier without damaging this social system. While depicting the dangers inherent in this encounter (particularly the incompatibility of virtuous southern womanhood with the wilderness), the novel nonetheless promises the inevitable triumph of white American society if the dictates of a 'natural' hierarchy are correctly observed, and patriarchal order maintained.

## II. HIERARCHY AND HEROISM

The action of *The Yemassee* is based upon the historical conflict, in 1715, between the Yemassee, a powerful tribe resident in South Carolina, and the English settlements, which at the time were still fairly scattered and vulnerable. The focus of the narrative is split between the Yemassee themselves, and an isolated white frontier community, at some distance from the cultural and military centre of Charleston. The Yemassee uprising is led by their noble chief Sanutee, a wise and far-sighted leader, who has foreseen that continued contact between his tribe and the English (with whom he has previously been on friendly terms) will inevitably lead to the degradation and eclipse of his people. This process has already begun in the person of his son, Oconestoga, a once promising brave who has become addicted to whiskey supplied by white traders. At the opening of the novel, Sanutee, not without misgivings, has set in motion a plot to unite most of the Indian tribes in the region, with Spanish backing — provided by an English pirate, Dick Chorley — in a concerted attempt to expel the English from the Carolinas once and for all.

The white hero of the tale is Gabriel Harrison, a handsome, daring soldier, skilled woodsman, and natural leader of men, who eventually, somewhat improbably, also turns out to be the Governor of Carolina, Lord Charles Craven. Overcoming the scepticism of some of the settlers, particularly the Puritan Reverend Matthews, and the sullen, sensitive young hunter Hugh Grayson, Harrison alerts the frontier community to their danger, enabling

them to defeat the Indian attack, and winning the hand of the beautiful Bess Matthews, the Reverend's daughter, as he does so.

*The Yemassee* engages specifically with southern concerns, and argues that the uniqueness of the southern region — its climate, its flora and fauna — necessitates a correspondingly unique social system. The existence of a frontier in the heart of southern territory, generated by the ongoing process of Indian removal, meant that the future direction of southern progress was still largely undetermined. Simms's distress at the depopulation of South Carolina was tempered by his concern that the new states of the Southwest should evolve on a southern model — that is, that they should develop into a plantation-based, hierarchical, slave-holding society. Politically, of course, this was crucial; the Missouri Compromise had preserved a delicate balance between slave and free states, but the further the frontier was pushed back, the harder it would be to maintain that equilibrium. For southern society to survive, it was essential, in Simms's view, that it be extended into the Southwest.

With this in mind, Simms created a fictional world that exemplified the way in which he felt the open territories of the West ought to be explored and settled. His ambivalence towards the West does not pivot on the familiar opposition between an Edenic paradise and a howling wilderness; instead, it is founded on the question of how quickly it should be settled, and upon what pattern. According to David Moltke-Hansen, Simms's entire world-view depended upon the preservation of balance between the two necessary forces of order and progress: 'In his view, political, social, and cultural progress required political, social, and cultural stability. He held the converse to be true as well: social, cultural and political stability required social, cultural and political progress'.<sup>7</sup> The movement of people to the West symbolised progress, and for Simms, as a Southerner, order meant hierarchy; but this clearly defined conception of societal order was threatened by the frontier at the same time as it was created by it. As he puts it in *The Yemassee*, the frontier was 'a part of the world in which the necessities of life were such as to compel a sense of equality in all; and indeed, if making an inequality

---

<sup>7</sup> David Moltke-Hansen, 'Ordered Progress: The Historical Philosophy of William Gilmore Simms', in *Long Years of Neglect: The Work and Reputation of William Gilmore Simms*, ed. by John Caldwell Guilds (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 128.

anywhere, making it in favour of the bold vigorous plebeian, than of the delicately-nurtured and usually unenterprising scion of aristocracy'.<sup>8</sup> It is a novel, then, largely engaged with the question of how to preserve the necessary structure of southern society in the face of such levelling conditions.

Joseph V. Ridgely has noted that the hierarchical society of Simms's fiction has three levels: '(1) the gentry, or leader class; (2) the middle class (artisans, merchants, small farmers, and so on); (3) the lower orders (poor whites, outcasts, and — most importantly — the slaves)' (Introduction to *Yemassee*, 14). The precise composition of these classes is complicated in *The Yemassee* by its colonial time-frame; during British rule, of course, there was a literal aristocracy based upon birth and privilege, whereas Simms is advocating a more flexible society in which eminence depends equally upon ability — in essence, the familiar Jeffersonian faith in 'natural aristocracy'. He resolves this dichotomy in two ways. Firstly, he has Harrison, really Lord Craven, operate in disguise. His qualities of leadership inspire the frontier community to follow him before his real identity is revealed — he is manifestly *not* 'delicately-nurtured' and 'unenterprising'. While thus avoiding an explicit support of aristocracy *per se*, he nevertheless implies that social standing is a function of natural ability, and that the possession of both entails a corresponding degree of social responsibility for those less privileged or less able.

Secondly, Simms is careful to distinguish between different types of 'Englishness', and to suggest that certain traditions of English nobility were worthy of preservation. A strict code of honour was integral to the southern conception of the gentlemen, a chivalric tradition in which Harrison is firmly located. He is, in his political allegiances, a Stuart and a cavalier, and at one point he expresses horror that, at the recent death of Queen Anne, the throne had passed to 'the Elector of Hanover'. By thus aligning him with an older line of English nobility, Simms distances him from the Hanoverian George III, the enemy of the Revolution. Alluding to the struggles to regain the throne for the Stuarts, he would also have conjured for his readers the milieu of Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels, immensely popular in America generally,

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina*, ed. by Joseph V. Ridgely (New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1964), 242. Further references will be to this edition.

and the South in particular. It has been argued that the somewhat archaic trappings of upper-class southern society, its obsession with honour and rigid code of propriety, were the result of an unhealthy obsession with Scott, and if Gabriel Harrison came across as a transplanted Fergus MacIvor, then he would have been none the worse for it in the eyes of Simms's southern readers.<sup>9</sup>

Simms's treatment of Harrison demonstrates his conviction that the basis of a stable community is a strong and capable leader; and he implies that the measure of the greatness of a man is not his courage, foresight or wisdom, but his willingness to exercise these qualities in the interests of his community. His notion of the ideal republic is one Brackenridge would have applauded — a system by which talented men may rise to the top, to guide the more ignorant and less capable mass of people. Democracy merely complicates things. He makes very clear his belief that a true leader, or natural aristocrat, must have the self-belief to act in the interests of his people even when the people themselves do not understand or condone his behaviour. He acknowledges the fine line between such decisive leadership and tyranny: 'Such men', he tells us, 'become the tyrants of all the rest, and, as there are two kinds of tyranny in the world, they either enslave to cherish or to destroy' (214). However, Simms's faith in the integrity and ability of 'natural aristocrats', of which Harrison is an example, is sufficient to overcome this fear. We are told that Harrison

was not to be deceived by the thousand shows which are apt to deceive others. He looked more deeply into principles and the play of moods in other men, than is the common habit; and while few of the borderers estimated with him the amount of danger and difficulty which he felt to be at hand, he gave himself not the slightest trouble in considering their vague speculations, to which a liberal courtesy might have yielded the name of opinions. His own thoughts were sufficient for him; and while this indifference may seem to have been the product of excessive self-esteem, we shall find in the sequel that, in the present case, it arose from a strong conviction, the legitimate

---

<sup>9</sup> Mark Twain, for instance, claimed with typical hyperbole that, in the South, 'the genuine and wholesome civilization of the nineteenth century is curiously confused and commingled with the Walter Scott Middle-Age sham civilization [...] But for the Sir Walter disease, the character of the Southerner — or Southron, according to Sir Walter's starchier way of phrasing it — would be wholly modern, in place of modern and medieval mixed, and the South would be fully a generation further advanced than it is [...] For it was he that created rank and caste down there, and also reverence for rank and caste, and pride and pleasure in them.' See James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 76.

result of a calm survey of objects and actions, and a cool and deliberate judgement upon them. (215)

In a critical essay on the work of James Fenimore Cooper, in which he offered a spirited, though not uncritical, defence of his northern contemporary against the attacks of Whig reviewers, Simms clearly expressed his faith in the hero as a powerful social force. He notes with approval the heroic stature of Natty Bumppo, and men of his kind:

It is only upon true manhood that man can rely, and these are genuine men — not blocks, not feathers — neither dull, nor light of brain, — neither the stubbornly stupid, nor the frothily shallow. Now, as nothing in nature is more noble than a noble-minded, whole-souled man, — however ignorant, however poor, however deficient in imposing costume or imposing person, — so nothing, in nature, is better calculated to win the homage and command the obedience of men, than the presence of such a person in their moments of doubt and danger. It is inevitable, most usually, that such a man will save them, if they are to be saved by human agency.<sup>10</sup>

Gabriel Harrison is clearly of the same stock, but his energies are more consistently directed towards serving other people than Natty's. Whereas Leatherstocking aids and rescues characters of lesser ability when they happen to cross his path, Harrison ventures into the wilderness specifically to protect the community over whom he exercises a paternal care. He does not retreat from society like Daniel Boone, nor exploit his superiority for his individual ends or personal gain. For Simms, the rhetorical privileging of the hero-figure does not undermine his concomitant investment in strong social ties and community values.

In fact, I would argue that Simms's notion of the heroic did not solely derive from his reading. As his tone in this passage suggests, the hero loomed as large for Simms in real life as he did in the pages of romance. The fate of nations was shaped by such powerful personalities, and it seems clear that the original mould from which he cast his heroes was in the shape of Andrew Jackson.<sup>11</sup> Simms had imbibed from his father an unshakeable faith in Jackson's ability and integrity. William Gilmore Simms, Sr, had served under

---

<sup>10</sup> W.G. Simms, *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction, First Series*, ed. by C. Hugh Holman (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1962), 272-273.

<sup>11</sup> The alternative to leaders such as Jackson is demagoguery, embodied in *The Yemassee* by the laboured comic figure of Dr Nichols, whose constant assertions of his desire to 'serve the people' fail to disguise his true cowardice.

‘Old Hickory’ in the War of 1812, and also in his subsequent campaigns against the Creeks, and the Spanish in Florida; he transmitted a reverence for his commander to his son which seems never to have left him. Perhaps most important of all for the young writer, Jackson was himself a Southerner; even better, although he was most closely associated with Tennessee, he was a South Carolinian, by birth. Upon Jackson’s eventual death, Simms eulogized him in an obituary for the July issue of *The Southern and Western Magazine*. Jackson had been, he claimed, ‘one of the greatest spirits that America has ever given to the world,’ and this great American, moreover was ‘the lasting boast of Carolina as one of her gifts to America’.<sup>12</sup>

Simms had publicly supported Jackson during the Nullification controversy, in the pages of the pro-union newspaper which he edited, *The Charleston City Gazette*. Although Simms believed that the state had the right to secede (he belonged to the States’ Rights and Union Party), he took the practical view that South Carolina could not hope to secede alone, and, given the reluctance to embrace either nullification or secession in other southern states (an indication that even at this relatively late stage in the history of the Old South, they were far from united in their political and social goals), Simms argued that it made more sense to look for solutions to the state’s difficulties within the existing system. The main danger to the future of the South, in his view, was not the tariff system but increasingly weak representation in Congress. His solution, such as it was, was to have a southerner as President. This notion seems strikingly short-term — after all, nobody could guarantee that a southerner remained in the White House forever — but reflects his unquestioning faith in Jackson. As Jon L. Wakelyn has put it,

Although he knew that Andrew Jackson had little sympathy for South Carolina’s tariff problems, Simms thought that the “hero of New Orleans” would serve southern interests in Washington. As a self-styled southern aristocrat, Jackson would certainly favor the southern position on other issues. Settling on executive control as the best means of redress of grievances, Simms was rapidly codifying his own romantic faith in the concept of the hero. He worshipped his father’s hero, and throughout his life he searched for men of Jackson’s aristocratic bearing to lead the South.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Charles S. Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Jon L. Wakelyn, *The Politics of a Literary Man: William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1973), 22-23.

Gabriel Harrison — successful Indian-fighter, opponent of Spain, public leader, and South Carolinian — smacks greatly of Simms's own hero.

### III. DISSIDENT VOICES IN *THE YEMASSEE*

Amongst the white characters in the novel, two voices are raised in dissent at Harrison's casual assumption of authority. The first of these belongs to Hugh Grayson, a young frontiersman who, unlike his more docile brother, refuses to yield to the 'drudgery' of farm labour. For most of the novel, Hugh is deeply resentful of the instinctive respect which is universally afforded Harrison, even when his aristocratic origins are unknown — in particular, he is jealous of the fact that Bess loves him. Grayson's language is often persuasive and sympathetic in its appeal to the virtues of independence — indeed, in most frontier novels of the period, Hugh would be the hero. Like Brown's Carwin and Edgar Huntly, and the protagonists of Paulding's novels, he is introverted, sensitive, and frustrated by the lack of intellectual stimulation in the wilderness; he has an 'active mind and feverish ambition'. He also has a Leatherstocking-like disdain for farming as a profession, though he expresses it with greater hauteur than Natty:

"I will not go into the field," — said the other, haughtily and impatiently. "It will do for you, to take the mule's labour, who are so willing to be at the beck and call of every swaggering upstart; but I will not. No! Let me rather go with the Indians, and take up with them, and dress in their skins, and disfigure myself with their savage paint; but I will neither dig nor hew when I can do otherwise." (157)

As he declares later to his mother, Hugh has developed this independence, like Natty, by thinking his own thoughts in the woods:

"I have thought for myself, mother — in the woods, by the waters — and I have not had my mind compressed into the old time-mould with which the pedant shapes the skulls of the imitative apes that courtesy considers human. My own mind is my teacher, and perhaps my tyrant. It is some satisfaction that I have no other." (244-255)

As far as Simms is concerned, however, his frontier upbringing has imbued Grayson with too much independence, and no respect for the marks of natural superiority exhibited by Harrison. The novel suggests that one cannot



help but be conscious of superiority in another when one encounters it; and to attempt to deny or ignore this consciousness is merely perverse. Even Hugh himself acknowledges that his actions are governed by pride rather than good sense:

“I cannot like that man for many reasons, and not the least of these is, that I cannot so readily as yourself acknowledge his superiority, while, perhaps not less that yourself, I cannot help but feel it. My pride is to feel my independence — it is for you to desire control, were it only for the connexion and the sympathy which it brings to you. You are one of the million who makes tyrants.” (66)

In the course of the novel, Hugh is gradually chastened, and taught the error of such rampant individualism. Maddened by Bess’s rejection of his love, Hugh becomes ‘a reckless savage’. Ambushing Harrison, he nearly kills his rival ‘with as fell a joy as the Indian strikes in battle’, earning further reproaches from the object of his affections. However, the structure of his society, and Harrison’s paternal recognition of his talents, rescues him from this savagery. He is redeemed by his decision to work for the community in its time of crisis, abandoning his inappropriate and ineffective self-reliance, and coming to acknowledge that his position in the social hierarchy is dictated by accomplishments and ability, not merely by ambition. Hugh, in short, had been Booning about for too long, lured by the wilderness into an undisciplined life of ease, governed by no social rules, and contemptuous of those who observe them. For Simms, this is not the stuff of which heroes are made.

The second voice raised in objection to Gabriel Harrison’s assumption of leadership is that of Reverend Matthews. In many ways, the Reverend’s objections to Harrison seem eminently reasonable. He dislikes the mystery surrounding the young cavalier’s origins, insisting on some proof that he comes from a good family. Chiding Harrison for his levity and arrogance, the minister also doubts his claim that the Indians, who have always been friendly, are on the point of war. These arguments, however, are shown to be misguided for several reasons. Firstly, Matthews is a Puritan, and his doctrinal approach to life, it is suggested, is not only out of step with Harrison’s easy good nature, it also clashes jarringly with the whole tenor of life in the South.

The southern atmosphere, Simms is at pains to establish, is to a large degree dictated by the environment; and ‘there seemed something of a backwardness, a chilly repulsiveness in the manner of the old gentleman, quite repugnant to the habits of the country’. He implies that the harsh religion of the Puritans has been moulded by the unforgiving climate of England, Old and New; and that they have become correspondingly narrow-minded. Matthews is

somehow stern of habit and cold of temperament — a good man in his way, and as the world goes, but not an overwise one — a stickler for small things — wedded to old habits and prejudices, and perhaps like a very extensive class, one who, preserving forms, might with little difficulty be persuaded to throw aside principles [...] The world within him was what he could take in with his eye, or control within the sound of his voice. He could not be brought to understand that climate and conditions should be various, and that the popular good, in a strict reference to the mind of man, demanded that people should everywhere differ in manner and opinion. (72)

This defence of sectional differences is the natural argument of a states’ rights partisan. The narrative voice of the novel, here as elsewhere, is very close to that of Simms himself; proud of his region’s idiosyncrasies, and resentful of outsiders attempting to impose values which he considers to be inappropriate.

Secondly, Matthews refuses to trust Harrison on the grounds of his manifest capability and experience, demanding from him evidence of his birth and family before he will consent to his courtship of Bess. Hugh Grayson recognises Harrison’s superiority and resents him for it; but Matthews is shown to lack this ability to read and understand what a man *is*, from what he appears to be. In the melting-pot of the southern frontier, such a skill is of paramount importance. Although Simms has told us that Harrison’s ability to ‘look [...] more deeply into principles and the play of moods in other men’, is an uncommon trait, he nevertheless suggests that his ‘natural nobility’ ought to be perfectly apparent. As Mrs Matthews puts it to her husband, “‘I know when a gentlemen is a gentlemen, and when he is not — and I tell you that if Master Harrison is not a gentleman, then give me up, and don’t mind my opinion again. I don’t want spectacles to see that he comes of good family and is a gentleman”” (231).

Simms insisted that historical romance, like pure history, should be morally improving, and the didactic intention of *The Yemassee* is clear. Both Matthews and Grayson maintain ostensibly reasonable positions, and therein

lies their danger. The novel dramatically demonstrates that reason and logic cannot disrupt natural hierarchy. However hard they argue, Hugh will never be as worthy of Bess as Gabriel, nor will Matthews's benevolence ever facilitate the integration of the Indians into white society. The narrative instructs the reader in how to detect the weaknesses of these arguments, whilst endorsing the authority of Harrison. The author sets up an analogy between the ability of characters to 'know when a gentleman is a gentleman', and the ability of the reader to interpret the action critically and correctly. To a modern reader — indeed, to any reader outside the culture from which Simms is drawing his value system — it is perhaps not apparent *why* Harrison is so superior to other men (just as Andrew Jackson no longer seems the epitome of American virtue), but if we were in any doubt, the narrative clarifies the situation by thoroughly discrediting all opposition to his somewhat autocratic but benevolent rule.

One of the distinguishing traits of the novel generally is the notion that true character manifests itself through physical appearance. Although this might be considered a naïve doctrine to preach, it is central to Simms's faith in the unshakable social order upon which he constructs his ideal society. In his patriarchal and hierarchical society, if everyone is to have a proper, 'fit' place, then their defining characteristics must be in some way intrinsic, and more importantly, discoverable. If imposture can be successful, then the entire social fabric is vulnerable to abuse. For Simms, the disruptive social upstarts and confidence tricksters (usually Yankees) who populate so much frontier fiction — in Brackenridge, in Cooper, in Paulding, and later in Twain — are dangerous figures. When they appear in Simms's work, they tend to fail, as though the southern environment renders their deceptions ineffectual and transparent. Simms made this point explicitly in his article on Cooper, when he chastised the New Yorker's tendency to attribute evils he found on his own doorstep to the country as a whole. In *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found* (1837), Simms argues that

Mr Cooper committed the precise error which is so much the error and offence of British travellers among us, that of confounding the commercial metropolis with the country. We protest, again and again, against the false assumption, that the city of New York is to be taken as fair sample of the characteristics of the United States. Will Boston suffer the comparison, or Baltimore? Sure are we that there is nothing of the same local and moral

influences predominating in Charleston and Savannah; and that the sturdy and simple agricultural population of our vast interior, — a sincere and manly people — generous and just — incapable of fraud and falsehood — ignorant of any of the arts by which these are made successful and maintained without discredit — that these should be supposed guilty of the rank vices and excesses, and miserable vanities, which lead to worse vices and excesses in city life, is beyond all doubt a calumny, and beyond all measure an injustice. (*Views and Reviews*, 286)

Thus, in *The Yemassee*, attempts at deception founder on the natural transparency which distinguishes social relations in Simms's fictional South. Only the obtuse Reverend Matthews believes Dick Chorley is a trader rather than a pirate; and even Harrison's well-intentioned disguise cannot mask his true qualities. Each character's entry into the narrative is marked by a close physical description which nails their colours to the mast. But this is more than merely a lazy use of stereotypes by Simms; the insistence that human nature is an open book is essential to his broader scheme. The only instance of successful imposture in the novel is achieved by a mannequin with no intrinsic character: the 'stuffed figure' of a man, which is used to train Harrison's dog, Dugdale, to attack Indians. To encourage the dog to attack, the figure is painted like an Indian, and has the entrails of a deer suspended around its neck — almost literally turned inside out. Later, during the attack on the Block House, the figure is disguised as a white man, and successfully used as a decoy to draw the Indian fire. Outward appearance is shown to be the main determinant of identity, but it is nonetheless immutable. Disguise is only possible where there is no inward nature to reflect.

