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### Recommended Citation

Frost, Linda () ""Living Curiosities" and "The Wonder of America": The Primitive, the Freakish, and the Construction of National Identities in Civil-War America," *Journal X*: Vol. 1 : No. 1 , Article 7.  
Available at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jx/vol1/iss1/7>

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## "Living Curiosities" and "The Wonder of America": The Primitive, the Freakish, and the Construction of National Identities in Civil-War America

Linda Frost

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In their westward march across the American continent, in the van of a higher civilization, the native red men have, at different times, given sad and fearful evidences of their enmity to the dominant white race; . . . no exhibition of Indian character had so afflicted and appalled the soul of humanity, as the fearful and deliberate massacre perpetrated by them in August, 1862.

—Charles S. Bryant, *A History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota*

Mr. Barnum has indeed found out that the Sioux and Winnebago Indians are the most consistent friends of the white men, for they have consented to sacrifice still another week of their home comforts, and the pleasures of their happy hunting grounds to comply with the demands of the public for their prolonged stay. The Museum is crowded to overflowing, night and day, to witness their performances.

—*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 24 October 1863

D—n Indians *anyhow*. They are a lazy, shiftless set of brutes — though they will *draw*.

—P. T. Barnum, letter to Moses Kimball, 26 September 1843

Four years before the Harper brothers were to launch their highly successful *Harper's Weekly*, entrepreneur P. T. Barnum recognized the financial potential of periodical publishing. Joining forces with *New York*

*Sun* editors H. D. and Alfred E. Beach and engaging Frank Leslie as his chief engraver, Barnum kicked off his short-lived publishing experiment with the first number of the revived *Illustrated News* in 1853.<sup>1</sup> The initial editorial address stated that “there was never a better field for such an enterprise than New York. . . . More than any other city in the world, New York is the center of intellectual as well as industrial and commercial activity, and it is in almost every essential the metropolis of this entire continent” (1 Jan. 1853; 6). By the time the second number of the paper appeared, the editors had revised the focus of their intended readership. While selecting New York as their “centre,” the editors carefully explain that they “wish to be understood as speaking to every part of America where the English language is spoken. We aim at a *national* undertaking, and are happy that as far as time and steam have permitted us to judge the success of an experiment, it has been nationally responded to” (8 Jan. 1853; 1). As if to concretize this emphasis on the paper’s nationalist project, this number of the *News* includes a series of engravings illustrating the ongoing construction of the Capitol building and the Washington Monument.

Barnum’s attempt to create a “*national* undertaking” in his newspaper illustrates the potential power these popular texts harbored, not only as money-makers for their ambitious owners and editors but as participants in the process of configuring their readers as Americans. Overlapping institutions of popular culture, such as Barnum’s version of the freak show, likewise inadvertently participated in this endeavor of identifying the definitive properties of “Americanness,” concretizing in imagery an abstract ideological construction. Such a project relies upon discourses of exclusion; Benedict Anderson has argued that a nation is ideologically created by the imagining of a community that draws clear boundaries as to who *cannot* claim membership in it.<sup>2</sup> Anderson claims that the nation consists of a community that is “imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6); a community *imagined* because its members will, for the most part, never know or meet one another and one that is also *limited* because even the largest nation “encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind” (7). The nation is “imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.” In the early years of the Civil War in America, not long after the initial proliferation of popular periodicals like Barnum’s *Illustrated News* and the institutionalization of Barnum’s freak show, this imagining depended heavily, if not primarily, upon a discourse of savagery and the primitive. How this discourse was used, however, depended largely upon what community was being imagined. At this particular historical moment, there was no single notion of a United States of America but several competing claims to American nationality and sovereignty.

As June Namias explains, rather than one United States, the Civil War and Dakota Wars occurring in the West in the early 1860s could have resulted in “three and maybe more nations: the United States of America, the Confeder-

ate States of America, and perhaps the Confederate Indian Lands of America" (218). Regionally, then, the idea of the "nation" had often conflicting, if overlapping meanings in relation to the country at large. By looking at the events covered during 1862 and 1863 — in this case, the Civil War and the Dakota Wars — I want to chart the mobility of this discourse of the primitive to see how it is used in different regions to accomplish quite different national and ideological goals. Although all remain concerned with the definition of some kind of American identity, different regions "primitivize" different "others" for specific yet different national agendas. While the Sioux of the western plains were the primary image of the "savage" for white settlers and government officials in Minnesota during the Dakota uprisings, for the New York press, primarily concerned with a costly, drawn out, and bloody division of the United States, the Southern Confederate took on the attributes of savagery. And for an entrepreneur like P. T. Barnum, the community of most concern was defined not only by race but by marketplace, a community with the risk-taking businessman at its head, offering for the community's consumption a primitive force that only a master of the market could control.