#### IV. "WHY DO WE THUS SEEK TO ROB THEM OF THEIR LANDS?"

John Caldwell Guilds has claimed that Simms was 'the most forward-looking and realistic American novelist in his portrayal of the Indian' (*Life*, 63). The nature of this claim is ambiguous; if he means that Simms's writing adumbrated the tragic fate of the southern Indian tribes, then it is not much of a boast. By 1835, the Creeks, Chickasaws and Choctaws had already moved west of the Mississippi, and it did not take much foresight to see that the Cherokees and Seminoles would soon be forced to follow suit. If he means that his statements about Indians prefigure modern, liberal attitudes towards Native American history and culture, then he is just plain wrong — Simms's

opinions are very much of his time. The notion that his portraits of the Indians are realistic is undermined by the author's own admission, in the Preface to the 1853 reissue of the novel, that the details of tribal culture and ritual in *The Yemassee* are 'a pure invention' (*Yemassee*, 22).

Whatever Guilds intends by his assertion, however, it is probably based on Simms's willingness to treat his Indian characters as individuals, rather than as indistinguishable, bloodthirsty savages. However, although his attitudes towards Indians are somewhat unconventional, his occasional professions of good will for them are anything but liberally motivated — indeed, they are predicated upon the fact that the southern tribes have already been displaced from the majority of their lands. By the time Simms was writing the novel, the program of removal was well under way, and as I will argue here, Simms had developed a complex and somewhat sophisticated theory of historical determinism to justify this program.

Simms was capable of extraordinary contradictions in his statements about Indian culture. In an article entitled 'Literature and Art Among the American Aborigines', he railed against

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. (*View and Reviews*, 142)

Simply to dispossess the Indians on the ignorant assumption that they were little better than animals to be exterminated, was, in Simms's opinion, beneath the dignity of a civilized race. He called them, in an early short story, 'a people, whom we have learned to despise, before we have been taught to understand'.<sup>14</sup>

His admiration for the character of the Indian, however, is always qualified by his support for the Indian Removal Act. Quite apart from his loyalty to Jackson, his own hopes for the development and maintenance of a plantation-based economy in the Southwest naturally depended on the

---

<sup>14</sup> 'Indian Sketch' in *The Writings of William Gilmore Simms, Centennial Edition*, 'Stories and Tales', ed. by John Caldwell Guilds (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), v, 7.

acquisition of the Indians' land. He vaguely suggests that they will benefit by it, stating that 'the progress of the Cherokees — their farms, their cattle, their manufactures, their discovery of the alphabet, their schools, their constitution and newspaper', were 'all the fruits of their subjection by the Muscoghees and other nations, just before the first English settlements in Virginia and the Carolinas'. This subjection forced them to labour, and labour, he argues, is 'the fruitful mother of all the nobler exercises of humanity' (*Views and Reviews*, 138). By extension, he is implying, even greater benefits may accrue to the tribe from this even greater hardship.

Ultimately, however, it is not a question of morality at all. Simms invariably cites historical determinism as the real force behind Indian Removal. By arguing that the eclipse of Indian culture was an unfortunate by-product of the irresistible course of human progress, he manages to maintain, simultaneously, that thinking of the Indians as 'brute savages' is morally wrong; but that forcing them to leave their ancestral home and march thousands of miles across the continent to an unknown land, was not an action to which one may apply the usual standards of moral judgement. In *The Yemassee*, he attempts to clarify his argument by depicting the forces of progress in action. The bonds of duty and responsibility that define membership in a culture, whether that culture be white or Indian, dictate the behaviour of the protagonists, to the extent that the choices they make are not really choices at all. Just as Sanutee feels he *has* to attack the settlements, so Harrison *has* to defend them. Both, according to Simms's relativist system of morality, are right to do so, but the outcome is as inevitable as their behaviour.

The hierarchy outlined by Ridgely is notable for the total absence of Indians from the social order. Black slaves exist at the bottom of the ladder — they are a low-ranking but nonetheless crucial ingredient in the socio-economic make-up of the South. The Indians, by contrast, have no role at all. Curiously, while Simms never hesitates to assert the intrinsic racial inferiority of Africans, it is precisely, he argues, because the Indians are not *racially* inferior to white men, but *culturally* less advanced, that they are completely incompatible with white society. While other Southerners espoused the theory of multigenesis — the very unbiblical belief in a completely separate genetic

origin for the different races — to justify their enslavement of blacks and displacement of Indians, Simms turned to his beloved history books for his explanation.

Simms maintains that the struggle between the Yemassee and the white settlers is a struggle between two parallel historical continuums, progressing at a different pace and arrived at different stages, which have become entwined. Through no fault of either side, the two historical strands are incompatible — their entanglement can only end in the destruction of the less developed culture. The Indian present is the white man's past; in *The Yemassee*, he compares tribal culture to the forerunners of contemporary European-American society, implying that, given time, the Indians would develop in a comparable way to white men, creating art and civilization:

The elements of all uncultivated people are the same. The early Greeks, in their stern endurance of torment, in their sports and exercises, were exceedingly like the North American savages. The Lacedæmonians went to battle with songs and dances; a similar practice obtained among the Jews; and one particularly, alike of the Danes and Saxons, was to usher in the combat with wild and discordant anthems. (278)

This is a point Simms made repeatedly in his writing. In an article entitled 'Literature and Art Among the American Aborigines', he argued that, had they not been interrupted by the arrival of European civilization, the Indians would eventually have abandoned their nomadic lifestyle, and would then inevitably have formalised and recorded their traditions and legends just as the Greeks did:

That these materials were in the possession of the North American Indians, — that these results might have followed their 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 — are conclusions not to be denied by those who have considered the character of this people. (*Views and Reviews*, 131-2)

In *The Yemassee*, even when plotting to destroy the white settlements in Carolina, Sanutee is infallibly noble, because he is driven by a spirit of patriotism, a motivation, to an American audience, that sanctifies and validates his actions. Critics have often noted the structural device of doubling which Simms seems to employ, through which the dialectical conflict

between the two cultures is given dramatic expression by the thematic and linguistic coupling of similar characters. Sanutee functions, in many ways, as Harrison's double, his physical appearance quickly establishing his stature within the novel. He has a 'symmetrical person — majestic port — keen, falcon eye — calm, stern, deliberate expression, and elevated head [...] His form was large and justly proportioned. Stirring event and trying exercise had given it a confident, free, and manly carriage, which the air of decision about his eye and mouth admirably tallied with and supported' (34-35).

However, it is precisely because they are credited with such nobility that the Indians are excluded from the world that Simms believes is being created, in America and in the South. In his opinion, blacks belong to the same historical time-frame, the same cultural present, as whites. Whereas the Indian destiny is necessarily distinct, those of whites and blacks are interlocked; their master-slave relationship is beneficial to both, and indicative of the relative abilities and propensities of the respective races. This is reflected in his opinion that black men can be improved by contact with whites, whereas Indians, who do not belong in the same cultural envelope, are damaged by it. Indians and white men are competitors, albeit on an uneven playing field; whereas, to Simms's patriarchal southern eyes, whites and blacks are complementary ingredients of the perfect society.

This is exemplified by a story he records in one of his 'Notes of a Small Tourist' letters, written from the Southwest in 1831. He recounts an incident which occurred when the stagecoach in which he was travelling became stuck in 'the quagmire of a vehement watercourse'. Unable to extricate themselves, the travellers decided to employ 'the lingering moiety of a tribe of Indians' who still lived nearby, but Simms is surprised to see that the Indians who perform the task are supervised and directed by a black man, whom he assumes to be their slave. Simms speculates as to the reason for this, wondering

whether it is, that the natural indolence of temperament, commonly attributed to the Indian character, is willing to depute to the guardianship of others, those matters which it would be laborious for themselves to perform, and which they can, without hesitation compel their own slaves to undertake; or whether it is, that acknowledging, as they do, the superiority of the whites, they conceive that some portion of those faculties which imparted to them that superiority, must, necessarily, have been acquired by the negroes, from their connection, however subordinate, with them — I know not; but



nevertheless such is truly the case. Among the Indians, the negroes gain caste; acquire authority and certainly great influence. They are not often ill treated — they grow in little time, as lazy as their masters; they dress immediately like them; they acquire the same sinister and sullen look with the Indians, and in all general respects, their manners and habits alone considered, they copy very closely after them. (*Letters*, I, 28-29; 'To the *City Gazette*, [April, 1831]; 'Notes of a Small Tourist — No. 7')

The opinions on display here reveal Simms's attitude towards both Indians and blacks. He clearly believes the former to be both naturally indolent (a function of their reliance on hunting, also a problem with frontier whites like Hugh Grayson, who refuse agricultural labour), and, more importantly, in awe of the technological accomplishments of white civilization. The negro slave, Simms assumes, has 'gained caste' in this community, not because of his own abilities, but because of his association with white culture. This is a classic articulation of the patriarchal conviction underpinning society in the Old South, that slaves benefited from their servitude, because they could be instructed by their benevolent masters. The corollary argument regarding the inherent danger of emancipation is also illustrated here — removed from the positive influence of white society, the slave is quick to absorb the pernicious 'manners and habits' of his Indian masters.

Within the novel, the fundamental incompatibility of Indians and whites is repeatedly voiced. Its clearest expression, however, comes from Hugh Grayson. He had earlier expressed his willingness to 'go with the Indians, and take up with them, and dress in their skins, and disfigure myself with their savage paint' (157), rather than become a farmer. However, Hugh's re-awakening sense of social responsibility is signalled by his complete rescension of this point:

"[I]t 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" (302-303).

For the Indian, in contrast to the African, slavery is synonymous with 'destitution', because 'they lose by our contact in every way'. Hugh refers to skin-colour, and in the context of a novel which insists that one's appearance is an infallible index to one's true nature, the colour of one's skin is obviously an important signifier; but it is not a definitive guide to character, merely to culture. The difference does not form, in itself, one of the deficiencies of the Indians, but functions rather as a visual reminder of cultural inferiorities which manifest themselves in other ways. It is, according to Simms, the consciousness of their own inferiority which leads the Yemassee to violent revolt: 'Until this period the Yemassee had never been troubled by that worst tyranny of all, the consciousness of their inferiority to a power of which they, at length, grew jealous' (29). And it is a mark of the wisdom of Sanutee that he feels more acutely than his tribesmen the inferiority of his people, and foresees what will be their fate if they remain in regular contact with the white community:

He was a philosopher not less than a patriot, and saw, while he deplored, the destiny which awaited his people. He well knew that the superior must necessarily be the ruin of the race which is its 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 bondsmen. (39)

This clearly applies not merely to the relationship between the English and the Yemassee, but to the entire system of social organization advocated by Simms. It is equally clear, however, that although the qualities of nobility, wisdom and justice can distinguish a man within his own community, they cannot bridge the gap between cultures and races. Though they are universally laudable and desirable characteristics, they are not predicates of the cultural superiority which Simms attributes to the white race; this, it seems, derives from the advanced technology, superior methods of farming, and other trappings of civilization that facilitate the irresistibly rapid dissemination of people across the continent. Nobility is merely incidental.

Simms does not subscribe to the common belief that Anglo-Americans were entitled to Indian land by divine right. He views the frontier process, rather, as the natural eclipse of one culture by another which is more advanced. The engagement between them is political, a clash between two groups with opposing interests, neither one of which is entirely 'wrong' — morals are not an issue in the conflict, or are at least entirely subservient to practical considerations. When Reverend Matthews prays for “one flock of all classes and colours, all tribes and nations, of thy people”, Harrison acknowledges the justice of the prayer, but cannot conceive of its realization:

“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.” (151-152)

Ultimately, the force of civilization which will sweep the Yemassee away (and in Simms's own time was in the process of sweeping the Cherokees and Creeks away) has nothing to do with religion, morality or justice, and everything to do with man's insatiable 'appetite for dominion', as Simms spells out:

It is in the nature of civilization to own an appetite for dominion and for extended sway, which the world that is known will always fail to satisfy. It is for her, then, to seek and create, and not with the Macedonian madman, to weep for the triumph of the unknown. 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. (92)

He thus attempts to exonerate the executors of Indian destruction, like Harrison (who proudly bears his nickname of 'Coosaw-moray-te', or 'the Coosaw-killer'), from implication in genocide, by removing the entire process from the moral sphere. Individual human agents are helpless before the vast forces of historical progress; the more powerful side will always win; the destruction of noble people and cultures is tragic but inevitable.

## V. SNAKES IN THE GRASS

Taken as a part of Simms's entire oeuvre, *The Yemassee* is an anomaly, since it takes place in a period and setting in which the dominant plantation society, which is his most common subject, has not yet come into being. Only Harrison belongs to the social stratum which would later be associated with plantations — a fact signalled by his ownership of Hector, the novel's only slave. The rest of the characters, exemplified by Walter Grayson, perform their own agricultural labour in small pockets of the wilderness; a far cry from the expansive, maternal structure of the plantation. In short, *The Yemassee* is a frontier novel rather than a plantation novel; but as such it demonstrates Simms's conception of how the wilderness becomes plantation. The traditional pattern of action in frontier narratives depicts the domination of a feminine wilderness by a lone male hero such as Daniel Boon, but Simms inverts that pattern in this novel.

Annette Kolodny has argued that the 'relationship Southerners had enjoyed with their landscape since the sixteenth century [...] seems to have been, from the very start, a desire to experience the New World landscape, not as an object of domination and exploitation, but as a quintessentially feminine ambience, enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction'. One of the dangers of this relationship, which has been commented upon by many southern writers over the years, including Robert Beverley and William Byrd, was that the superabundance of the landscape might be a great temptation to 'Idleness', as Byrd puts it, for its inhabitants. Kolodny also notes

the inevitable tension [...] between the initial urge to return to, and join passively with, a maternal landscape and the consequent impulse to master and act upon that same femininity. [...] Only in the South had the conflict moved towards a tentative resolution. While the rest of the nation followed in the footsteps of Dan'l Boon or James Fenimore Cooper's pioneer characters, busily proving their worth and their collective manhood by overcoming and dominating the natural world, the heirs of Beverley and Byrd and their succeeding generations managed to stylize their containment within, rather than prove their mastery over, the Mother.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Annette Kolodny, "Striped, shorn and made deformed": Images on the southern Landscape', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 75 (1976), 56, 63.

She goes on to suggest that in the majority of Simms's work, the image of the plantation represents a 'highly stylized garden in the wilderness'. The plantation, she argues, was the institution which allowed wealthy white Southerners to retain an attitude of 'studied indolence' without abandoning the idea of progress, or disrupting the 'maternal matrix' of the land of which they perceived themselves to be a part. The illusion of leisure was maintained because the actual work of transforming the landscape was performed by slaves. Plantation society therefore looked with disgust on the invasive, overtly transformative approach of Yankee individualism, on their canals, railroads and other inventions, maintaining a somewhat precarious and false belief in their own 'filial' relationship with the bountiful southern land ('Images on the Southern Landscape', 64, 67).<sup>16</sup>

This argument is compelling, but in the light of *The Yemassee*, requires partial revision. The landscape of the novel is manifestly not maternal or even feminine in nature, and the characters are not faced with 'the threat of engulfment by an overpowering maternal order' ('Images on the Southern Landscape,' 63). In fact, the male characters are not threatened by the environment in which they move at all, because it is an overtly masculine one, and they belong in it. They are only threatened by the actions of other men within that environment.

Women, on the other hand — or to be more precise, white women — quite clearly do not belong in the wilderness in which the action of the novel takes place; and this point is spectacularly made in the novel's most famous chapter, in which Bess Matthews is transfixed by a rattlesnake. In this chapter, she has agreed to meet Harrison, her lover, in 'the old grove of oaks, well-known even to this day in that neighbourhood, for its depth and beauty of shadow, and its sweet fitness for all the purposes of love' (154). The physical isolation of the grove mirrors the curious distinctness of the whole chapter. The events which occur have a dramatic completeness that seems removed from the social and political intrigue that drives the rest of the novel; it symbolically conveys a discrete and unmistakable message, that relates

---

<sup>16</sup> That this belief was delusory is indisputable. Although southern society was obviously agricultural rather than industrial, a large, intensively farmed plantation was arguably even more damaging to the land than a factory. See Gates, 3.

directly to Kolodny's point about the attribution of gendered characteristics to the landscape.

The grove has an 'aspect of wooing and seductive repose' and 'all things in it seemed to breathe of love' (166). Bess is lulled by its tranquillity, and Simms briefly suggests that she is well-suited to the appreciation of such natural beauty, being almost 'a thing of the forest' herself, 'gentle as its innocentest flowers, [and] quite as lovely' (167). Despite her upbringing, then, and her dutiful respect for her father, Bess is anything but a typical Puritan — she could scarcely be the heroine of this novel if she were. In fact, she has an altogether more pantheistic belief in the holiness of all things, which Simms links to her artistic nature:

She felt all the poetry, all the truth of the scene — its passion, its inspiration; and, with a holy sympathy for all of nature's beautiful and, the associated feeling of admiration for all that was noble, also, awakened in her mind a sentiment, and in her heart an emotion, that led her, not less to the most careful forbearance to tread upon the humblest flower, than to a feeling little short of reverence in the contemplation of the gigantic tree. (167)

From this attitude of reverence for 'the gigantic tree', Bess progresses to the contemplation of Harrison, whom, we are told, she loves for his similarity to such living things: 'She loved him, as she found in him the strength of a tree well combined with the softness of the flower [...] the free grace of his manner — his manliness, and playful frankness' (168).

The sexual imagery is thinly disguised and all-pervading, and continues in the same vein. Finding Harrison absent, Bess sits 'at the foot of a tree, the growth of a century, whose thick and knotted roots, started from their sheltering earth', while her mind 'grew impatient and confused with the various thoughts crowding upon it — sweet thoughts it may be, for she thought of him whom she loved'. Preoccupied with thoughts of her lover, and the 'long hours of happy enjoyment which the future had in store', Bess becomes overpowered with a manifest sense of sexual anxiety at his absence (168). Even in the pre-Freudian world in which Simms was writing, the scene has an oneiric ambience which makes it seem as though Bess's internal fears and concerns are made concrete in the landscape which surrounds her. The narrative voice aligns itself with Bess, and through her eyes we experience the entire drama:

“He does not come — he does not come,” she murmured, as she stood contemplating the thick copse spreading before her, and forming the barrier which terminated the beautiful range of oaks which constituted the grove. [...] A small tree rose from the centre of a clump around which a wild grape gadded luxuriantly; and, with an incoherent sense of what she saw, she lingered before the little cluster, seeming to survey that which, though it seemed to fix her eye, yet failed to fill her thought. (168-169)

Bess’s mixture of excitement and anxiety, isolation and inexperience, quickly lead to vulnerability. Her eye becomes

fastened by a star-like shining glance — a subtle ray, that shot out from the circle of green leaves — seeming to be their very eye — and sending out a fluid lustre that seemed to stream across the space between, and find its way into her own eyes. [...] How beautiful, with wondrous intensity, did it gleam, and dilate, growing large and more lustrous with every ray which it sent forth. And her own glance became intense, fixed, also; but with a dreaming sense that conjured up the wildest fancies, terribly beautiful, that took her soul away from her, and wrapt it about as with a spell. (169-170)

Hypnotised by this phallic spectacle, she cannot look away from the mysterious gaze, which now resembles ‘a torch, waving hurriedly by night in the hands of some playful boy’ (170). Eventually, the narrator deigns to tell us that he is actually describing a snake, albeit one with a ‘great flat head rising in the midst, and slowly nodding, as it were towards her, the eye still peering deeply into her own’ (171). But just as the snake is about to strike, and Bess lets out a single climactic scream, Oconestoga saves her with a single, well-aimed arrow. Harrison himself arrives moments later.

The abundant sexual symbolism which infuses this peculiar diorama is perhaps not as straightforward as it seems. Certainly, Bess is emblematic of the civilizing, feminine impulse of white American society, but her experience in the grove does not necessarily subvert the wilderness-as-garden paradigm which has such a long history in American culture, and which Kolodny suggests to be central to the southern relationship to the land. Rather, the episode reformulates the notion of the ‘garden’ as a haven. The juxtaposition of vulnerable female and threatening snake obviously conjures up the Garden of Eden, but in this garden the Fall has already taken place. The grove conforms to a post-Fall model of the garden, in which sexuality is ever-present. Bess is not an Eve-like innocent, and the narrative makes clear that she is, to a degree, complicit in the snake’s attack; indeed, her manifestly

sexual daydreams almost seem to summon it from the hitherto benign landscape.

The resemblance of the wilderness to a lush garden is therefore not misleading; it does not suddenly metamorphose from a safe, feminine environment into an arena for malevolent masculinity, as is clearly indicated by the 'manly' trunks by which she is hemmed in. The threat posed by the rattlesnake is clearly sexual as well as merely physical. The damage it would have inflicted, it is implied, would have been as much to her fragile female virtue as to her body. However, it is not the phallic snake which has invaded a zone of feminine security — indeed, what more likely place is there to encounter a snake? — but Bess who has wandered into a masculine zone which confronts her with her own sexuality. Ultimately, this chapter seems to express a more palpable fear of unleashing female sexuality, than of predatory masculinity. The snake, after all, is destroyed by a similarly phallic arrow, one penetrative masculine symbol defeating another; after which the snake sinks its fangs into its own coils.

Oconestoga is closely associated with the rattlesnake itself, on which, we are told, the Indians model their own behaviour: 'With them he is esteemed the gentleman, the nobleman — the very prince of snakes. His attributes are devoutly esteemed among them, and many of their own habits derive their existence from models furnished by its peculiarities' (174). This affinity between Indian and snake is natural — both are noble and powerful representatives of the wilderness, posing a temporary threat to white civilization that will ultimately come to nothing.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, they seem bound on a course of self-destruction, a function, Simms would argue, of their proximity to a superior culture to which they cannot be reconciled.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> The link between Indians and snakes in the novel is not only expressed through Oconestoga. Chinnabee, the Coosaw chief who confronts Harrison later on in the story, is addressed by his foe thus: 'I know you of old for a cunning snake — a snake lying in the dried bush. The foot of the Coosah-moray-te will trample on thy head.' Chinnabee takes him at his word, and simulates a snake's movements during the battle. For a more detailed discussion of animal imagery in the novel, see Charles S. Watson, 'A New Approach to Simms: Imagery and Meaning in *The Yemassee*', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 26 (1973) 155-163.

<sup>18</sup> This symbolic pattern of desperate, noble self-murder, exemplified by the snake biting itself, is repeated by the Indian characters throughout the text. Oconestoga, having escaped the anger of his tribesmen for conniving at the sale of tribal lands to the English, goes back on a mission to betray his own people, having been manipulated by the ungrateful Harrison. He meets his death at the hand of his own mother, Matiwan, who is convinced that she is saving him from a fate worse than death. Matiwan, grieving for her son, later decides to set the captive Harrison free, thereby releasing the only man who could possibly save the white



The arrival of Oconestoga, one therefore might expect, should not signify the end of Bess's peril. However, having killed the snake, Oconestoga advances towards his victim 'without giving more than a single glance to the maiden' (173), despite her helpless, exposed state. This indifference on Oconestoga's part further emphasises that Bess's response to masculinity is the focus of the anxiety rather than the threat of masculinity *per se*. Now that Bess is unconscious, the threat to her virtue, despite the replacement of one male presence with another, has disappeared.

This point is reiterated later in the novel, as the Indians begin their attack on the white settlements. Reverend Matthews has stubbornly refused to remove his family to the relative security of the Block House, and therefore his exposed cottage is one of first to come under attack. Despite his disbelief of Harrison's warnings, however, the building would have been secure, had it not been for Bess, who, after watching the Indians crossing the river, without realising what they are, leaves her shutters open. How are we meant to read this? Although her father is scornful of Harrison's predictions, Bess purports to believe him. How can she therefore not recognise the Indians, and expose herself and her family to attack? Once again, she seems to invite the threat to her virtue, and therein lies the real danger.

Ishigaska, the 'ignoble savage' who gains entry into her bedroom, 'throw[s] himself flat upon the ground, [and] crawled on like a serpent'. Once again, like Eve, Bess has conjured a snake-like threat to her virtue. Although the narrator suggests that Ishigaska is unmoved by her beauty, the sexual danger is manifest — indeed, she is never so highly eroticised in the narrative as when she is threatened with death:

Never did her beauty show forth more exquisitely than now, when murder stood nigh, ready to blast it forever — ready to wrest the sacred fire of life from the altar of that heart which had maintained itself so well worthy of the heaven from which it came. Ishigaska looked on, but with no feeling inconsistent with the previous aim which had brought him there. The dress had fallen low from her neck, and in the meek, spiritual light of the moon, the soft, wave-like heave of the scarce living principle within her bosom was like that of some blessed thing, susceptible of death, yet, at the same time, strong in the possession of the most exquisite developments of life. Her long

---

settlements, and condemning her own people, and her own husband, to ignominious defeat and death. Sanutee, finally — who disowns and condemns his son, thus ending his own family line — acts, throughout the novel, with a fatalistic desperation, as though he knows that his people cannot really hope to win the war.

tresses hung about her neck, relieving but not concealing, its snowy whiteness. (325)

But Ishiagaska does not rape her, nor symbolically penetrate her with his hatchet, despite her vulnerability, and there are two ways of understanding his reticence. There is a heavy emphasis here on the ‘snowy whiteness’ of Bess’s bosom, and that whiteness is closely linked with her erotic appearance. Explicitly, Simms is suggesting that Ishiagaska is no more capable of being aroused by the vision of a half-naked white woman than the panther or snake as which he is described. Like Oconestoga earlier, he seems to ignore Bess’s sexuality — of which the author is all too aware — and sees her only as an object to murder: ‘It was a picture for any eye but that of the savage — a picture softening any mood but that of the habitual murderer. It worked no change in the ferocious soul of Ishiagaska. He looked, but without emotion’ (325). On one level, Simms is eager to suggest a lack of sexual compatibility between whites and Indians, which further vindicates the complete removal of Indians from contact with white society that is taking place as the novel is being written.<sup>19</sup> He links Ishiagaska’s lack of sexual desire with an absence of aesthetic appreciation. Because he cannot *see* beauty, it is implied, he cannot be moved by it.

However, I would also argue that the scene has a submerged meaning which is equally apparent. Ishiagaska has, in effect, been invited in by Bess, to find her undressed and waiting for him — she has not even climbed into bed. But she has fallen asleep, and her lack of consciousness prevents him from striking. As with the earlier scene in the grove, the danger to Bess’s virtue is shown to originate in her complicity in the situation. Without her being conscious, there can be no consent, and Ishiagaska is paralysed. The moment she awakes, and lets out a scream, he strikes. And just as the snake had been stopped by Oconestoga’s arrow, so Ishiagaska is denied his victim by the interposition of Chorley, motivated by his own desire to possess Bess. Throughout the novel, therefore, she is ringed by men, and masculine

---

<sup>19</sup> The historical rarity of Indians raping white women is frequently commented on with gratified surprise in accounts of Indian captivity, and writers of fiction in this period commonly extrapolate from this that Indians have no sexual interest in white women. In Cooper’s five Leatherstocking tales, for instance, only Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans* poses a sexual threat to white women, and the object of his desire, Cora Munro, turns out to have a black mother.

symbols, competing for her possession, and she is shown, at various points, to encourage the advances of each competitor — Hugh Grayson, Harrison, Chorley, the snake, and Ishiagaska. When she categorically rejects Hugh's advances, he compares himself to a serpent crushed beneath her heel: "Thou art bent to crush me quite, Bess Matthews — thou wouldst have me in the dust — thy foot on my head, and the world seeing it. This is thy triumph" (314). She may have successfully resisted one incarnation of the snake-like manhood which besets her, but there are plenty more to take his place.

*The Yemassee* suggests that female virtue exists in a state of delicate balance with female sexuality. Until that sexuality is locked within the domestic sphere by marriage, not even the most virtuous female can be trusted to retain that virtue when exposed to the wilderness, even a wilderness resembling a garden. The only safe environment for a woman is a familial, domestic one, as a dutiful daughter, wife or mother, each stage becoming progressively more secure. Bess is endangered when she is disobeying her father by encouraging Harrison's advances, or disobeying Harrison by leaving her window open. Her sense of duty is compromised by her transferral from father to lover, and this movement from one figure of patriarchal authority to another exposes her to danger. Not until Harrison marries Bess, at the novel's end, and brings her firmly under his control, is it suggested that her virtue is once again secure.

Since the southern landscape is conventionally conceived to be feminine, and Bess is the main female character in the novel, her progress can also be linked with the dialectical transformation of southern frontier society as a whole. The fact that Harrison, Bess's new husband, also turns out to be Lord Craven, the patriarchal Governor of the colony, reinforces this parallel. *The Yemassee* follows Bess from vulnerable, virginal girlhood to the comparative stability of marriage. Similarly, the infant society of South Carolina, hemmed in by enemies at the novel's outset, ends the novel with its enemies defeated and its security considerably improved. The novel thus sets the scene for a natural progression to the third stage, that of motherhood, and the concomitant transformation of masculine wilderness into maternal plantations. It is this stage that Simms depicts in his subsequent frontier fiction.



## 8. Robert Montgomery Bird and the Politics of Indian-hating

---

First published in 1837, Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods, or The Jibbenainosay: A Story of Kentucky* belongs to an identifiable sub-genre of frontier fiction: the Indian-hating narrative. In the preface to the original 1837 edition of his novel, Bird states his intention to revise what he considered to be the overly romanticised vision of the natives created and perpetuated by American writers in the preceding two decades, objecting that the Indian is incapable of heroic behaviour:

[W]e confess, the North American savage has never appeared to us the gallant and heroic personage he seems to others. The single fact that he 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: we look into the woods for the mighty warrior, the 'feather-tinctured chief', rushing to meet his foe, and behold him retiring, laden with the scalps of miserable squaws and their babes. — Heroical? *Hoc verbum quid valeat, non vident.*<sup>1</sup>

So hostile was the representation of Indians in *Nick of the Woods*, that even otherwise complimentary reviewers remarked that Bird was 'no friend to the Indian, and has made him act a part accordingly', adding that 'to our taste, there is quite too much of the extra-sanguinary in his pages'.<sup>2</sup> William Harrison Ainsworth, the sympathetic English novelist who edited the British edition of Bird's novel, commented on Bird's portrayal of the Indians 'not as men possessing the heroic virtues ascribed to them by Heckewelder and others, but as wretches stained by every vice, and having no one redeeming quality'. Ainsworth speculatively attributes Bird's stance to 'a desire to justify the encroachments of his countrymen upon the persecuted natives, rather than by a reasonable estimate of the subject' ('Editor's Preface', *Nick*, v-vi).

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, *Nick of the Woods; A Story of Kentucky*, ed. by William Harrison Ainsworth (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), xii. Further references to the text of the novel will be to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> 'Review of *Nick of the Woods*', in *The Knickerbocker, or New-York Monthly Magazine*, 9:4 (April, 1837), 421. Bird was also accused, by some critics, of a somewhat hostile attitude towards Quakers. He responds to both accusations in the preface to the revised edition of the novel, published in 1853.

However diplomatically made, the imputation that his negative depiction of the Indians reflected a need for national self-justification, clearly riled Bird. When he came to write the preface to a revised edition, sixteen years later, he assured his readers that ‘the author’ had written the novel

with no other object than to amuse himself, and — if that might also be — the public. One does not often compose novels with any grave and sinister design of fomenting discord, of instigating or defending cruelty, or even of provoking the hostilities of readers: at least, that was not the fashion among novelists when “Nick of the Woods” first saw the light.<sup>3</sup>

Bird’s response suggests an undue sensitivity about this point. In actual fact, there was very little serious criticism of Bird’s handling of his Indian characters. A reviewer in the *Southern Literary Messenger* applauded ‘the more sober and truthful painting of Doctor Bird, in which these characters are exhibited with little of the picturesque, and nothing of the grand or beautiful [... He] gives us no more of their conversation than is necessary to his story. For this forbearance he has our approbation and our thanks’.<sup>4</sup> Ainsworth’s comments, meanwhile, were clearly a well-intentioned attempt to mediate between some of Bird’s more extreme statements and a British audience generally predisposed to look favourably upon the Indians.

Bird’s touchiness, however, has had a noticeable effect on critical responses to *Nick of the Woods*, which, following Ainsworth, have invariably linked his Indian-hating to an expansionist agenda, assuming that Bird set out to justify and celebrate the ongoing westward movement of white Americans at the Indians’ expense. Cecil B. Williams crystallizes this reading, in the introduction to his 1939 edition, when he states, firstly, that ‘throughout the book, [...] it is apparent that Dr Bird accepts the “Westward March of Empire” as right and proper’; and secondly, that of all the authors who write about the frontier in this period, ‘Bird is clearly the least favorable to the Indian’.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Nick of the Woods; A Story of Kentucky*, revised edn (New York: Redfield, 1853), 3.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Review of *Nick of the Woods*’ in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, 3:4 (April 1837), 257.

<sup>5</sup> Cecil B. Williams, in the introduction to his edition of *Nick of the Woods or The Jibbenainosay; A Tale of Kentucky* (New York: American Book Company, 1939), liv, lviii. Although I will question these assertions, Williams’s essay remains a good short introduction to Bird’s work, about which there is a dearth of good scholarship.

Stepping back from the text, however, the undeniable virulence of the Indian-hatred in *Nick* is difficult to reconcile with the rest of Bird's fiction, drama, and correspondence, in which he seems neither a dyed-in-the-wool Indian-hater, nor a tub-thumping believer in America's 'manifest destiny'. He had frequently expressed admiration of the Indian character, and regret over their displacement, in the years before he came to write *Nick*; indeed, he was himself responsible for several fictional avatars of the noble Indian chief, of which he is so scornful in the preface to the novel. The question of 'the Westward March of Empire' is even more moot; as an easterner and a Whig, Bird was far from committed to the rampant expansionism that marked the age in which he lived, and his letters and short fiction repeatedly interrogate the values of Jacksonian America. It would be perplexing, then, if his most successful and enduring novel provided an unquestioning endorsement of those values. This chapter traces the evolution of Bird's opinions of both Indians and westerners, and accounts for the overt racism of *Nick of the Woods* by reading the novel in the light of the author's explicit support for the Whig party. While it may be true that he did not set out with the 'design of fomenting discord', the novel is more ideologically motivated, I will argue, than Bird himself suggests when he claims it was only intended to amuse.

#### I. 'A WHIG, A VERY GOOD ONE'

Robert Montgomery Bird was born in New Castle, Delaware, on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1806. After a comfortable childhood in Delaware, marred by the early death of his father, he moved with his mother to Philadelphia, aged fourteen; entered the University of Pennsylvania in 1824; and graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in August 1827. Dr Bird, as he was referred to throughout his career, apparently enjoyed the purely scientific and experimental aspects of medical science, but became depressed by actually having to deal with sick people, and abandoned his practice after about a year.

Having started writing in medical school, between 1827 and 1828 he began publishing poems and short tales in the *Philadelphia Monthly Magazine*. As a young man, Bird had a clear sense of how his literary career would progress: he intended to start out as a poet and dramatist, proceed to romance and novel writing, and then turn his hand as a mature writer to

history.<sup>6</sup> He began an intense program of study to prepare himself, embarking on several unfinished plays and stories. He was also painting constantly, as he continued to do for most of his life. In 1828, an up-and-coming American actor, Edwin Forrest, started offering an annual prize for the composition of plays as vehicles to foster his star-status. The prize was won in the first year by John Augustus Stone, whose play *Metamora; or The Last of Wampanoags*, was hugely popular and extremely influential in creating an appetite for 'Indian' plays.<sup>7</sup>

It was rumoured that Stone's *Metamora* had been plagiarised from an early, unproduced work by Bird called *King Philip, or The Sagamore*, but, whatever the truth of this, Bird submitted a play the following year and won the prize, with a classical tragedy called *Pelopidas, or the Fall of the Polemarchs*, but since there was no clear starring role, it was never produced. However, spurred on by this partial success, Bird wrote *The Gladiator*, designed specifically for Forrest, based on the revolt of Roman slaves under Spartacus in the first century BC. Opening in September 1831, it was an instant and enormous success. Forrest and Bird became firm friends, and over the next four years they collaborated on two more plays, and went on two extended trips together, to the South and West.

In 1834, Bird turned his hand to fiction, and over the next five years published five novels. All were historical romances: *Calavar* (1834) and *The Infidel* (1835) were set in South America and Mexico; *The Hawks of Hawks-Hollow* (1835) during the Revolution; and *Sheppard Lee* (1836) during the War of 1812. The fifth, his most famous novel, was *Nick of the Woods*. In the year of its publication, Bird broke with Forrest in a dispute over payment for his plays, and married Mary Mayer. Their son Frederick was born the following year, but in 1839, despairing of earning a living through literature,

---

<sup>6</sup> Always a prodigious planner, his papers are littered with notes projecting everything from individual plays and novels, to the shape of his entire career.

<sup>7</sup> Between 1825 and 1860, there were at least forty new Indian plays produced on the American stage, all featuring stereotypical, romanticized Indian characters, mostly of the 'noble savage' variety. Their popularity only began to decline shortly before the Civil War. See Curtis Dahl, *Robert Montgomery Bird* (New Haven, CT: College & University Press, 1963), 62-63; Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama* (New York: Harpers, 1923), 269-275; and Albert Keiser, *The Indian in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 65. Keiser estimates that 'nearly three score of plays dealing primarily with the native seem to have been written or produced, but of them fewer than twenty have survived' (65). Quinn lists forty-five Indian plays written and performed between 1827 and 1858 (275).



he abandoned writing. Over the next decade he tried his hand at both farming and journalism, returned to medicine as a college professor, continued to paint, and became one of the earliest practitioners of photography in the United States; but with limited success in any field. Mired in financial difficulties and physically debilitated, Bird died in January 1854.

Bird was a man of firm political convictions, though not always active in the political arena. Although he declined the opportunity to stand for Congress in 1842, on the dual grounds of illness and a disinclination to be separated from his wife, from 1847 until his death he edited the staunchly pro-Whig *North American and United States Gazette*, and wrote the campaign biography for Zachary Taylor during his successful presidential campaign of 1848. Dogged throughout his life by ill health, he lacked the energy to devote himself to such political pursuits until the 1840s, when his literary career was effectively over. Nonetheless, his writing is underpinned by the political and social concerns of a man who described himself as ‘a Whig, a very good one’.<sup>8</sup>

As a formal political party, the Whigs — their name intended to evoke both the English Whig party, and the colonial forces in the Revolution — came into existence over the winter of 1833-1834. The leader of the party, from its infancy to its dotage, was Henry Clay, and it shaped its policy around the ‘American system’ outlined by Clay when he was Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams in the 1820s: generally in favour of a national bank and federally sponsored public works, to support the ongoing industrial revolution. Although, in the short term, Clay and his supporters were provoked by Jackson’s decision to remove federal deposits from the Bank of the United States, the political opposition to the Democrats had been gathering force for a number of years, largely in response to Jackson’s extensions of executive power. The initial defining characteristic of the party, therefore, was a negative one — a horror of Jackson’s ‘dictatorial’ behaviour, and of the Democrats’ undue privileging of the demagogic politician.

The new coalition absorbed former National Republicans, pro-Bank campaigners, nullifiers, advocates of a high protective tariff, supporters of

---

<sup>8</sup> Clement E. Foust, *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York: Knickerbocker, 1919), 125.

internal improvements — in short, anyone with an axe to grind against Jackson. As a result, the Whig party in the 1830s was a fairly nebulous political entity, and the dichotomy it created with Jackson's Democrats was less easily defined along demographic lines than the earlier split between Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans. As Thomas Brown has summarised, commentators have variously argued that the Whigs were 'quondam Federalists who tried to disguise their aristocratic pretensions with insincere professions of love for the people', 'enlightened conservatives who sincerely believed that the public promotion of economic development would contribute to the equality of opportunity and social progress', 'political elitists who were repelled by the Democrats' mastery of the organization and techniques of mass party politics', or even 'militant evangelical Protestants who sought to promulgate their social ideals through political action'.<sup>9</sup> Each of these positions is reductive, failing to acknowledge that the Whig party was all of these things and none of them; that it had, in Brown's words, no 'model constituency' (Brown, 2).