The primitive has been and perhaps remains the most powerful and consistent strain in America's imperialist discourse. The positioning of the African American or the Native American as primitive and anthropologically stunted plants these figures firmly at the beginning of narratives of evolution that, according to popular myth, were already over. As Marianna Torgovnick points out, the primitive acts as a narrative that establishes "definable beginnings and endings that will make what comes between them coherent narrations" (245). Explorers' narratives pepper the pages of weeklies like Barnum's *Illustrated News*, and stories such as those about the "discovery" of "missing link" tribes relied on their white readers' fascination with an evolutionary model that affirmed their own racial superiority. Depicting primitives as either bestial, cannibalistic monsters or ignorant, naive children, conveniently positioned them at the beginning of the story of Western civilization. This use of narrative aided in the construction of the nation as an ideological entity and a political community. Étienne Balibar contends that "the history of nations . . . is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject" (338). Narratives of civilization are foundational to the stories comprising these competing versions of America.

The narrative of Western progress in particular was a common one in the weeklies. An 1851 image from *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* emphasizes the familiar story of frontier expansion. Entitled "Progress of Civilization," the scene — which is meant to be read from left to right — features on the far left two warriors paddling a canoe underneath a Native American village. In the center, a farm and a church form the background against which two well-dressed white men distribute books to tribal members and gesture to the far right of the picture, where a train, factories, and steam-powered ships chug toward a future as yet hidden from the reader beyond the right edge of the image. The text reads as follows:

The white man meets the Indian in council, takes him by the hand . . . and points out to him the improvements of the civilized life. . . . By degrees,



the log cabin rises and takes the place of the rude tent of skin. . . . [G]rounds are cleared and fenced in. . . . Factories spring up . . . cities [are] founded, and those modern accessories to civilization, and improvement in all things, the steamboat and the railroad, bring us in our imagination to the present time. (19 April 1851; 28)

The *story* of progress highlighted by this writer was likewise employed in the projects of other cultural agents including P. T. Barnum. An 1873 “Advance Courier” advertisement for Barnum’s “Great Traveling World’s Fair,” a portable version of his American Museum, includes a picture of the burning of the Museum in 1868 with Barnum rising godlike from the smoky flames, one hand extended to offer “The World in Contribution” to the paying customer. This world includes human curiosities like those pictured throughout the image: Siamese twins, dwarves, and cannibals as well as Native Americans. Like “civilization” itself, Barnum’s progress is made possible by that technological triumph, the steam engine, which is appropriately pictured near the center of the engraving.<sup>3</sup>

The primitive as a source of entertainment value and exotica was absolutely crucial to the discourse of the popular freak show. Freak presentation, because of its emphasis on and exploitation of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences, reaffirmed Euro-American audience members’ notions of who “belonged” to the “civilized” community of America and who did not. Freak shows themselves emerged from the museum tradition that gained momentum in the nineteenth century, with displays featuring the pseudo-scientific exhibition of “curiosities” that included not only such human oddities as legless men and bearded women but artifacts of cultural and social significance as well: paintings, inventions, stuffed exotic animals, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> P. T. Barnum founded the American Museum in New York in 1840, and Robert Bogdan credits this as the start date of the freak show as an institutionalized form of popular entertainment, thanks in part to Barnum’s central role in the creation of it (2).<sup>5</sup> The freak as an exhibit was a construction, a figure wrapped in cultural myth and story. Freaks were almost always shown within the context of a narrative; a showman typically related the story of how they came to be in the museum and sold souvenir chapbooks that contained the freak’s “history.” There was then no such thing as a *real* freak; by virtue of their carefully plotted representation, freaks were/are always constructed.

A late-nineteenth-century article pasted into one fan’s scrapbook, that of Nathaniel Paine of Worcester, Massachusetts, illustrates the understanding showmen and audiences shared: “A little pot-bellied negro boy, with a pointed head, and short, crooked arms and legs, would not draw more than a passing glance in the usual order of things. Call him the Turtle Boy, and he becomes a freak. People like to stare at him and trace the combination of the boy and turtle, which the genius of the showman has suggested.”<sup>6</sup> This description could almost accompany another image in Paine’s text, a *carte de visite* of an African-American boy labeled in handwriting (presumably Paine’s) simply “Nondescript” — “a commonly used phrase [in the nineteenth century] for animals not yet classified or described by science” (Bogdan 136). Draped in what appears

to be a bear hide, the little boy rests his abnormally shortened arms on a rock, the setting for the portrait simulating a meadow complete with grass, rocks, and painted tree background (see fig. 1). Despite the child's obvious physical deformity, his status as a "freak" results less from the deformity itself than from the way in which that deformity is represented, couched in trappings of the primitive: the piece of fur he wears, the outdoor setting of the studio, and the "on-all-fours" position that his four shortened limbs appear to necessitate. This is even more apparent with another of Paine's postcards, titled simply "Man With Claws," which shows a long-haired young man (dressed also in fur) whose long, curled fingernails are the only things that set him physically apart from members of the audience.