Both Whigs and Democrats founded their ideologies in the republican traditions of the eighteenth century, and because the Democrats could trace a direct line of descent to the Jeffersonian Republicans, it was easy, then as now, to view the Whigs as a reincarnation of the old Federalist party — indeed, many former Federalists belonged to the coalition. Unlike the Federalists, the Whig party had a strong following in the South as well as the North (particularly in Jackson's second term), and boasted a broader popular appeal than the Federalists ever attained; but some of their tenets clearly owed more to Hamilton than to Jefferson. Central to Whig doctrine was a faith in commerce and internal improvements as the basis on which American civilization would be built. Clay and his followers conceptualised American society as a harmonious, organic whole, in which the economic progress of different regions, classes and professions was achieved by the exchange of products and services through the market economy. The Whigs, according to Harry L. Watson, 'stressed the compatibility of all classes and interests and

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Brown, *Politics and Statesmanship: Essays on the American Whig Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 2.

explained how “the producing classes” included lawyers, bankers and merchants as well as laborers’.<sup>10</sup>

A distinguishing feature of Whig belief, especially in its early years, was distaste for the relatively new phenomenon of the party politician, who seemed to embody the excess and corruption of Jacksonian party politics:

Often an obscure nobody, he attained power and prominence through party discipline and organization. Only a strictly regimented and unquestioning partisan following would vote for such a man. Pliant, manipulative, and devious, he had no concern for the public good. The party was everything to him, for it was only through it that he had his being. Hence, he was willing to advocate anything, no matter how irresponsible, if it promoted the welfare of the party. (Brown, 8)

Whig ideology focused instead on the figure of the statesman, embodied by Clay, and resurrecting the Revolutionary conviction that the holder of public office should be an educated, independent and incorruptible man, whose only concern in making his decisions is the public good, rather than popular acclaim. Although such men need not be members of the wealthy, educated classes, in practice they usually were. Whigs were careful to minimize the implicit elitism of their rhetoric, however, by stressing that such a system of government showed more respect to the rational capacities of the electorate than the superficially egalitarian party politics of the Democrats. Brown notes that the Whig statesman

appealed to men’s “rational” attributes of prudence and conscience: he believed men were capable of reason, moderation, and self-control. In contrast, the politician appealed to the lower, “animal” faculties: he pandered to men’s appetites and instincts. The Whigs argued that by supporting statesmen and rejecting politicians, Americans could affirm the dominion in themselves of reason over passion. The good Whig, it followed, was not a slavish partisan, held captive by his emotions, but a free citizen, rationally and selflessly devoted to the pursuit of principle. (Brown, 10)

This is exactly the kind of leader, and the kind of citizen, Brackenridge had appealed for, and tried to be; but more surprisingly, it also describes Gabriel Harrison from Simms’s *The Yemassee*, a novel that satirises the Democratic politician in the figure of Dr Nichols. The fact that Simms, a professed Democrat, can be seen to promulgate Whig attitudes underlines Whig

---

<sup>10</sup> Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noontday, 1990), 244.

accusations that partisan politics prevented its participants from voting according to their actual beliefs.

Whig support for the manufacturing and mercantile sectors naturally attracted the majority of the wealthy industrial class to the new party; whereas, generally speaking, the Democrats held sway in rural areas ‘where the inroads of the Market Revolution were more limited, and more dreaded, than in more commercial areas’ (Watson, 237). The ‘common man’, the farmer in whom Jefferson had placed such faith, remained the symbolic lynchpin of Democratic ideology, and, as we have already seen, this led to vastly inflated territorial ambitions under Jackson. Land was seen by Democrats to be the great leveller of society, offering farmers a second chance, and forcing Eastern industrial employers to keep wages high, in order to retain a work force that otherwise would drain away to the West. Such concerns were naturally bolstered by Southern fears that without the large-scale expansion needed to support the plantation system, the slave states would find themselves ‘outnumbered in Congress and surrounded by hostile societies devoted to free labor’ (Watson, 242).

The Whig attitude to expansion was quite different, essentially arguing that the United States should invest its energy and money into improving what it already had rather than pushing for more land that it did not really need. In short, Whig thinkers argued that the greater the geographical extent of the nation, the longer it would take for America to consolidate its strengths, develop a social and economic structure to rival Europe, and foster the cultural developments — including art and literature — which are the hallmark of a civilized society. As Watson has expressed it:

The Whig preoccupation with “improvement” left the party with little enthusiasm for territorial expansion. Unlike most Democrats, Whigs longed to replace the primitive subsistence economy with refined patterns of moral and technological development. In their eyes, the acquisition of a new unsettled territory was more likely to dilute or attenuate the forces of order and civilization and to slow down national progress. [...] When Democrats shouted “Manifest Destiny,” Whigs replied with Daniel Webster, “You have a Sparta, embellish it!” (Watson, 245)

This opinion had considerable support in the South as well as the North, as many plantation owners realised that without improvements in roads, canals, and railroads, their produce would never reach its market; and without

investment in education, and banks to finance southern trade, the region would fall ever further behind the North in economic strength. This is exactly the anxiety we have already traced in the work of Simms, whose fears were balanced by his unshakable faith in Jackson's leadership. Many southerners, however, were disillusioned by the president's hostility to the Bank, and his response to South Carolina's Ordinance of Nullification — not necessarily because they were pro-bank or pro-nullification, but because Jackson increasingly seemed to represent the South's worst nightmare: a powerful and intrusive federal government.

What kind of Whig, then, was Robert Montgomery Bird? His correspondence (partly collected by his wife after his death, but mostly existing in manuscript at the University of Pennsylvania) gives an extraordinarily detailed portrait of his personal life and opinions, and makes clear that, though a fervently patriotic nationalist, Bird was inherently conservative. He was not a particularly zealous man, and had little to do with the militant Protestant wing of the northern Whigs; but he was opposed to slavery, as *The Gladiator* had made abundantly clear.<sup>11</sup> Despite such points of difference with both northern and southern members of his party, Bird's Whiggery was unwavering. It derived principally from two factors — a snobbish aversion to the uneducated working class, and a conviction that continual expansion and emigration would create a shiftless nation with no sense of its own history.

That Bird was a snob seems plain. Even at the height of his success as a dramatist, he felt an intense dislike of the audience for which he was compelled to write:

Our theaters are in a lamentable condition and not at all fashionable. To write for and be admired by the groundlings! villains that will clap when you are most nonsensical and applaud you most heartily when you are most vulgar; that will call you 'A genius, by G—' when you can make the judicious grieve and 'a witty devil' when you force a woman to blush. (Foust, 51)

---

<sup>11</sup> In 1831, Bird had recorded his opinion that if the play were to be performed in a slave state, 'the managers, actors, and author as well would probably be rewarded with the penitentiary' (Foust, 51). Walt Whitman, in reviewing the play, had commented that it was 'as full of abolitionism as an egg is of meat', by which he meant 'very full of abolitionism'.

Provoked by his falling-out with Forrest to abandon the drama, this contempt for the vulgarity of the audiences, and the ‘unfashionableness’ of the venues, enabled Bird to turn his back on the theatre as entirely as he had the medical profession. Mary Mayer Bird tells us that after his split with Forrest in 1837, he attended only one more play in the remainder of his life, from which he ‘returned home sickened by the heat and the crowd’ (cited in Foust, 71, fn).

The further he went from his home in Philadelphia, the more uncomfortable Bird seems to have been when forced to deal with the uneducated majority of the American population. He journeyed several times to the West and Southwest, but despite numbering among his close friends two educated Kentuckians, J. Roberts Black and John Grimes, he could never muster much enthusiasm for the common people he met *en route*. That he was sometimes impressed by the beauty and sublimity of the landscape is beyond doubt — exemplified by his passionate enthusiasm for the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, and Niagara Falls — but, typically for Bird, his impressions wavered with his health and his mood, and he is just as capable of bemoaning ‘the savage floods and roaring forests of this howling land’. Nor was he won over by the examples of Western wit and exuberance he encountered, writing in the same letter, ‘I think Hoogers, Roarers, and, in general, all the geniuses of the river and prairie are mighty dull stupid rascals; and I wish I was back in Philada. [*sic*]’.<sup>12</sup>

While visiting London in 1834, in an attempt to secure royalties for the British publication of his books and plays, Bird seems to have experienced the stirrings of his liberal conscience and some sympathy for the ‘masses’; but he was the first to acknowledge the transience of such feelings. In a letter to his wife and daughters headed ‘London, June 25th, 1834’, he makes light of the possibility that he might become a Democrat:

I am afraid if I stay here longer, I shall become a Jackson man! I begin to feel like a democrat, and for the first time in my life to think that God will lead the foot of the poor man to the neck of the rich, and that, in this, there will be justice. I can’t look about me here, the right or left, before or behind, to the window above or the gutter at my feet, without seeing an evidence of the corruption and misery that follow in the steps of privilege. If you could but look into some of the wretched hovels which make up the mass of London

---

<sup>12</sup> ‘Nashville, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1833’, in Mary Mayer Bird, *The Life of Robert Montgomery Bird, by His Wife Mary Mayer Bird*, ed. by C. Seymour Thompson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library, 1945), 70.

[...] you would wish to be men, your blood would boil, and you would become reformers, radicals, agitators — that is to say Jackson men, undoubtedly. But all this political indignation of mine comes from my personal dissatisfaction. (Mary Mayer Bird, 82)

To the conservative Bird, all Jacksonians are ‘reformers, radicals, agitators’, and by his own admission, his indignation is a product of his frustration over his floundering royalty negotiations, not a sudden revelation of the evils of privilege and hierarchy.

Bird’s conservative opposition to the expansionism of Jackson was buttressed by the economic errors he and his fellow Whigs were convinced (with good reason) the President and his supporters were making. The money Bird believed should be spent on internal improvements and encouraging the arts was being lavished on the frontier — on surveying and administering the sale of enormous tracts of newly acquired public land. The Democrats, despite their agrarian rhetoric, were not so naïve as to think that improvements were unnecessary — Jackson passed the Deposit Act, for instance, to encourage states to invest in transportation. But Whigs were of the opinion that encouraging expansion *and* improvement simultaneously, as Jackson was doing, created enormous economic instability. At the heart of the problem was Jackson’s opposition to the Bank of the United States, by which he devolved responsibility for issuing currency onto state banks. As Ray Allen Billington explains,

In those days any bank chartered by a state was allowed to issue its own currency, usually without proper supervision to assure adequate specie backing. Amidst the heady prosperity of the 1830s all did so; between 1832 and 1836 the volume of money in circulation skyrocketed from \$59,000,000 to \$140,000,000. This encouraged wild speculation, not only by states on internal improvements, but in every form of investment. Much went into land along the frontiers; government sales that had averaged less than 4,000,000 acres a decade leaped to 38,000,000 between 1835 and 1837.<sup>13</sup>

What was the point, Whigs asked, of throwing money at distant western lands, when the infrastructure of the settled East was incomplete? In any case, this was not the kind of improvement that Bird and other Whigs advocated. They wanted such schemes to be federally supported, via a national bank if

---

<sup>13</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 320-321.

necessary, with specie currency (gold and silver) rather than paper. Their fears were painfully validated by the Panic of 1837, when paper currency lost its value, and the nation was littered with half-finished canals and railroads. Moreover, privately or state-operated schemes were more open to corruption than federally supervised ones, and *created* rivalry between states and regions rather than eliminating it.

Westward expansion, in Bird's lofty view, threatened the economic stability of the nation, and provided a breeding-ground for the 'dull stupid rascals' he so abhorred. But it had yet more serious ramifications. The continuous flow of pioneers towards the West, he believed, negated any affection that Americans might feel for their native land. The harsh necessities of frontier existence fostered individualism and intolerance; any communal spirit that might exist was sectional rather than national. Divorced from the everyday reminders of the achievements and sacrifices made by previous generations of Americans, how was it possible to preserve the sense of community and civic responsibility so crucial to virtuous republicanism? The key to creating a republic to be proud of, Bird believed, was consolidating and celebrating the achievements of the founders of the nation. This entailed staying at home in the East, making improvements in arts and culture to rival the achievements of Europe. Moreover, the preservation of local and familial attachments fostered a generosity of spirit that was its own protection against the divisive influence of sectionalism.

Bird emphatically expresses these opinions in a letter of 1835:

The affection for the land of our birth is strengthened and perpetuated by the existence of objects and places endeared to our recollection and pride; and it will be a happy day for America, when every spot of holy ground throughout the State, shall be known, revered, and loved. When this shall have happened, when such places are marked with monuments, and distinguished by pilgrimages and festivals, when our beautiful rivers and valleys have been made, as they should be, the theme of our poets and musicians, the subjects of romance and song, we shall have objects at home, whereon to bestow our affections, much more honourable and profitable than any we can seek in our fatherlands. It was the boast of all the polished nations of antiquity, that they were sprung from the soil they occupied; it should be ours, that we return to that which our fathers have made habitable. With this feeling, it becomes us to trace the footsteps of our progenitors, and do honour to the sites made memorable by their labours and sufferings. There is no fear that local attachments will degenerate into sectional jealousies. They who have most to be proud of at home, are not found to be the most narrow-spirited of our



citizens. I would, for my own part, that every state had its Bunkers Hill, and its Rock of Pilgrims. (Williams, *Nick*, xxix-xxx)

Bird's characteristically Whig demand for 'improvements' has an artistic as well as an economic goal; he sought improvement in the taste and manners of the people. The appropriate way of 'doing honour' to one's forefathers was not merely to remain on the land inhabited by them, but to commemorate their achievements artistically. In her biography of her husband, Mary Mayer Bird recalls a plan by which he hoped to advance this goal — the design of a monument, dedicated to Washington, which he wanted to erect in Philadelphia:

The grandeur and novelty of his design secured for it many admirers, but its costliness would have effectually prevented its adoption by a republican community, always chary of an outlay for works of Art. (Mary Mayer Bird, 40)

Just beneath the surface of Mrs Bird's tactful comment, it is easy to perceive her husband chafing under the restraints imposed upon the patriotic artist by the excessively pragmatic, populist, and economically driven community. The story of Bird's planned Washington memorial does not end there, however. Bird asked his close friend Dr J. Roberts Black to approach the President in search of funding, perhaps hoping that Jackson might support a scheme which could contribute to his own public image, and invite parallels between himself and Washington. The description of their encounter, in a letter from Black to Bird, offers a glimpse of Jackson's diplomacy, and makes clear how little time the President had for Bird's artistic endeavours:

We also talked of American architecture [...] The old fellow was absolutely sarcastic on the employment of foolish *European* architects in this country. Having talked to Barry of you [William Taylor Barry, then Postmaster General], and of your monument plan, and of the glorious point which might be made in our history by Genl. Jackson causing the erection of a monument to Genl. W—— and that monument the germ of a new Amern. order of architecture — and Barry having expressed delight and his vivid and favorable remembrance of you etc. — thinks I, now's the time to nail the Prest., when he asked me to step to the window to shew me the view from it and the conversation was led off by him. I was too much a diplomatist to play boy and have postponed it until I see him again. (Mary Mayer Bird, 40-41, footnote)

Presumably, the request was never renewed. Jackson's rebuttal seems characteristically Democratic-Republican; when asked to support 'a new order of American architecture', the President directs attention to the view through his window. What need is there of monuments, he seems to be saying, when the American landscape offers so much beauty simply by looking through the window? On the whole, the episode reveals Bird as a man whose political sympathies were, to an extent, driven by his own self-interest, not above kow-towing to the President if it would help him to achieve his ends. Jackson's snub must have rankled on a personal, as well as political, level.

## II. 'THE CHILDREN OF THE SUNSET, WHERE ARE THEY?'

If Bird was ambivalent about expansion, and less than fond of frontiersmen, what were his feelings about Indians? As a young man, he was clearly seduced by the Cooperian image of the noble savage. An inveterate planner of literary projects, Bird left behind notes and projections for some fifty-five different, unwritten plays; and one of the most advanced of these was entitled *King Philip, A Tragedy; or The Sagamore*. Bird intended to rework the familiar story of King Philip (sometimes known as Philip of Pokanoket or Metacomet), the Wampanoag chief who had attempted to unite New England tribes against the Puritan settlers in the late seventeenth century, and who had been the subject of numerous earlier literary efforts, most notably one of Irving's tales in *The Sketch-Book*.

Amongst the *Bird Papers* at the University of Pennsylvania is a complete synopsis of this play, together with some notes and fragments of speeches, probably written around 1828. Philip is presented as a noble chief forced into confrontation with the white community by the wrongs done to his people, of which he complains to the white Governor in the following terms:

Philip (in conference with the governor &c.): My father [i.e. the whites] asked for a garden — he has filled our vallies [*sic*] with his lodges; my father begged a cup of water — his ships have choked up our rivers; my father asked for food — he has changed our hunting grounds into deserts — my people seek in vain for the deer & and the beaver: the white man has driven them away; my children cry for food in their mother's laps.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Robert Montgomery Bird, Manuscript Letters, Poems, Novels, and Miscellaneous Papers, Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, Ms. Coll. 108, Box 6, Folder 183, '*King Philip, A Tragedy, or The Sagamore*, misc. loose papers'. Hereafter cited as 'Bird Papers'.

The play was to open with the Governor and a party of white men exploring the wilderness, 'examining this part of the country to see whether it is good enough to seize it'. Philip saves them from a panther attack in the wilderness, and then shelters a party of whites during a storm. On conducting them back to their settlement, the noble chief is accused of a conspiracy to destroy the settlers by a treacherous Indian, Sausaman, and imprisoned despite the intercession of a friendly white man, Shoreby. The governor's daughter, Lillia, releases Philip, in gratitude for his generosity to her father; the chief escapes, but his son Tobias, who murders Sausaman, is captured and sentenced to death. Realising that his execution will create a permanent breach between the Indians and whites, Philip stoically says, 'Let him die', sacrificing his own son to the political need to motivate his people against the whites. In the ensuing war, naturally, Philip and his allies are defeated, and, proudly refusing to surrender, Philip is finally killed at his own request by one of his lieutenants.

The pattern here is familiar from other Indian fictions of the period; the action parallels that of *The Yemassee* quite closely, and in Philip, Tobias, Shoreby and Lillia, there are distinct echoes of Sanutee, Oconestoga, Gabriel Harrison and Bess Matthews.<sup>15</sup> And just as in Simms's novel, the nobility of the Indian chief offers no protection against his extermination, merely adding pathos to his ultimate death. Indeed, Philip's pride and inflexibility make his own tragic fate, and that of his tribe, a kind of self-destruction: despite the efforts of benevolent whites to intercede, he sacrifices his son and his own life in an ultimately futile struggle. In 1828, of course, Indian removal debates

---

<sup>15</sup> These similarities may be more than a coincidental use of similar generic patterns. At the time of its first performance, many of Bird's friends alleged that John Augustus Stone's play *Metamora*, the first winner of Forrest's prize in 1829, had been plagiarised from *King Philip* — see Dahl, 19. Dennis Gendron, meanwhile, argues that *The Yemassee* is clearly indebted to two plays by James Nelson Barker, *The Indian Princess* (1808) and *Superstition* (1824) for many of its incidents and characters — see 'A Source for Simms's *The Yemassee*', *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, 48 (1976), 368-370. If Simms was prepared to use Barker's plays as a source, he might also have borrowed from *Metamora*, which he would certainly have had the opportunity of seeing performed, as it remained part of Forrest's repertory for the rest of his long career. Moreover, during the first performance of *Metamora* in New York, a prologue and epilogue were appended to the five act drama, written by Prosper Wetmore and James Lawson respectively, both of whom came to be close friends of Simms — see Barrett H. Clark, ed., *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), xi. If *The Yemassee* was indebted to Stone's play, however, it engendered no resentment between Bird and Simms, as neither man refers to it in their brief and respectful correspondence with each other.

were just coming to the boil, and the characterisation of Philip and his tribe that Bird had intended for this play seems to place him firmly in line with pro-removal agitators. Though capable of noble actions, the Indians are again shown to be completely incompatible with white society; and while he laments their destruction, and even regrets the conduct of white settlers towards them, he never suggests that another alternative was available.

This position is echoed in another unpublished piece of work, probably begun in the late 1820s and then revised in 1831 and again in 1833. 'The Cave' (or 'The Mammoth Cave', as it is referred to in his later notes) was intended by Bird to be an American epic poem, allegorically celebrating past glories and offering portentous warnings about the future.<sup>16</sup> Although incomplete, Bird's characteristically extensive notes tell us both how long it was meant to be — '9 Cantos each of 27 stanzas (243 lines) (9 pages)' — how long it would take him to write it — '3 stanzas a day would require 81 days' — and, more importantly, what it would achieve:

A vision of what we might be — The greatest nation in the world the arbiter of others — a nation of just men [...] All happy & peaceful our land thronged with cities of unexampled beauty &c. &c. Science and arts making their home with us and other nations (barbarous in comparison) trying to imitate our example & free themselves from the miseries of Kings, monopolies &c. (Bird Papers, Box 8, Folder 206)

Of this modest little project, four cantos exist, each consisting of between twenty-five and thirty-five nine-line stanzas. The poem tells the story of 'the Wanderer', a nameless figure traversing a rugged symbolic terrain, entering the Cave of the title, and there discovering a variety of allegorically significant Halls: the Hall of Angels, of the Flood, of Heroes, of Immortals, and finally of Pillars, representing the American past and the possible American future.

In stanzas XIII-XV of Canto I, Bird describes the displacement of the Indians once again, rhetorically asking 'The Children of the Sunset, where are

---

<sup>16</sup> Bird also exploited this speluncar obsession in a prose sketch entitled 'The Mammoth Cave' in which the cavern of the title is described as 'the monarch of caves: none that have ever been measured can at all compare with it, even in extent; in grandeur, in wild, solemn, severe, unadorned majesty, it stands entirely alone. "It has no brother, it is like no brother"' — *Peter Pilgrim, or A Rambler's Recollections*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1838), II, 65-66.

they?'. In this instance, however, Bird offers more than a mere shrug of his shoulders in response to the question of white culpability:

But this, my country, will I not impute  
To be the crime, wherewith, in future day,  
Strangers shall shame the history, and pollute  
Thy face of glory: if the seed takes root, —  
Injustice, — and its bitter fruits display, —  
Sorrow and wrath, discord and civil fray;  
My lips, even as the victim's, shall be mute:  
Him may I follow, where the deserts be,  
And weep for him, but cast no shame on thee. (Bird Papers, Box 8, Folders  
201-202)

Bird is responding, in this passage, to the accusation that Americans have committed a moral crime in removing and exterminating the Indians. He suggests that such an idea — currently being promulgated by evangelical campaigners like Jeremiah Evarts — might damage American society, if it 'takes root', and lead to more serious evils, such as internal 'discord and civil fray', or 'shame' in the eyes of other countries. Whilst acknowledging the crime, Bird argues for its suppression, and asks other Americans to be similarly complicit. Somewhat unusually, he is implying that the *appearance* of American virtue is more important than its substance. 'Strangers' are unable to understand the reasons and justifications for the removal of the Indians, and will never perceive it as a necessary evil; better, therefore, to pretend it never happened. The stability and reputation of the United States are more important than the moral implications of the white treatment of the Indians.

Of course, the whole passage is an act of rhetorical equivocation; in writing this stanza, he draws the reader's attention to the very issue which he argues should not be discussed, immediately breaking his promise to be 'mute'. It might appear surprising that Bird, as a Whig, should make such a promise at all, on a subject so potentially embarrassing to the Democrat administration. However, although the political opposition to Indian removal did come from northern Whigs such as Senator Frelingshuysen, there were, as I have noted, many other incarnations of Whiggery, and Bird did not belong to the party's evangelical wing. He was enough of a Whig to acknowledge that removal was

at least morally dubious; but he was too much of a patriot to condemn it entirely.

The second set of revisions to 'The Cave' were made in late 1833, shortly after he returned from the first of two trips to the South and West with Forrest, which produced an evolution in his estimate of Indian character. His letters make clear that he embarked on this expedition with certain romantic preconceptions, which were gradually eroded by his experiences. Instead of the proud warriors of whom he had read and written, he found a demoralised and economically dependent people:

[T]hought I, in the solitudes of the pine-barrens of Georgia, I shall feel very poetical; and among the Muscogee groves, I shall see wandering red men, and verify mine old visions of romance. In those solitudes I saw the green forest kings, and [...] in the Muscogee groves, I saw the proud warriors; but they always came to sell green strawberries, and beg tobacco ('New Orleans, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1833'; Mary Mayer Bird, 63).

Any sympathy he feels for their situation can only be felt in the abstract; in one letter he refers, with a kind of political reflex, to the 'steril woodlands, which the hand of oppression is this moment wresting from the poor Creeks'. A few lines later, however, he describes his disrespectful response to a rare instance of an Indian who meets his preconception of the noble savage:

Talking of Creeks, I saw one fellow, one day, stalking near some wigwams, who was really as noble in figure and carriage, and as picturesque in costume, as I have ever imagined a wild man to be [...] As this creature approached me with the strut and port of a god, his head elevated, his eyes neither seeking nor shunning me, but shining now to the right and now to the left, as if he felt himself the guardian spirit of his tribe — the very Wahconda of the Muscogees [...] I was so tickled with his vainglory that I burst into a laugh. This insult, for which I was instantly sorry — for his pride was the only possession of which my countrymen had not robbed him — stung him. He halted, wheeled half round, falling into an attitude really majestic and Apollo-like, and gave me a look of such fierce and fiery intensity that I began to wish I had my pistols about me. ('New Orleans, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1833'; Mary Mayer Bird, 65)

The confusion of tone in this passage is revealing. *This* Indian, surrounded by the stereotypical vocabulary of the noble savage — 'majestic and Apollo-like' — conforms with Bird's literary preconception — 'as picturesque [...] as I have ever imagined a wild man to be'. But to the writer's own surprise, his response to him is unexpected. He finds him more ridiculous than sublime;

and even as he acknowledges that ‘his countrymen’ had ‘robbed’ the Indians of everything, he unthinkingly expresses the conventional white fear of latent Indian savagery, in his instinctive wish to have ‘my pistols about me’, merely because the Indian recognises his insult.

In these letters, there is a tension between Bird’s intellectual recognition of the injustice with which the Indians have been treated, and his more emotive and instinctual contempt for them on a personal level. Bird seems to have believed that to attempt to sustain such contrary positions in a fictional work would fatally undermine its unity — artistically, if not ethically or politically, he needed to pick sides. In preparing for the composition of *Nick of the Woods*, therefore, he turned to his library to clarify a dilemma he had been unable to resolve from personal experience. The Bird Papers contain a fascinating fragment, written on a tiny corner of paper, recording which texts the author used when researching *Nick*:

Nick of the Woods

Read: Wilkinson’s Memoirs

— 2. Brackenridge’s Do. [ditto]

— 3. Haywood, Filson, Imlay — Butler, Flint, Hall

4. Hoffman’s Winter in the West.<sup>17</sup>

Bird had always been rigorous in the historical research he did for his novels and plays, but the works he has selected in the above list are remarkable for the one-sided picture they would have given him of Indian affairs in the 1780s. Limiting himself to historical works dealing with Kentucky, Bird excludes, for example, any ethnological studies of Indian

---

<sup>17</sup> ‘Wilkinson’ is probably General James Wilkinson. ‘Brackenridge’ refers to Henry Marie Brackenridge, son of Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and author of *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West* (Philadelphia: J. Kay, 1834). Judge John Haywood (1753-1826), as well as being a Justice of the Tennessee State Supreme Court (like Andrew Jackson before him), founded the Tennessee Antiquarian Society, and is sometimes known as ‘The Father of Tennessee History’. Alongside many works on Tennessee law, Haywood published the *Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee from its Earliest Settlement up to the Year 1796* (Knoxville, TN: 1823). Filson and Imlay are obvious. Mann Butler was a western historian who had recently published *A History of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (Louisville, KY: Wilcox, Dickerman, 1834). Butler had been involved in a minor controversy with James Hall, another historian of Kentucky and the author of several volumes of surprisingly good short stories, and one novel. Timothy Flint was variously a missionary, pioneer, editor and novelist. He had published numerous works which Bird might have plundered, including *Recollections of the Last Ten Years in the Mississippi Valley* (1826); *A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, or the Mississippi Valley* (1828); *Indian Wars of the West* (1833); and his novel *The Shoshonee Valley* (1830). Charles Fenno Hoffman had published *A Winter in the Far West* in 1835, a travel narrative, in epistolary form, of the author’s experiences in the West over the winter of 1833-1834.

culture.<sup>18</sup> Kentucky's bloody history of conflict meant that histories by westerners, such as Brackenridge, Hall and Butler, invariably portrayed the Indians as savagery incarnate. Flint and Hoffman, though, respectively a New Englander and a New Yorker, record numerous accounts of Indian massacres as told by westerners they encountered on their travels: Flint's *Indian Wars of the West*, in particular, is a digest of Indian conflict and a celebration of white settlement of the West from the colonial period onwards. Bird's choice of source material may give the appearance of inclusivity, taking in personal memoirs, histories (possibly even fiction, in the case of Hall and Flint), but they effectively preclude the possibility of presenting a positive picture of the Indians; they seem rather to have been chosen for the unanimity of their anti-Indian rhetoric.

However, Bird's selective reading-list only partly accounts for the dramatic disjuncture between the gentle mockery we find in his letters, and the vituperative demonisation of Native Americans in *Nick of the Woods*. Although his opinion of Indian character had declined during the 1830s, and his reading had provided him with countless examples of Indian atrocity, he worried that his deliberate decision to dehumanise his Indians risked robbing his work of its 'poetic' qualities. His preparatory notes for *Nick of the Woods* reveal that even as he planned the novel, Bird was still wrestling with his literary attachment to the trope of the noble savage:

It is the fashion of poetry to lament the change, to weep over the rapacity of the settler and wrong of the red king of the forest. It is right that poetry should do so; for there is something deeply melancholy and humbling in the fate of the Indian. Nonetheless, philosophy has no sigh for the change; the earth is the dwelling of man, not the brute, and its fair fields are intended for those who will cultivate them and multiply, not for those who harvest it for wild beasts. (Bird Papers, Box 11, Folder 252)

This acknowledgement of the power and effectiveness of the 'poetic' representation of the 'red king of the forest' suggests Bird's anxiety over his artistic decision to excise this familiar figure from the pages of his own novel.

---

<sup>18</sup> Bird might have justified ignoring Heckewelder on the grounds that he was not writing about the Delawares, with whom Heckewelder exclusively deals; but there was no such excuse for ignoring the work of, say, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who had published *A Narrative of an Expedition Through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake* in 1834. Flint, also a missionary, occasionally paints a conventional 'noble savage' picture of Indian culture, but even this is undermined by his fascination with instances of Indian brutality.



This latent anxiety goes some way to accounting for his disproportionate response to criticism of his treatment of the Indians, and for the prominence he gives to justifying his portrait in his original preface. However, as I will argue, these remarks by the author are a distraction. The demonisation of the Indians, though deliberate, is not an end in itself in *Nick of the Woods*, but is rather a function of the novel's insistently *anti-expansionist* agenda.

#### IV. *NICK OF THE WOODS*

*Nick of the Woods* focuses on the unlikely exploits of a young, aristocratic Virginian soldier, Roland Forrester, and his cousin Edith. Courtesy of an internecine conspiracy hatched by a corrupt lawyer, Richard Braxley, Roland and Edith have been disinherited by their Tory uncle, and have travelled West to start a new life. Unbeknownst to them, Braxley has pursued them, driven by a desire to possess the beautiful Edith. They encounter a motley cast of characters: Colonel Tom Bruce, the generous leader of the Kentuckian settlement, and his family; Telie Doe, the daughter of Abel Doe, a renegade white man who has 'gone Injun'; the horse-thief Ralph Stackpole, a supposedly comic caricature of a 'rip-roaring' Kentuckian; Pardon Dodge, a Yankee pedlar; and finally, Nathan Slaughter, or Bloody Nathan, the novel's most memorable character. Nathan is a Quaker who refuses to fight; but in the course of the narrative, it transpires that this supposedly peace-loving man is actually a demented Indian killer —the legendary Jibbenainosay, the devil, or 'Nick' of the woods, who haunts the forests, killing Indians and carving a cross on their chests. The plot of the novel is a tangle of conspiracies and coincidences, ambushes, battles, and hair's-breadth escapes. Nathan, driven to avenge the murder of his family by Indians years before, repeatedly rescues the hapless Roland from the predicaments in which he finds himself; kills the evil Indian chief Wenonga; and leads the Kentuckian troops in their final, exterminating victory over the 'savages'.

Faced with this absurd tangle, it is hardly surprising that commentary on *Nick of the Woods* has mostly ignored the complexities of the largely conventional love and conspiracy plot, and concentrated on the Indian-hating Nathan Slaughter, the savagery of much of the violence depicted, and the author's constantly reiterated hostility towards Indians. This has inevitably led

to the dismissal of the importance of Roland and Edith, a stance well characterised by the following remark by Joan Joffe Hall:

The main plot in *Nick* need not concern us much. Roland and Edith Forrester are dispossessed Virginian lovers; and once a lost child and a stolen will are recovered, they return to their genteel upper-class property. Their name is neither descriptive nor ironic. They are the stock hero and heroine; the book comes alive only when Nathan is on stage.<sup>19</sup>

The contradictions of Nathan's dual personality, the conflict between his pathological desire for revenge and his religious conscience, have generally been thought to provide the real dramatic tension in the novel. However, I believe that, on the contrary, the 'main plot in *Nick*' is just that, and that to ignore it, as Joffe suggests, is to ignore an essential key to understanding Bird's intentions in the creation of Nathan, and the entire frontier environment in which he has chosen to set his tale. An understanding of how the text relates to the profound changes the country was undergoing at this time imparts meaning to the apparently irrelevant conventionality of *Nick*'s plot, which in turn forces a reappraisal of the central ideological message of the book. The novel that emerges, I wish to argue, is more complex than the triumphal celebration of manifest destiny as which it has sometimes been viewed.

Bird reverts to the familiar conceptualisation of the wilderness as a locus of degeneration, a zone in which the valuable attributes of civilization will be compromised and gradually eroded by the savagery of frontier life. We have already noted, in earlier chapters, the ways in which race informed ideas of nationhood in the aftermath of Independence, when the fledgling United States were seeking to distance themselves from their European past and yet were uncertain what the future they had chosen to embrace held in store for them. As Jared Gardner puts it:

Concerned, on one hand, with distinguishing themselves from white Europeans, white Americans in the early national period were, on the other hand, anxious lest these distinctions should become too great. The question that resonates throughout the early national period is: What is an American

---

<sup>19</sup> Joan Joffe Hall, 'Nick of the Woods: An Interpretation of the American Wilderness', in *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism and Biography*, (Durham, NC, 1963), 35: 173—174. For some reason, many commentators on *Nick of the Woods* make the mistake, like Hall, of thinking that Telie Doe really is the missing heir to the Forrester estate, but Bird makes it quite clear that she is not.

going to be? Scarcely hidden behind the question is the fear that in this undiscovered country and under this untested political system, white Americans will be either collapsed back into Europeans or else transformed into something as completely 'different' as blacks and Indians. (Gardner, 1)

Bird resurrects this early national interrogative, and applies it to his own era; in particular, *Nick of the Woods* confronts its readers with a graduated spectrum of civility — with Edith and Roland at one end and the Indians at the other — that demonstrates both what Americans *are* and what they are capable of becoming. The borderers are poised between the two extremes, capable of tipping either way.

Bird's Indians are therefore agents in his overarching scheme, in which the frontier must be shown to threaten the representatives of a stable social order. To this end, he presents his Indians as demonic figures, exemplified in the following passage, with its combination of Miltonic imagery and 'local color' racist homilies:

For a time, indeed, one might have deemed the little hamlet an outer burgh of Pandemonium itself; and the captain of horse-thieves swore, that, having long been of opinion 'the red abbegynes war the rale children of Sattan, and niggurs only the grand-boys, he should now hold the matter to be as settled as if booked down in an almanac, — he would, 'tarnal death to him.' (*Nick*, III, 58).

Bird inverts the argument of evangelical campaigners such as Evarts, so that, far from resulting in damnation for America if the Indians are not saved, any further exposure to them will result in moral, spiritual and physical corruption. The Indians are employed by Bird as the living embodiments of the dangers of expansion.

By setting his scene in 1782, the action of *Nick of the Woods* is placed in a comfortably distant past, and the contemporaneity with the Revolution lends the tale a validating association with the pivotal moment in national history. The 'dark and bloody ground' of Kentucky, by 1837, was thoroughly settled, and Bird's novel, in a sense, can be read as a textual 'monument' to those who conquered the wilderness. But it should not be read as an endorsement of further westward expansion; it functions as a parable of the dangers to civilised man in distancing himself from centralised law and government, and exposing himself to the elemental savagery of the wilderness and its Indian

inhabitants. Roland is torn between his established role in the nation (soldier, landowner) and the temptations of a potential, alternative role (pioneer, settler). The action of the novel demonstrates the former to be honourable and suitable for one of Roland's status, and the latter to be fraught with moral and physical dangers that could lead to a descent into savagery as extreme as Nathan Slaughter's. At the same time the novel presents an ideal paradigm of regional and social unity in which the hierarchies of class and race are rigidly preserved; Roland, the aristocratic Virginian soldier, combines with the Yankee pedlar Dodge, the slave Emperor, Nathan the Pennsylvanian Quaker, and the Kentucky settlers, to combat the threat to the nation represented by the demonic Indians. The old association of Indians with a treasonous, internal danger is invoked in the person of Braxley, paying the Indians to assault and imprison the icons of Bird's ideal American society, much as the British employed them in the Revolution and the War of 1812.

Bird's narratorial voice repeatedly celebrates the virtues and accomplishments of civilisation — it is to this sphere that Edith and Roland belong. They are no more at home in the Kentuckian settlements than in the wilderness itself. He refers in the Preface to the triumph of the republican spirit shown in the fact that ignorant, uneducated men,

succeeded in their vast enterprise, wrested from the savage the garden-land of his domain, and secured to their conquest all the benefits of civil government and laws. Their success may be considered a phenomenon in history: but the philosophic examiner will perhaps find in it an illustration of the efficacy of the republican principle in enlarging the mind, and awakening the energies, of men whom the influence of another code of political faith would have kept in the darkness and insignificance to which they were born. (*Nick*, x)

The language here is insistent in its emphasis on 'the benefits of civil government and laws', as the ultimate end of settlement. The process by which they were achieved — the border conflict that the novel describes — is not something to be sought for its own sake. Nor should the fact that previous generations succeeded in settling and ultimately civilising the wilderness be taken as a mandate for unlimited future expansion — their success was 'a phenomenon in history'. This success having been achieved, it should be remembered and celebrated, but not necessarily emulated.

Roland's first appearance in the novel brings home his acute sense of difference from the other pioneers. He is the implicit leader of the group of travellers who appear at Bruce's station, because of his military experience, his air of command, his aristocratic background. It is made clear that in his proper environment, Roland is a man of judgement and vigour, trusted by others despite his youth. But his own opinion of the Kentucky settlers is anything but positive:

'Yonder people, the outcasts of our borders, the poor, the rude, the savage, — but one degree elevated above the Indians, with whom they contend, — are they the society from whom Edith Forrester should choose her friends?'  
(*Nick*, 1, 16)

At this stage, he is very aware of the gulf in class that distinguishes him and Edith from their companions; and though Edith insists that she is not too good for these common, decent people, Bird implicitly suggests that she is. Almost immediately, the judgement of the borderers is brought into question. Tom Bruce introduces himself to Roland by establishing a connection with his uncle, under whom he had served, dating back to the French and Indian War — the very uncle by whom Roland has been disinherited. Although the fundamental decency of Bruce and his companions is never questioned, the subtle perversion of their values is. The praise Bruce heaps upon his son for having killed an Indian at the age of fourteen impresses upon us the brutality of the place and the time, and we are meant to recoil slightly at the Colonel's inappropriate suggestion that Edith might consider his precocious offspring as a husband. Bruce, the leader of the settlement, fails to protect Roland's horse from the thieving Stackpole; he fails to heed the genuine warning of Nathan; and his assurance that the road the party must follow is safe turns out to be wrong. We are quickly led to doubt the capacity of this frontier commander adequately to control his environment. His attempt to impose order, by sending a lynching party after Stackpole, is represented as barbaric, and the reader is instructed in the correct response by the delicacy of Edith, who insists that he be cut down. Roland, in this scene, is tempted to let him hang, his civilised values already beginning to be corrupted by the wilderness around him.

Following his release, Stackpole insistently describes Edith as ‘angelliferous madam’, and indeed, in the moral and spiritual maze of their wilderness environment, she cuts a consistently angelic figure. She exemplifies the delicate virtue of civilised womanhood, a virtue that, like that of the Lady in Milton’s ‘Comus’, ‘may be assailed but never hurt, / Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled’.<sup>20</sup> Edith’s air of impregnability is also linked to her status as the real heir. Braxley’s grasp on her uncle’s estate is based on the false claim that an earlier child had survived; he therefore wants not just to possess Edith sexually — otherwise he could just rape her — but to marry her, thereby legitimately becoming master of the estate. Edith’s class, wealth, and chastity are all closely interlinked; the abandonment of one, Bird implies, will entail the loss of the others.

It is, however, Roland who has the tragic potential to fall from grace, to be tempted by the violence of an environment with which he is unfamiliar to abandon his aristocratic, civilised virtues. Edith is his good angel; when he is separated from her and held prisoner by the Pianckeshaw Indians, they bind him on a cross, a rather crudely symbolic means of reiterating his alignment with New Testament ideals. But if Edith is his good angel (rather like Faith in Hawthorne’s story ‘Young Goodman Brown’), whom he must rescue from a kind of descent into hell, then Nathan is, in a sense, his bad one — a guide through the wilderness who appears to be something he is not. The following exchange between them exemplifies this. Nathan asks Roland what he would have done had his family been murdered by Indians:

‘Declared eternal war upon them and their accursed race!’ cried Roland, greatly excited by the story; ‘I would have sworn undying vengeance, and I would have sought it,— ay, sought it without ceasing. Day and night, summer and winter, on the frontier and in their own lands and villages, I would have pursued the wretches, and pursued them to the death.’

‘Thee is right!’ cried Nathan, wringing the hand he still held, and speaking with a grin of hideous approval; — ‘by night and by day, in summer and in winter, in the wood and in the wigwam, thee would seek for their blood, and thee would shed it,— thee would think of thee wife and the little babes, and thee heart would be as stone and fire within thee — thee would kill, friend, thee would kill, thee would kill!’ And the monosyllable was breathed over and over again with a ferocity of emphasis that showed how deep and vindictive was the passion in the speaker’s mind. (*Nick*, II, 237-238)

<sup>20</sup> John Milton, ‘A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle’ [‘Comus’], ll. 589-590, in *John Milton*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60.

Despite repeatedly saving Roland from the Indians, Nathan's monomania — and his single-minded thirst for revenge strongly recalls Melville's Ahab — tempts him to abandon the tenets of civilisation that define him.

The forest, in the novel, has a distinctly unrealistic, maze-like quality, like the setting of a fairy tale, in which the unfortunate souls wandering through it are being tested. The wilderness is, as James C Bryant has noted, a fallen world, one that embodies the essential conflicts of American society.<sup>21</sup> But we are not being invited to contrast this world with an Edenic paradise, but with the ideal social and political stability of the emerging nation. On the frontier, people must choose between violence and religion, savagery and civility, expansionism and conservatism, madness and sanity. Roland — in an inversion of the pattern we have seen in *Edgar Huntly* — continually makes the wrong decisions in the woods, and is unable to control his violent impulses. Out of place in the wilderness, he cannot achieve his true potential.

His reliance on Nathan is indicative of the weakness of his position. Nathan's double nature encapsulates the persistent duality of the novel; he is neither one thing nor the other, neither peace-loving man of religion nor a true savage. And yet he is the only competent person offered to the reader, the only character able both to predict and respond to the incessant outbursts of violence. For Bird, the fact that the only white man capable of independent survival teeters on the edge of sanity and is driven by a lust for vengeance is an indictment of the society engendered by the frontier. The Kentuckians, one step closer to civilisation, are one degree less able frontiersmen — the final victory over the Indians, to which they are led by Nathan, is an eruption of genocidal violence and savagery to which Bird objects, not because it is really wrong to kill Indians, but because civilised men should try to avoid the savagery frontier warfare supposedly makes necessary. The Northerner Dodge gives voice to his disapproval of their conduct at one point:

'Everlasting bad work, Cunnel!' cried Dodge, 'they're a killing the squaws! hark, dunt you hear 'em squeaking? Now, Cunnel, I can kill your tarnal *man* fellers, for they've riz my ebenezzer, and I've kinder got my hand in; but I rather kalkilate, I han't no disposition to kill wimming!' (*Nick*, III, 233)

---

<sup>21</sup> James C. Bryant, 'The Fallen World of *Nick of the Woods*', in *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism and Bibliography*, 38, 352-364.

The silence that meets his protest in the text implies that 'killing wimming' is an inevitable by-product of pushing the frontier ever further west. The elision of cruelty and necessity in border warfare is explicitly spelled out:

But the triumph was not completed until the village, with its fields of standing corn, had been entirely destroyed — a work of cruel vengeance, yet not so much of vengeance as of policy; since the destruction of their fields, by driving the savages to seek a winter's subsistence for their families in the forest, necessarily prevented their making warlike inroads upon their white neighbours during that season. (*Nick*, III, 244)

Ultimately, the novel emphasises the fragility of human achievements, human virtue, and the ease with which the delicate balance of society can be disrupted, just as an individual can be corrupted. At one point Braxley suggests the fineness of the line between good and evil, when he says to Edith:

'I am a villain indeed [...] all men are so. Good and evil are sown together in our natures, and each has its season and its harvest. In this breast, as in the breast of the worst and the noblest, Nature set, at birth, an angel and a devil.'  
(*Nick*, III, 123)

Similarly, Bird has set an angel and a devil, Edith and Nathan, at work in his fictional wilderness, working not just for good and evil, but also for virtuous civility and intemperate savagery.

There are clearly points of similarity between Nathan and Cooper's Natty Bumppo, both capable scouts who lead vulnerable, aristocratic Virginians through interminable frontier dangers, but who ultimately retreat from the society represented by those under their protection. But Nathan and Natty are not interchangeable. The principle difference between them is that Nathan is transformed by the wilderness, whereas Natty's character is fixed, as he so frequently informs us, by his 'gifts'. Nathan starts out as a representative of tolerant, civilized, Christian values. But the wilderness, personified, as so often, by the Indians, reaches out and irrevocably alters him. The senseless slaughter of his family marks the destruction of those values, unleashing an uncontrollable psychology that splinters and destroys his own civilized self, at the same time as it wreaks a terrible vengeance on the forces of savagery. Despite being the only character with the competence to survive, Nathan is a



tragic figure, embodying a standard of civility that has been compromised by his assimilation with the wilderness.

Nathan walks through the novel like an Old Testament prophet, his warnings ignored by the unbelievers. His advocacy of vengeance and faith simultaneously is certainly Old Testament in tone, and appropriate to the world he inhabits. Edith's Christian forgiveness is out of place on the frontier, just as Roland's skills as a soldier are. But Nathan belongs too completely to the wilderness, and, at the novel's end, he cannot leave it. Exposed as the Jibbenainosay, he retreats into the woods, never to be seen again. His vengeance is not cathartic, and his savagery remains too elemental even for the rude society of the frontier. By sending the two cousins back to Virginia, newly restored to wealth and position, and fundamentally unchanged by their experiences, Bird lays his cards on the table. Their inheritance was associated, on the one hand, with anti-republicanism, eschewed by Roland to fight for his country; and sexual capitulation, the option Braxley offers to Edith. By emerging unscathed from the frontier crucible, they have purged their birthright of these connotations.

## *Conclusion: Romance, Realism, and Popular Fiction*

---

In an article called 'Americanism in Literature', published in 1845, William Gilmore Simms advances what initially seems to be a curiously self-defeating argument. The very nature of the American landscape, he suggests, and the habits of life which it inculcates, work against the development of American art:

[O]ur very wealth of territory, and the ease with which we live, are obstacles in the way of our improvement. 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. Standards of judgement fluctuate, sensibilities become blunted, principles impaired, with increasing insecurity at each additional remove; and this obstacle in the way of our literary progress must continue, until the great interior shall react, because of its own overflow, upon the Atlantic cities.<sup>1</sup>

The production of art, he claims, is contingent upon a settled state of society; therefore, the 'state of transition', in which American society is kept by the pioneering impulse of her people, is detrimental to the production of national literature. And yet Simms felt such a literature to be one of the 'self-evolving attributes' which define a successful civilization (*Views and Reviews*, 15).

The problem, according to Simms, is not a lack of subject-matter for authors, but rather that the impulse which leads to the creation of literature is the same impulse which drives people to explore and settle new territories. Requiring the same energies, they cannot co-exist. Literature is a kind of surrogate for the intensity of experience to be found in an unstable culture, and therefore necessarily belongs to the later stages of settlement:

The most certain sources of a national literature, are to be found in the denseness of its population, in its readiness to encounter its own necessities — in other words, its willingness to labour in the domestic tendencies of the citizen — in the growth of intellectual wants — in the necessity of furnishing a stimulus to pampered and to palsied appetites, and in the sympathy of the community, thus needing provocatives, with the talent which is required to provide them. (*Views and Reviews*, 133)

---

<sup>1</sup> *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction, First Series*, ed. by C. Hugh Holman (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1962), 10-11.

The lives of people in a state of social flux provide them with all the stimulation they require, and literature is only sought after by 'pampered' and 'palsied appetites'. According to this definition, literature and art are, of necessity, urban. They are 'the achievements of the city, of the crowded mart, of struggling, toiling, conflicting masses' (134).

As America's urban population grows, Simms implies, so will its artistic stature; and a writer who wishes to participate in this development, must remain in the city. The subject of their writing, however, must be retrospective. They must mine the familiar locales of their childhood, and the histories of their regions, for their subjects:

The heart must be moulded to an intense appreciation of our woods and streams, our dense forests and deep swamps, our vast immeasurable mountains, our voluminous and tumbling waters. It must receive its higher moral tone from the exigencies of society, its traditions and histories. [...] He 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. These histories, making vivid impressions on the pliant fancies of childhood, are the source of those vigorous shoots, of thought and imagination, which make a nation proud of its sons in turn, and which save her from becoming a by-word and reproach to other nations. In this, and from such impressions, the simplest records of a domestic history, expand into the most ravishing treasures of romance. (*Views and Reviews*, 16-17)

Romance, he implies, can be created *outside* the stabilising influence of society, by exploiting the local historical traditions which flourish despite, or perhaps because of, the diaspora of the American people. It is, therefore, the perfect form for early American literature. Such an argument is hardly revolutionary — Brown had suggested much the same approach in 'Walstein's School of History'. Simms, however, provides the clearest expression of the theoretical assumption that made the historical romance so prevalent in this period — that it was the only form that offered a solution to the peculiar difficulties confronting the American author. Even Paulding — who, unlike Simms, was convinced that the future of American art lay in the West, and unconvinced that history was the best source for fiction — failed to discover a more viable form in which to write.

The popularity of Scott — and his American successors — had transformed perceptions of the novel as a literary form. Simms called Scott

'more perfect, more complete and admirable, than any writer of his age' (Wimsatt, 36), but it was his marriage of fiction and history, rather than any formal perfection, which had elevated novel-writing, in the eyes of the American public, from the pastime of scribbling women to an acceptable male profession. Partly due to the immense popularity of Scott, the 1820s and 1830s witnessed a surging interest in local history, particularly in the South. State history became a source of contemporary local pride and national status. On the model of the Massachusetts Historical Society established by Jeremy Belknap in 1791, other state historical societies began to spring up — Pennsylvania in 1824, Virginia in 1831, North Carolina in 1833.<sup>2</sup>

The contemporaneous popularity of the historical novel and local history was not coincidental; most writers in the period considered the disciplines of fiction and history to be interlinked. Indeed, Simms even went so far as to proclaim that 'the chief value of history [...] consists in its proper employment, as so much raw material, in the erection of noble fabrics and lovely forms, to which the fire of genius imparts soul, and which the smile of taste informs with beauty' (*Views and Reviews*, 34). The historian and the romancer only differ in the extent to which they can utilise their powers of invention in the formation of their narratives.

In *Views and Reviews*, then, Simms anatomised what American novelists — or 'romancers', in his terminology — had been doing for more than twenty years; but he did so, ironically, just as his views were becoming outmoded. A new generation of writers and critics had new demands for American literature. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1837, Ralph Waldo Emerson addressed a meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard University. Later published as 'The American Scholar', his speech was 'soon hailed as America's literary Declaration of Independence', according to Carl Bode. 'Our day of dependence', Emerson confidently declared, 'our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close'.<sup>3</sup> American authors had been predicting or proclaiming the separation of American and European literature for over fifty years. Emerson's address is interesting not so much for its

---

<sup>2</sup> For more on the proliferation of historical societies, see Charles S. Watson, *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1993), 2.

<sup>3</sup> *The Portable Emerson*, ed. by Carl Bode and Malcolm Cowley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), xv, 51.

familiar nationalistic preoccupations, but for its assertion that all American literary efforts up to that point display nothing more than the 'exertions of mechanical skill'.

Emerson suggests that American writers have been restricted by their obsession with the past. In *Nature*, published in 1836, he had complained that 'Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism'. An entire generation of American authors had assumed that to write American literature, one must write about the past, and more particularly, about how the United States came to be. It is this historical construction of America, and American literature, to which Emerson objects; he envisages a literature that speaks more immediately to the present: 'The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?' (*Portable Emerson*, 7).

The future of American literature, he implies in 'The American Scholar', lies not in the contemplation of sublimity, the elevation of heroes, or the description of exotic and distant lands:

I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and the future worlds. (*Portable Emerson*, 69)

Emerson recommends a new generation of American authors to turn their backs, not only on European subjects for their writing — a common exhortation from Brockden Brown to Paulding — but on the past. Rejecting the historical romanticism that has been so influential in America, he advocates writing with a social and domestic focus — 'the literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride' (68-69). In short, Emerson argues, Americans must embrace realism and eschew romance; they must learn to write about themselves as they are, rather than as they were, or would like themselves to be.

Other critics echoed Emerson's rejection of romance in favour of greater realism. Nathaniel Hawthorne, reviewing *Views and Reviews* in the *Salem Advertiser* in 1846, commented that 'the themes suggested by [Simms],

viewed as he views them, would produce nothing but historical novels, cast in the same worn out mould that has been in use these thirty years, and which it is time to break up and fling away' (Holman, *Roots*, 31). Similarly, whilst reviewing Cooper's *Mercedes of Castile* (1840), an historical novel about Columbus's discovery of America, Evert A. Duyckinck boldly declared that 'the Romance of History is an exhausted vein of writing from which the ore has long disappeared'.<sup>4</sup> The historical romance, Duyckinck asserted,

is not the form of composition that a first-rate man should select for the exercise of his pen. Truth is now better than fiction. The present is greater than the past: a living man with hopes, and aims, and faculties to attain them, or fall short of them, is a nobler object, though in rags, than Pharaoh in all his glory.<sup>5</sup>

In a sense, the rejection of historical writing by Emerson and Duyckinck is not particularly radical. When Brockden Brown suggested that 'incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness' were the most suitable subject for American writing, he was talking about 'the present'; in 1799, the topic had an immediate relevance to American readers, even to easterners. The frontier was still relatively close, and the nation still debating whether to push it further westwards. The fate of the Indians was undetermined, and a matter of serious political debate. To write about the wilderness and Indian conflict was not to indulge in retrospective, escapist fantasy, but to engage with one of America's chief preoccupations.

Emerson suggests that the frontier portrayed in historical romances has lost that sense of immediacy; it has become no more relevant than 'Provençal minstrelsy' to a contemporary audience. He refers to American authors who, having 'written out their vein, [...] moved by a commendable prudence, sail for Greece or Palestine, follow the trapper into the prairie, or ramble around Algiers, to replenish their merchantable stock' (*Portable Emerson*, 61). Heading into the prairie or the Mediterranean, Emerson implies, may give 'prudent' authors like Cooper and Irving new material for their writing, but it will be mundane and imitative. This is literature reduced to pure commodity,

---

<sup>4</sup> Rather ironically, Duyckinck, as an editor for Wiley and Putnam Publishers, was responsible for the publication of Simms's *Views and Reviews*, which sold very badly indeed.

<sup>5</sup> *Arcturus, A Journal of Books and Opinion*, ed. by Cornelius Matthews and Evert A. Duyckinck (New York: Benjamin G. Trevelt, 1841), I, 90-91.

to 'merchantable stock' — not the product of genius that Emerson was hoping for.

Emerson's audience, both the Harvard students to whom he spoke, and the book-buying public that bought his pamphlet, largely consisted of easterners, for whom the struggle for survival on the frontier was as distant as the intrigue of a European court. Indeed, Indian Removal meant that most of the eastern population had no contact with Indians at all, other than in the pages of novels; whereas increasing urbanization and industrialization saw a corresponding decrease in the percentage of the population farming the land. But Emerson did not mean to suggest that the enormous variety and extent of the American continent could not be the subject of American literature, merely that it must be addressed with a contemporary voice. All previous American writing, in his opinion, had failed to capture the essence of America, as he makes clear in 'The Poet', first published in 1844:

Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boasts and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres. (*Portable Emerson*, 262)

American literature, as well as being too historical, has been too regional in its concerns. Genius, he claims, speaks to the unified nature of man. 'The best books', he says, 'impress us with the conviction that one nature wrote and the same reads'. The pleasure of reading them 'is in great part caused by the abstraction of *time* from their verses' (*Portable Emerson*, 57). Any kind of sectional commitment roots the work in 'time', denying it this universal voice. This critical credo is familiar; in its anti-ideological thrust, it anticipates New Criticism.

It must be noted, however, that, while the profoundly intellectual Emerson exhorted writers and readers to find a new voice and an original vehicle for American expression, the public appetite for formulaic frontier fiction did not abate. Even an influential literary editor like Duyckinck could not change the tastes of the reading public overnight. America, of course, still had a frontier, in the far West, whose attraction to many Americans was as powerful as ever. The eastern Indian population had been decimated and removed, providing a

paradigm of Indian-white relations that could be (and was) repeated in the ongoing settlement process. Texas had separated from Mexico, and was about to join the Union. The overland trail across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains was being established, and the era of 'Manifest Destiny' was about to begin. The American population was still in flux, with immigrants from overseas pouring in, and heading West. While the growth of American cities may have kept pace with the ongoing acquisition of new land, the West continued to provide the imaginative focus for American dreams of self-betterment. 'Do not lounge in the cities!' Horace Greeley editorialised in the pages of the *New York Tribune* in 1841: 'There is room and health in the country, away from the crowds of idlers and imbeciles. Go West, before you are fitted for no life but that of the factory'.<sup>6</sup> If the Panic had given rise to any momentary doubts about the continental destiny of the nation, they were quickly shaken off, and the impetus of American expansion renewed.

Louise K. Barnett has itemised seventy-three 'frontier romances' published between 1793 and 1868, of which nearly half appeared after 1837.<sup>7</sup> The end-point of this thesis, clearly, does not mark the end of frontier writing; merely the point at which it ceases to occupy the mainstream of 'serious' American literature. Paulding, Simms and Bird were serious literary men; whatever the merits of their work, they did not consider themselves, nor were they considered by others, to be mere 'hack' writers. As I have attempted to show, their adoption of the historical romance seemed to them the natural progression for American literature. They took what they felt to be the somewhat shapeless themes and concerns of earlier writers such as Brown and Brackenridge, and grafted them to a genre which, at the time, dominated the literary landscape, and seemed ideal for articulating the anxieties and

---

<sup>6</sup> Erik S. Lunde, *Horace Greeley* (Boston: Twayne, 1981), 29. Greeley, famous founder and long-term editor of the *Tribune*, is supposed to have given this advice initially to Josiah B. Grinnell, who remarked, "I was the young man whom Mr Greeley told to go, and I went" (Lunde, 29). Greeley, it should be noted, was not a proponent of Manifest Destiny; in fact, he campaigned against the removal of the southern Indians in the pages of the *New Yorker* during the 1830s. He advocated, rather, the agrarian doctrine that the American nation should expand at the rate at which its land was settled and farmed, rather than overreaching itself in an endless drive for more territory. However, the slogan that Greeley popularised quickly became associated with a more imperial attitude towards the continent. For Greeley's attitude to land and farming, see Suzanne Schulze, *Horace Greeley: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992), 12-13; and Lunde, 87, 99-102.

<sup>7</sup> Louise K. Barnett, *The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790-1890* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975), 197-199.



aspirations of Jacksonian America. The romance, in their hands, though historical in its setting, was urgently contemporary in meaning.

After 1837, however, slowly but perceptibly, a critical vocabulary began to develop which distinguished between 'popular' and 'literary' fiction; an echo of earlier generic discrimination between 'serious' history and 'frivolous' fiction. In 1843, Edgar Allan Poe clearly articulated this growing division, in a review of Cooper's *Wyandotté*, another Revolutionary frontier romance. According to Poe, 'life in the Wilderness' and life on the ocean are two themes of such 'intrinsic and universal interest' that if any work should employ them and still fail to achieve popularity, it 'might be properly regarded as conclusive evidence of imbecility on the part of the author'. However, Poe echoes Duyckinck's opinion that

A man of genius will rarely, and should never, undertake either; first, because both are excessively hackneyed; and, secondly, because the reader never fails, in forming his opinion of a book, to make discount, either wittingly or unwittingly, for that intrinsic interest which is inseparable from the subject and independent of the manner in which it is treated.<sup>8</sup>

Poe's argument seems to be that because everyone is automatically interested in these subjects, clichéd though they are, they present no challenge to the author. Presumably, a talented writer should pick a dull subject (something of which Poe could not have been accused), as a true test of his powers.

Poe concludes that 'there are two great classes of fictions'. At the head of the first — 'a popular and widely circulated class, read with pleasure but without admiration — in something very nearly akin to contempt' — he places Cooper. The second is 'a class not so popular, nor so widely diffused, in which, at every paragraph, arises a distinctive and highly pleasurable interest, springing from our perception and appreciation of the skill employed, or the genius evinced in the composition' (261). Somewhat puzzlingly, he includes Brockden Brown and Simms in this class, alongside Hawthorne. Later generations may not have agreed with Poe's distribution of writers in their divisions, but his notion that there are two classes of fiction, distinguished as much by their popularity as by their quality, has proved to be lasting. The invention of the dime novel in 1860, by Erastus Beadle, was

---

<sup>8</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, 'Review of *Wyandotté*', in *Graham's Magazine*, XXIV (November 1843), 5: 261.

merely an explicit recognition of a literary assumption that had been hardening for several decades — that such formulaic tales appealed to an entirely different audience to ‘real’ literature. For some, the mass production of cheap, widely available, popular fiction signalled the laudable democratisation of literature; for others, the dispiriting triumph of commercialism over art — the ultimate reduction of literature to ‘merchantable stock’.

The belief that the settlement of the frontier was an inappropriate subject for ‘serious’, ‘adult’ literature became so strong in the late nineteenth century that even Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*, although they continued to be published, were mainly considered to be children’s literature, at best. Cooper, Simms, Paulding and Bird were all grouped with the cheap, popular fiction which they inspired — fiction, for the most part, published anonymously or pseudonymously, and so ahistorical in its setting as to be devoid of political or regional inflection. The rediscovery of the frontier romance genre in the twentieth century has concentrated largely on its value as myth, and as such these works, if they are considered at all, are usually thought to be depoliticised. This thesis, it is to be hoped, provides a corrective to this assumption — by reading marginal texts in the light of the political events to which they respond, it casts light on a broad period of American literary history which has been unduly neglected.

## *Bibliography of Works Consulted*

---

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### MANUSCRIPTS

Robert Montgomery Bird Papers, Ms. Coll. 108, Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Robert Montgomery Bird Collection, #7459, #7459-a. Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library

Charles Brockden Brown Collection, #6349, #6349-a, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library

James Kirke Paulding Papers, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library

William Gilmore Simms Papers, #6257-a through 6257-h, #6257-j, #6257-k, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library

#### BOOKS, ARTICLES, CORRESPONDENCE, ETC.

Adams, John, 'A Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law', in *The True Sentiments of America: Contained in a Collection of Letters Sent from the House of Representatives of the Province of Massachusetts Bay to Several Persons of High Rank in this Kingdom: Together with Certain Papers Relating to a Supposed Libel on the Governor of that Province, and a Dissertation on the Canon and the Feudal Law* (London: I. Almon, 1768), 111-143

Adams, John Quincy, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795 to 1848*, ed. by Charles Francis Adams, 12 vols (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1874-1877)

Anon., 'An Account of a Murder Committed by Mr J—— Y——, Upon His Family, in December, A.D. 1781', in *The New York Weekly Magazine*, July 20 1796, 20, and July 27 1796, 28

Anon., *The Removal of the Indians: An Article from the American Monthly Magazine — An Examination of an Article in the North American Review; and an Exhibition of the Advancement of the Southern Tribes in Civilization and Christianity* (Boston: Pierce and Williams, 1830)

- Anon., 'Review of *The Emigrants*', in *The Critical Review* (October, 1793), 155-158
- Anon., 'Review of *The Emigrants*', in *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal, Enlarged*, XI (May-August, 1793), 468-469
- Anon., 'Review of *Nick of the Woods*', in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, 3:4 (April 1837), 254-257
- Anon., 'Review of *Nick of the Woods*', in *The Knickerbocker, or New York Monthly Magazine*, 9:4 (April, 1837), 419-421
- Anon., 'Review of *The Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*', in *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal, Enlarged*, vol. VIII (May-August 1792), 390-401
- Anon., 'Speech of an Indian', *American Museum*, 3 (1788), 256-257
- Barker, James Nelson, *The Indian Princess or, La Belle Sauvage*, in *Early American Drama*, ed. by Jeffrey H. Richards (New York: Penguin, 1997), 109-165
- Barlowe, Arthur, *The First Voyage Made to the Coasts of America*, in *Hakluyt's Voyages*, ed. by Richard David (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), 445-446
- Belknap, Jeremy, *The Foresters, An American Tale*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1796)
- *The Foresters, An American Tale*, ed. by Lewis A. Turlish (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969)
- 'The Belknap Papers', in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, 1877, II & III; 6<sup>th</sup> Series, 1891, IV
- Berkeley, Bishop George, 'Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America', extracted from *The American Poetry Full-Text Database* published by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
- Beverley, Robert, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed. by Louis B. Wright (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1947)
- Bickerstaff's Almanack for 1788* (Norwich, CT: J. Trumbull, 1787)
- Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack, or the Federal Calendar, for the Year of our Redemption, 1788* (Boston: Russell, 1787)
- Bird, Robert Montgomery, *Nick of the Woods; A Story of Kentucky*, ed. by William Harrison Ainsworth, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1837)

—— *Nick of the Woods or The Jibbenainosay; A Tale of Kentucky*, revised edn (New York: Redfield, 1853)

—— *Nick of the Woods or The Jibbenainosay; A Tale of Kentucky*, ed. by Cecil B. Williams (New York: American Book Company, 1939)

—— *Peter Pilgrim, or A Rambler's Recollections*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1838)

Bleecker, Ann Eliza, *The History of Maria Kittle*, in *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1793), 19-87

—— 'Letters', in *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1793), 115-184

—— 'A Pastoral Dialogue', in *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1793), 253-259

—— 'Peace', in *The Posthumous Works of Ann Eliza Bleecker* (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1793), 251-253

Brackenridge, Hugh Henry, *Modern Chivalry*, ed. by Claude M. Newlin (New York: American Book Company, 1937)

—— 'On the Situation of the Town of Pittsburgh, and the Present State of Society at that Place', in *Gazette Publications* (Carlisle, PA: Alexander and Phillips, 1806), 7-19

—— 'Dissertation on Indian Rights to the Soil', in *Gazette Publications* (Carlisle, PA: Alexander & Phillips, 1806), 102-103

—— 'Thoughts on the Present Indian War', in *Gazette Publications* (Carlisle, PA: Alexander & Phillips, 1806), 93-102

—— *Indian Atrocities: Narratives of the Perils and Sufferings of Dr Knight and John Slover, Among the Indians, During the Revolutionary War, With Short Memoirs of Col. Crawford and John Slover, and a Letter from H. Brackenridge, on the Rights of the Indians etc.* (Cincinnati: U.P James, 1867)

—— 'The Cave of Vanhest', in Daniel Marder, ed., *A Hugh Henry Brackenridge Reader, 1770-1815* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), 78-92

—— 'Thoughts on the Enfranchisement of the Negroes' in Daniel Marder, ed., *A Hugh Henry Brackenridge Reader, 1770-1815* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), 103-104

—— 'The Trial of Mamachtaga' in Daniel Marder, ed., *A Hugh Henry Brackenridge Reader, 1770-1815* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), 355-364

—— *Incidents of the Insurrection*, ed. by Daniel Marder (New Haven: College and University Press, 1972)

Brackenridge, Henry Marie, *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West* (Philadelphia: J. Kay, 1834)

Bradford, William, 'Of Plymouth Plantation', in *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, ed. by Perry Miller (New York: Anchor, 1956)

Brown, Charles Brockden, *Wieland; or, The Transformation*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid, 6 vols (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), I

—— *Wieland; or The Transformation and Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist*, ed. by Emory Elliott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994)

—— ‘Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist’, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid, 6 vols (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), I

—— *Ormond, or The Secret Witness*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid, 6 vols (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982), II

—— *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid, 6 vols (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1980), III

—— *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleep-walker*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Sydney J. Krause and S.W. Reid, 6 vols (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1984), IV

—— *Edgar Huntly; or Memoirs of a Sleep-walker*, ed. by Norman S. Grabo (New York: Penguin, 1988)

—— *Alcuin*, in *The Novels and Related Works of Charles Brockden Brown*, ed. by Sydney J. Krause, S.W. Reid, and Robert D. Arner, 6 vols (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1987), VI

—— *Literary Essays and Reviews*, ed. by Alfred Weber and Wolfgang Schäfer (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992)

—— *Somnambulism and Other Stories*, ed. by Alfred Weber (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1987)

—— *An Address to the Government of the United States, on the Cession of Louisiana to the French, &c.* (Philadelphia: John Conrad, 1803)

—— ‘Signior Adini’, reprinted in William Dunlap, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown: Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts Before Unpublished*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1815), II, 140-169

—— *A System of General Geography* (Philadelphia: [1809?])

Brown, William Hill, *The Power of Sympathy* [with *The Coquette* by Hannah Webster Foster], ed. by Carla Mulford (New York: Penguin, 1996)

Butler, Mann, *A History of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (Louisville, KY: Wilcox, Dickerman, 1834)

—— *An Appeal from the Misrepresentations of James Hall, Respecting the History of Kentucky and the West* (Frankfort, KY: Albert G. Hodges, 1837)

Cass, Lewis, ‘Indians of North America’, *North American Review*, L [new series, XXV] (January 1826), 53-119

—— ‘Removal of the Indians’, *North American Review*, LXVI [new series, XLI] (January 1830), 62-121

Champlain, Samuel de, *The Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, trans. by Charles Pomeroy Otis, 3 vols (Boston: Prince Society, 1878-1882)

Chastellux, Marquis de, *Travels in North America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782*, ed. by Howard C. Rice, transl. by George Grieve, 2 vols (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963)

Chetwood, William Rufus, *The Voyages, Dangerous Adventures and Imminent Escapes of Captain Richard Falconer: Containing the Laws, Customs, and Manners of the Indians in America; his Shipwrecks; his Marrying an Indian Wife; his narrow Escape from the Island of Dominico, & c.* (London: 1720)

Child, Lydia Maria, *Hobomok & Other Writings on Indians*, ed. by Carolyn L. Karcher (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986)

Columbus, Christopher, *The Four Voyages of Columbus*, trans. and ed. by Cecil Jane, (New York: Dover, 1988)

Cooper, James Fenimore, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, ed. by Wayne Franklin (New York: Penguin, 1997)

——— *The Pioneers; or the Sources of the Susquehanna*, ed. by James Franklin Beard and others (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980)

——— *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative Of 1757*, ed. by James Franklin Beard and others (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983)

——— *The Prairie; A Tale*, ed. by James P. Elliott (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985)

——— *The Pathfinder; or, The Inland Sea*, ed. by Richard D. Rust, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981)

——— *The Deerslayer; or, The First War-Path*, ed. by James Franklin Beard and others (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987)

——— *The Pilot; A Tale of the Sea*, ed. by Kay Seymour House (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986)

——— *Wyandotté; or, The Hutted Knoll*, ed. by Thomas and Marianne Philbrick (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982)

——— *Notions of the Americans, Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor*, ed. by Gary Williams (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991)

——— *The American Democrat*, ed. by George Dekker and Larry Johnston (Harmondsworth: Pelican/Penguin, 1969)

——— *A Letter to His Countrymen* (New York: John Wiley, 1834)

Crèvecoeur, J. Hector St John De, *Letters from an American Farmer*, ed. by Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Davis, John, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America, during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801 and 1802* (London: R. Edwards, 1803)

- Defoe, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985)
- Dickinson, John, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies* (Boston: Mein & Fleemin, 1768)
- Duyckinck, Evert A., 'Mr Cooper', in *Arcturus, A Journal of Books and Opinion*, ed. by Cornelius Matthews and Evert A. Duyckinck (New York: Benjamin G. Trevelt, 1841), I, 90-92
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, *The Portable Emerson*, ed. by Carl Bode and Malcolm Cowley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981)
- Filson, John, *The Discovery, Settlement and Present State of Kentucke* (Wilmington: James Adams, 1784)  
—— *Filson's Kentucke: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Original Wilmington Edition of 1784*, ed. by Willard Rouse Jillson (Louisville, KY: Morton, 1930)
- Flint, Timothy, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years Passed in Occasional Residences and Journeyings in the Valley of the Mississippi* (Boston: Cummings/Hilliard, 1826)  
—— *A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, or the Mississippi Valley*, 2 vols, (Cincinnati: E.H. Flint, 1828)  
—— *Indian Wars of the West* (Cincinnati: E.H. Flint, 1833)  
—— *The Shoshonee Valley* (Cincinnati: E.H. Flint, 1830)
- Franklin, Benjamin, *The Autobiography and Other Writings*, ed. by Kenneth Silverman (New York: Penguin, 1986)  
—— *Selected Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 3 vols (London: Pickering, 1996)
- Freneau, Philip, and Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Rising Glory Of America: Being Part Of A Dialogue Pronounced On A Public Occasion*, extracted from *The American Poetry Full-Text Database* published by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
- Godwin, William, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. by Richard Holmes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) [with *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* by Mary Wollstonecraft]
- Hall, James, *Letters from the West; Containing Sketches of Scenery, Manners, and Customs* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828)  
—— *Legends of the West* (Philadelphia: Key & Biddle, 1833)  
—— *Kentucky. A Tale*, 2 vols (London: A.K. Newman, 1834)  
—— *Tales of the Border* (Philadelphia: Harrison Hall, 1835)  
—— *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the West*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Harrison Hall, 1835)



- Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist* (London: Phoenix, 2000), ed. by William R. Brock
- *Report of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States on the Subject of Manufactures. Presented to the House of Representatives, December 5, 1791* (London: J. Debrett, 1793)
- *Letters. Industrial and Commercial Correspondence of Alexander Hamilton Anticipating his Report on Manufactures*, ed. Arthur Harrison Cole (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968)
- Hariot, Thomas, *A Brief And True Report Of The New Found Land Of Virginia, in Narrative of the First English Plantation of Virginia* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893)
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The House of the Seven Gables*, ed. by Milton R. Stern (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986)
- Heckewelder, John, *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians, from its commencement in the year 1740 to the close of the year 1808*, ed. by William E. Connelley (Cleveland, OH: Burrows, 1907)
- Hentz, Nicholas Marcellus, *Tadeuskund, The Last King of the Lenape* (Boston: Cummings/Hilliard, 1825)
- Hoffman, Charles Fenno, *A Winter in the Far West*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1835)
- Imlay, Gilbert, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America, &c.* (London: J. Debrett, 1792)
- *The Emigrants*, ed. by W.M. Verhoeven and Amanda Gilroy (Middlesex: Penguin, 1998)
- *Observations du Capt. Imlay*, in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, I (1896), 953-4
- *Mémoire sur la Louisiane*, in *American Historical Review*, III (April, 1898), 505
- Irving, Washington, *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, ed. by Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
- 'Traits of Indian Character', *Analectic Magazine*, 3 (February 1814), 145-156
- Jefferson, Thomas, *Writings*, ed. by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984)
- *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Viking Penguin, 1975)
- Lawrence, D.H., *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971)

- Lee, Richard Henry, *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, ed. by James Curtis Ballagh, 2 vols (New York: MacMillan, 1914)
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. by C.J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970)
- Mather, Cotton, *Humiliations Follow'd with Deliverances. A Brief Discourse on the Matter and Method, of that Humiliation which would be an Hopeful Symptom of our Deliverance from Calamity. Accompanied and Accommodated with a Narrative, of a Notable Deliverance Lately Received by Some English Captives, from the Hands of Cruel Indians* (Boston: Green & Allen, 1697)
- Melville, Herman, *Moby-Dick*, ed. by Tony Tanner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)
- *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade*, ed. by Hershell Parker (New York: Norton, 1971)
- Milton, John, 'A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle' ['Comus'], in *John Milton*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Monroe, James, *The Writings of James Monroe*, ed. by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, 7 vols (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1898-1903)
- Montaigne, Michel De, *Essays*, trans. by J.M. Cohen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993)
- Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, Baron de, *The Spirit of the Laws [De l'esprit des lois]*, trans. and ed. by Anne M. Cohler and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- Morton, Sarah Wentworth, *Ouâbi; Or the Virtues of Nature* (Boston: I. Thomas & E.T. Andrews, 1790)
- Neal, John, *Logan; A Family History* (London: A.K. Newman, 1823)
- Paine, Thomas, *Common Sense*, ed. by Isaack Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976)
- Panther, Abraham (pseud.), *A Surprising account of the Discovery of a lady who was taken by the Indians in the year 1777, and after making her escape, she retired to a lonely Cave, where she lived nine years* ['The Panther Captivity'], in *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, ed. by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), 81-90
- Paulding, James Kirke, 'The Adventures of Henry Bird', *Analectic Magazine*, VI (October 1815), 295-301
- *The Backwoodsman: A Poem*, (Philadelphia: M. Thomas, 1818)

- ‘National Literature’ in *Salmagundi, Second Series* (revised), II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 265-272 [first publ. as ‘The Wreck of Genius’ in *Salmagundi, Second Series* (1819-1820), III, 264-288]
- *Koningsmarke, The Long Finne: A Story of the New World*, ed. by Daniel Wells (Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1988)
- *The Lion of the West: Retitled The Kentuckian, or A Trip to New York*, revised by John Augustus Stone and William Boyle Bernard, ed. by James N. Tidwell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954)
- *The Dutchman’s Fireside: A Tale*, 2 vols, (New York: Harpers, 1831)
- *Westward Ho!: A Tale* (1832), 2 vols, (New York: Harpers, 1832)
- *Slavery in the United States* (New York: Harpers, 1836)
- *The Letters of James Kirke Paulding*, ed. by Ralph M. Aderman, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962)
- Poe, Edgar Allan, ‘Review of *Wyandotté*’ in *Graham’s Magazine*, XXIV (November 1843), 5: 261-264
- Raynal, Guillaume Thomas, *A Philosophical and Political History of the British Settlements and Trade in North America, from the French of Abbé Raynal* (Edinburgh: C. MacFarquhar, 1776)
- Rush, Benjamin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, ed. by George W. Corner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948)
- *Essays, Literary, Moral & Philosophical* (Philadelphia: Thomas & Samuel F. Bradford, 1798)
- *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. by L.H. Butterfield, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951)
- ‘On Animal Life’ in *Benjamin Rush’s Lectures on the Mind*, ed. by Eric T. Carlson and others (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981)
- Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe, *A Narrative of an Expedition Through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake, The Actual Source of this River* (New York: Harpers, 1834)
- Scott, Walter, *Waverley*, ed. by Andrew Hook (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986)
- *The Pirate* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles, 1871)
- Sedgwick, Catharine Maria, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. by Carolyn Karcher (Middlesex: Penguin, 1998)
- Simms, William Gilmore, *The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina*, ed. by Joseph V. Ridgely (New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1964)
- ‘Indian Sketch’ in *The Writings of William Gilmore Simms, Centennial Edition*, v, ‘Stories and Tales’, ed. by John Caldwell Guilds (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1974), 1-9
- *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, ed. by Mary C. Simms Oliphant and others, 5 vols (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952-1982)

— *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction, First Series*, ed. by C. Hugh Holman (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1962)

Smith, John, *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*, in *The Complete Works of John Smith (1580-1631)*, ed. by Philip L. Barbour, 3 vols (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986)

Stone, John Augustus, *Metamora*, in *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Barret H. Clark (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943)

Symmes, John Cleves, *The Correspondence of John Cleves Symmes*, ed. by Beverley W. Bond, Jr (New York: Macmillan, 1926)

Trollope, Frances, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. by Pamela Neville-Sington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997)

Washington, George, *The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799*, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, 4 vols (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925)

— *The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1931-44)

Webster, Noah, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn (New York: S. Converse, 1830)

Williams, William Carlos, *In the American Grain* (New York: New Directions, 1956)

Winter, John, ed., *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Massy Harbison from Indian Barbarity, Giving an account of her captivity, the murder of her two children, her escape, with an infant at her breast, communicated by herself* (Beaver: Wm. Henry, 1836)

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, ed. by Richard Holmes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) [with *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by William Godwin]

## SECONDARY SOURCES

Althusser, Louis, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, transl. by Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971)

Ambrose, Stephen E., *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

Appleby, Joyce Oldham, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984)

- *Without Resolution: The Jeffersonian Tensions in American Nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
- *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)
- Axelrod, Alan, *Charles Brockden Brown: An American Tale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983)
- Bailyn, Bernard, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage, 1970)
- *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1992)
- Bakker, Jan, 'The Pastoral Pessimism of William Gilmore Simms', *Studies in American Fiction*, 11:1 (Spring 1983), 81-90
- Barnett, Louise K, *The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790-1890* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975)
- Beer, Gillian, *The Romance* (London: Methuen, 1970)
- Bell, Michael Davitt, *The Development of American Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)
- Bercovitch, Sacvan, and Myra Jehlen, eds, *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- Billington, Ray Allen, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, (New York: Macmillan, 1974)
- ed., *The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History?* (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger, 1977)
- Bird, Mary Mayer, *The Life of Robert Montgomery Bird, by His Wife Mary Mayer Bird*, ed. by C. Seymour Thompson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library, 1945)
- Boime, Albert, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting c. 1830-1865* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991)
- Bradfield, Scott, *Dreaming Revolution: Transgression in the Development of the American Romance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993)
- Brandon, William, *New Worlds for Old: Reports from the New World and their Effect on the Development of Social Thought in Europe, 1500-1800* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1986)
- Brown, Stuart Gerry, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Twayne, 1967)

- Brown, Thomas, *Politics and Statesmanship: Essays on the American Whig Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)
- Bryant, James C., 'The Fallen World in *Nick of the Woods*', in *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism and Bibliography*, 38: 352-364
- Buck, Solon J., and Elizabeth Hawthorn Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939)
- Budick, Emily Miller, *Fiction and Historical Consciousness: The American Romance Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)
- Bush, Clive, *The Dream of Reason: American Consciousness and Cultural Achievement from Independence to the Civil War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977)
- Cawelti, John G., 'Cooper and the Frontier Myth and Anti-Myth,' in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Historical and Literary Contexts*, ed. by W.M. Verhoeven (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 1993)
- Cayton, Andrew R.L., and Frederika J. Teute, eds, *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)
- Cecil, L. Moffitt, 'Symbolic Pattern in The Yemassee', *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, 35 (1964), 510-514
- Chaden, Caryn, 'Dress and Undress in Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*', *Early American Literature*, 26:1 (1991), 55-72
- Charvat, William, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870: The Papers of William Charvat*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968)
- *The Origins of American Critical Thought, 1810-1835* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936)
- Chase, Richard, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (London: G. Bell, 1958),
- Clark, Barret H., ed., *Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943)
- Clark, David Lee, *Charles Brockden Brown: Pioneer Voice of America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1952)
- Clark, Robert, *History, Ideology and Myth in American Fiction, 1823-52* (London: Macmillan, 1984)

- Cole, Jr, Charles C., 'Brockden Brown and the Jefferson Administration,' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 72:3 (July 1948), 253-263
- Cole, Charles W., 'Jeremy Belknap: Pioneer Nationalist' in *New England Quarterly*, 10 (1937), 743-51
- Conway, Moncure, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols (New York: Putnam, 1892)
- Crowley, John E., *The Privileges of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
- Dahl, Curtis, *Robert Montgomery Bird* (New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1963)
- Davidson, Cathy N., *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- Davis, James E., *Frontier America, 1800-1840: A Comparative Demographic Analysis of the Settlement Process* (Glendale, CA: H.H Clark, 1977)
- Dekker, George, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Novelist* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967)
- and John P. McWilliams, eds, *James Fenimore Cooper: The Critical Heritage*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1973)
- Derounian-Stodola, Kathryn Zabelle, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998)
- DeVoto, Bernard, ed., *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (Boston: Mariner, 1997)
- Dollimore, Jonathan, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984)
- Downs, Paul, 'Constitutional Secrets: *Memoirs of Carwin* and the Politics of Concealment', *Criticism*, 39:1 (Winter 1997), 89-117
- Dunlap, William, *The Life of Charles Brockden Brown: Together with Selections from the Rarest of his Printed Works, from his Original Letters, and from his Manuscripts Never Before Published*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1815)
- Elkins, Stanley and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- Elliot, Emory, *Revolutionary Writers: Literature and Authority in the New Republic, 1725-1810* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982)

- Ellis, Joseph J., *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York: Norton, 1979)
- Ellison, Julie, 'Race and Sensibility in the Early Republic: Ann Eliza Bleecker and Sarah Wentworth Morton' in *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, 65:3 (Sept. 1993), 445-74
- Emerson, Oliver Farrar, 'Notes on Gilbert Imlay, Early American Writer', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 39 (1924), 406-39
- Engell, John, 'Brackenridge, *Modern Chivalry* and Humor' in *Early American Literature*, 22 (1987), 43-61
- Feer, Robert A., 'Shays's Rebellion and the Constitution: A Study in Causation', in *The Formation and Ratification of the Constitution: Major Historical Interpretations*, ed. by Kermit L. Hall (New York: Garland, 1987), 159-181
- Fender, Stephen, 'American Landscape and the Figure of Anticipation: Paradox and Recourse', in *Views of American Landscape*, ed. by Mick Gidley and Robert Lawson-Peebles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- Ferguson, Robert A., *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)  
——— *Law and Letters in American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984)
- Fisher, Philip, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)
- Fliegelman, Jay, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)  
——— *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993)
- Folsom, James King, *Timothy Flint* (New York: Twayne, 1965)
- Foust, Clement E., *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (New York: Knickerbocker, 1919)
- Franklin, Wayne, *The New World of James Fenimore Cooper* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982)
- Friedman, Lawrence J., *Inventors of the Promised Land* (New York: Knopf, 1975)
- Frye, Steven, 'Simms's *The Yemassee*, American Progressivism, and the Dialogue of History', *Southern Quarterly*, 35:3 (Spring 1997), 83-89



Fussell, Edwin, *Frontier: American Literature and the American West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965)

Gardner, Jared, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787-1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

Garraty, John A., and Mark C. Carnes, eds, *American National Biography*, 24 vols, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Gates, Paul Wallace, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960)

Gendron, Dennis, 'A Source for Simms's *The Yemassee*', *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, 48 (1976), 368-370

Gidley, Mick, and Robert Lawson-Peebles, eds, *Views of American Landscapes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

— and Robert Lawson-Peebles, eds, *Modern American Landscapes* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995)

Gilmore, Michael T., *American Romanticism and the Market Place* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)

— 'Eighteenth Century Oppositional Ideology and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*', *Early American Literature*, 13 (1978), 181-92

Gould, Philip, *Covenant and Republic: Historical Romance and the Politics of Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Grabo, Norman S., *The Coincidental Art of Charles Brockden Brown* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981)

— 'Ideology and the Early American Frontier', in *Early American Literature*, 22:3 (1987), 274-290

Gross, Robert A., *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993)

Guilds, John Caldwell, ed., *Long Years of Neglect: The Work and Reputation of William Gilmore Simms* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 1988)

— *Simms: A Literary Life* (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 1992)

— and Caroline Collins, eds, *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997)

— 'Simms's Use of History: Theory and Practice', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 30 (1977), 505-511

- Häberlein, Mark, 'Contesting the "Middle Ground": Indian-White Relations in the Early American Republic', in *The Construction and Contestation of American Cultures and Identities in the Early National Period*, ed. by Udo J. Hebel (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, C. Winter, 1999), 1-23
- Haims, Lynn, 'Of Indians and Irishmen: A Note on Brackenridge's Use of Sources for Satire in *Modern Chivalry*', *Early American Literature*, 10 (1975), 88-92
- Hale, William Harlan, *Horace Greeley, Voice of the People* (New York: Harpers, 1950)
- Hall, Joan Joffe, 'Nick of the Woods: An Interpretation of the American Wilderness', in *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism and Biography*, 35 (1963), 173-182
- Hall, Kermit L., ed., *The Formation and Ratification of the Constitution: Major Historical Interpretations* (New York: Garland, 1987)
- Hart, James D., *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950)
- Herold, Amos. L., *James Kirke Paulding, Versatile American* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926)
- Heyne, Eric, ed., *Desert, Garden, Margin, Range: Literature on the American Frontier* (New York: Twayne, 1992)
- Holman, C. Hugh, *The Roots of Southern Writing* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972)
- Hoppenstand, Gary, 'Justified Bloodshed: Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* and the Origins of the Vigilante Hero in American Literature and Culture', in *Journal of American Culture*, 15:2 (Summer 1992), 51-61
- Hsu, Huan L., 'Democratic Expansionism in "Memoirs of Carwin"' in *Early American Literature*, 35:2 (2000), 137-156
- Jehlen, Myra, and Michael Warner, eds, *The English Literatures of America, 1500-1800* (New York: Routledge, 1997)
- Keiser, Albert, *The Indian in American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933)
- Kelsall, Malcolm, *Jefferson and the Iconography of Romanticism: Folk, Land, Culture and the Romantic Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999)

- Kibler, James E., 'The First Simms Letters: "Letters from the West" (1826)', *Southern Literary Journal*, 19:2 (Spring 1987), 81-91
- Kirsch, George B., 'Jeremy Belknap: Man of Letters in the Young Republic', *New England Quarterly*, 54 (March 1981), 33-53
- Kolodny, Annette, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975)
- "'Stript, shorne and made deformed": Images of the Southern Landscape', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 75 (1976), 55-73
- 'Turning the Lens on "The Panther Captivity": A Feminist Exercise in Practical Criticism' in *Critical Inquiry*, 8:2 (Winter 1981), 329-345
- *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984)
- 'Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions: Notes Towards a New Literary History of the American Frontiers', in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy N. Davidson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 9-26
- Lawson-Peebles, Robert, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- Lee, A. Robert, and W.M. Verhoeven, eds, *Making America/Making American Literature: Franklin to Cooper* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996)
- Levernier, James A., and Douglas R. Wilmes, eds, *American Writers Before 1800: A Biographical and Critical Dictionary*, 3 vols (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983)
- Lienesch, Michael, 'Reinterpreting Rebellion: The Influence of Shays's Rebellion on American Political Thought', in *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion*, ed. by Robert A. Gross (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 161-182
- Lunde, Erik S., *Horace Greeley* (Boston: Twayne, 1981)
- MacDonald, Gary, 'Manly Beauty and Southern Heroism: The Example of William Gilmore Simms', *Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South*, 37:3-4 (1999 Spring-Summer), 266-76
- McHaney, Thomas L., 'William Gilmore Simms' in *The Chief Glory of Every People: Essays on Classic American Literature*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), 173-190
- McWilliams, John P., *Political Justice in a Republic: James Fenimore Cooper's America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972)

- Maddox, Lucy, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- Marder, Daniel, *Hugh Henry Brackenridge* (Boston: Twayne, 1967)  
——, ed., *A Hugh Henry Brackenridge Reader, 1770-1815* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970)
- Martin, Wendy, 'On the road with the philosopher and the profiteer: a study of Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 4:3 (Spring 1971), 241-256  
—— 'The rogue and the rational man: Hugh Henry Brackenridge's study of a con man in *Modern Chivalry*', *Early American Fiction*, 8:2 (Fall 1973), 179-192
- Marx, Leo, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964)  
—— *The American Revolution and the American Landscape* (Washington DC: Oxford University Press, 1975)
- Mevers, Frank C., 'Jeremy Belknap', in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. by Clyde N. Wilson (Detroit: Brucoli Clark, 1984), xxx, 30-33
- Miller, John C., *The Federalist Era, 1789-1801* (New York: Harpers, 1960)
- Miller, Lee, ed., *From the Heart: Voices of the American Indian* (London: Pimlico, 1995)
- Miller, Perry, ed., *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry* (New York: Anchor, 1956)
- Moore, J. Quitman, 'William Gilmore Simms', *De Bow's Review*, 29 [old series], 4:6 [new series] (December 1860), 702-712
- Mulford, Carla, 'What is the Early American Canon, and Who Said it Needed Expanding?' in *Resources for American Literary Studies*, 19 (1993), 165-173
- Namias, June, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993)
- Nance, William L., 'Satiric Elements in Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 9 (1967-1968), 381-389
- Nash, Roderick, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973)
- Newlin, Claude M., *The Life and Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Mamaroneck, NY: Paul Appel, 1971)

- O'Brien, Conor Cruise, *The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, 1785-1800* (London: Pimlico, 1998)
- O'Donnell, Thomas, 'Koningsmarke: Paulding vs. Scott in 1823', in *American Transcendental Quarterly*, 24: 1 (Fall 1974), 10-17
- Ogburn, Jr, Floyd, 'Structure and Meaning in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*', *Early American Literature*, 15:2 (Fall 1980), 141-150
- Olson, Lester C., *Emblems of American Community in the Revolutionary Era: A Study in Rhetorical Iconology* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian, 1991)
- Onuf, Peter S., 'Liberty, development and union: visions of the West in the 1780s', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3, series 43, no.2 (April 1986), 179-213
- Owens, Louis D., 'James Kirke Paulding and the Foundation of American Realism', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (Autumn 1975), 40-50
- Parker, Patricia, *Charles Brockden Brown: A Reference Guide* (Boston: Hall, 1980)
- Patterson, Mark R., 'Representation in Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 28:2 (Summer 1986), 121-139
- Patterson, Stephen E., 'The Federalist Reaction to Shays's Rebellion', in *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion*, ed. by Robert A. Gross (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 101-118
- Paul, Charles Kegan, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols (London: 1876)
- Pearce, Roy Harvey, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988)
- Peck, H. Daniel, 'James Fenimore Cooper and the Writers of the Frontier', in *Columbia Literary History of the United States*, ed. by Emory Elliott (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 240-261
- Peden, William, 'Thomas Jefferson and Charles Brockden Brown', *Maryland Quarterly*, 2 (1944), 65-68
- Person, Leland S., Jr., 'James Kirke Paulding: Myth and the Middle Ground', *Western American Literature*, 16:1 (Spring 1981), 39-54
- Petter, Henri, *The Early American Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971)

- Pitcher, Edward W. R., *Fiction in American Magazines Before 1800* (Schenectady, NY: College Union Press, 1993)
- Prucha, Francis Paul, *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975)  
— *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984)  
— *The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969)
- Quinn, Arthur Hobson, *A History of the American Drama* (New York: Harpers, 1923)  
— *American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1936)
- Ratner, Lorman, *James Kirke Paulding: The Last Republican* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992)
- Remini, Robert V., *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, condensed edn (New York: Penguin, 1990)  
— *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on Democracy, Indian Removal and Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988)
- Rennie, Neil, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995)
- Reynolds, Larry J., *James Kirke Paulding* (Boston: Twayne, 1984)
- Rice, Grantland S., 'Modern Chivalry and the Resistance to Textual Authority', *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, 67:2 (June 1995), 257-81
- Richards, Jeffrey H., ed., *Early American Drama* (New York: Penguin, 1997)
- Ridgely, J.V., *William Gilmore Simms* (New York: Twayne, 1962)
- Ringe, Donald A., *James Fenimore Cooper* (Boston: Twayne, 1962)  
— *Charles Brockden Brown* (Boston: Twayne, 1991)
- Rogin, Michael Paul, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975)
- Rombes, Nicholas, 'Cheating with Sound: Imagining Civic Culture in Federalist America', *Arizona Quarterly* 54:4 (Winter 1998), 1-24  
— 'Dark Reflections: Terrors of the Enlightenment in Early American Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1994)

- Romero, Lora, 'Vanishing Americans: Gender, Empire and New Historicism' in *Subjects and Citizens: Nation, Race and Gender from Oroonoko to Anita Hill*, ed. by Michael Moon and Cathy N. Davidson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 87-105
- Rose, Alan Henry, *Demonic Vision: Racial Fantasy and Southern Fiction* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976)
- Rosenthal, Bernard, *Critical Essays on Charles Brockden Brown* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1981)
- Rubin, Louis D., Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study of the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989)
- 'The Romance of the Colonial Frontier: Simms, Cooper, the Indians, and the Wilderness', in *American Letters and the Historical Consciousness: Essays in Honour of Lewis P. Simpson*, ed. by J. Gerald Kennedy and Daniel Mark Fogel (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 112-134
- Rusk, Ralph Leslie, 'The Adventures of Gilbert Imlay,' *Indiana University Studies*, 10, study 57 (Mar. 1923)
- Sanderson, James, 'Agrarianism in Hugh Henry Brackenridge's Articles in *The Pittsburgh Gazette*', *Early American Literature*, 22:3 (1987), 306-319
- Satz, Ronald N., *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975)
- Schultz, Lucille M., 'Uncovering the Significance of the Animal Imagery in *Modern Chivalry*: an Application of Scottish Common Sense Realism', *Early American Literature*, 14:3 (Winter 1979/80), 306-311
- Schulze, Suzanne, *Horace Greeley: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992)
- Seelye, John, 'The Jacobin Mode in Early American Fiction: Gilbert Imlay's *The Emigrants*' in *Early American Literature*, 22:2 (Fall 1987), 204-212
- *Beautiful Machine: Rivers and the Republican Plan, 1755-1825* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991)
- *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977)
- Shaner, Richard C., 'Simms and the Noble Savage', *American Transcendental Quarterly: Journal of New England Writers*, 30:1 (1976), 18-22
- Sharp, James Roger, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

- Sheehan, Bernard W., *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980)
- Shelton, Austin J., 'African Realistic Commentary on Culture Hierarchy and Racist Sentimentalism in *The Yemassee*', *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture*, 25 (1964), 72-78
- Silverman, Kenneth, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976)
- Slaughter, Thomas P., *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- Slotkin, Richard, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1973)  
— *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985)
- Smith, Henry Nash, *Virgin Land: The American West As Symbol and Myth* (New York: Vintage Books, 1950)
- Spiller, Robert E., ed., *The American Literary Revolution, 1783-1837* (New York: New York University Press, 1969)
- Sumner, William Graham, *Andrew Jackson as a Public Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882)
- Sunshine, Kathleen, *Early American Literature and the Call of the Wild: Nature, the Indian and the Woodsman in Fiction* (New York: Garland, 1987)
- Taylor, Alan, 'Regulators and White Indians: The Agrarian Resistance in Post-Revolutionary New England', in *In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion*, ed. by Robert A. Gross (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 145-160
- Thornton, Russell, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987)
- Toles, George, 'Charting the Hidden Landscape: Edgar Huntly', *Early American Literature*, 16 (Fall 1981), 133-53
- Tompkins, Jane, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)
- Turner, Frederick Jackson, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1953)



- *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (New York: Harpers, 1906)
- VanDerBeets, Richard, ed., *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973)
- Verhoeven, W.M., ed., *Rewriting the Dream: Reflections on the Changing American Literary Canon* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 1992)
- Wakelyn, Jon L., *The Politics of a Literary Man: William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973)
- Wallace, Anthony F.C., *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999)
- *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993)
- Waples, Dorothy M., *The Whig Myth of James Fenimore Cooper* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938)
- Warner, Michael, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990)
- Watson, Charles S., *From Nationalism to Secessionism: The Changing Fiction of William Gilmore Simms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993)
- 'A New Approach to Simms: Imagery and Meaning in *The Yemassee*', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 26 (1973) 155-163
- Watson, Harry L., *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noonday, 1990)
- Watts, Edward, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998)
- Watts, Stephen, *Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)
- *The Romance of Real Life: Charles Brockden Brown and the Origins of American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994)
- Weidman, Bette S., 'White Men's Red Man: A Penitential Reading of Four American Novels', *Modern Language Studies*, 4:2 (1974), 14-26
- Wertheimer, Eric, 'Commencement Ceremonies: History and Identity in "The Rising Glory of America," 1771 and 1786', *Early American Literature*, 29 (1994), 35-58
- Whittle, Amberys R., 'Modern Chivalry: The Frontier as Crucible', *Early American Literature*, 6 (1971), 263-70

Williams, Daniel, "'Wolves in Sheep's Clothing': Ministerial Deception and the Manipulation of Belief in Early America', *Publications of the Mississippi Philological Association* (1988), 169-181

Wilson, Clyde N., 'John C. Calhoun', in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. by Joel Myerson (Detroit: Brucoli Clark, 1979), III, 44-55

Wimsatt, Mary Ann, *The Major Fiction of William Gilmore Simms: Cultural Traditions and Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989)

Winston, Robert P., 'Paulding's *The Dutchman's Fireside* and the Early American Romance', in *Studies in American Fiction* 11:1 (Spring 1981), 47-59

Wood, Gordon S., *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969)

——— *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991)