In fact, not only the primitivization but the bestialization of human exhibits was a mainstay in freak representation. "Krao, the Missing Link," "Susie, the elephant girl," and "Jo-Jo, the Dog-Faced Boy" are all examples of this practice, which "posited that certain malformations were the result of crossbreeding man with beast" (Bogdan 106). This literalization of the animalistic quality of primitive freak exhibits evidenced the fascination — as well as the culturally sanctioned revulsion — that white middle-class Americans had for miscegenation. Such bestialization of "savage" performers also confirmed and expanded associations already existing in the culture regarding native, non-Western people and their shaky or simply non-human status. An 1860 Currier and Ives political lithograph features the freak, "What Is It?" (also known as "Zip the Pinhead") a microcephalic African-American man, William Henry Johnson, whom Barnum began exhibiting in 1860.<sup>7</sup> In an illustrated catalog to Barnum's American Museum, "What Is It?" is described as a blend of ape and man: "While his face, hands, and arms are distinctly human, his head, feet and legs are more like the Orang Outang [orangutan], indicating his mixed ancestry" (108).<sup>8</sup> The Currier and Ives cartoon uses this "nondescript" missing-link representation to satirize Republican support of African-American rights in the 1860 presidential campaign; entitled "An Heir to the Throne," the print features *New York Tribune* editor and abolitionist Horace Greeley and presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln standing behind the "What Is It?" figure, extolling *his* virtues as a presidential candidate (see fig. 2). Barnum's narrative of primitiveness surrounding the constructed "What Is It?" freak exhibit relies not only on the color of Johnson's skin but on specific racist ideologies circulating in the culture about the "animal" nature of the African and African-American slave. The Currier and Ives piece also shows how such an exhibit, and all its attendant meanings, is put to overt political use, here by Northern opponents of Greeley/Lincoln "radicalism." Freaks were often popular — and therefore profitable — because their representation both reinforced racist attitudes and ethnocentric distinctions upheld by white Americans and underscored the narrative of civilization and progress that maintained their position of privileged membership in that community. That representation, as always potentially dangerous and frequently sexualized, simultaneously served to titillate the white viewer.

About ten years after Barnum started the American Museum, a mid-century publishing boom catapulted the production and circulation of periodicals

like the *Illustrated News*. Historian Frank Luther Mott associates both the Compromise of 1850, which included a series of measures passed to appease both proslavery and antislavery proponents, thus causing the intensification of the debate over slavery overall, and the 1852 Post Office Act, which reduced postal rates and revised the relationship between subscriber and publisher, with this “beginning of a new era in the history of American magazines” (3). Throughout the mid-century, periodical types and titles proliferated as they never had before. Women’s magazines like *Godey’s Lady Book*, abolitionist papers like William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator*, story papers like Robert Bonner’s enormously successful *New York Ledger*, family-oriented weeklies and miscellanies like *Harper’s Weekly* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, true-crime papers like the *National Police Gazette*, and even pornographic periodicals such as the scandalous *Venus Miscellany* provided Americans with a wide range of reading material. While varying markedly in content and quality, all of these publications shared one major aim: to reach the widest group of readers possible. And although they accomplished it in different ways, these texts likewise served an important ideological function: to create a community of readers described by ambitious editors like Barnum as national.

Ronald Zboray uses the term “fictive people” to refer to this kind of constructed community, indicating a trend toward “cultural coherence” reflected in the print culture of nineteenth-century America that was both a force in and product of the period’s rapid increase in industrialization.<sup>9</sup> Technological improvements in the printing process and supporting industries (like the railroad) that were responsible for dramatically propelling the distribution of print matter increased both the mass of printed materials and the possibility that they might find readers. These readers, inundated with reading material and geographically scattered due to the increased movement of Americans away from their home communities, found their experiences reflected in a somewhat hit-or-miss fashion in the variety of texts that lay before them. Zboray argues that while “these somewhat experimental practices of the reading public mitigated against the creation of a national literature . . . readers *had* to find their commonalities in literature that would sell the most copies” (189, 191). And while this search for self in the popular press may in part explain the rise in formulaic fiction that dominated the periodicals at this time, it does not explain the differing depictions of news events that varied from regional paper to regional paper; both the availability of information regarding an event and its relevance to that region’s audience determined its reportage.

How the papers were read and distributed also affected their roles as producers of national ideologies. Benedict Anderson argues that the newspaper was the primary vehicle of nation-building in the nineteenth century, given that newspapers contribute to an imagining of community via an imaginary and doubled sense of simultaneity. Anderson argues that newspaper readers are informed about the same set of events and circumstances, each at the same time — “each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs [of reading the paper] is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion” — and that these events themselves share a simultaneity of

existence due to their juxtaposed presentation on the page (35). It is this apparently random, yet typically meaningful juxtaposition that causes Anderson to liken reading a newspaper to "reading a novel whose author has abandoned any thought of a coherent plot" (33). But what Anderson describes as a joint and comprehensive attempt to create an imagined nationalized body of readers is a process complicated by the historical context of mid-century America, where different regions were attempting to conceive of themselves as different kinds of Americas. Readers at this time were *not* necessarily reading the same materials at the same times, but they were often reading regional versions of events that placed emphasis on those accounts that had particular relevance for that area.<sup>10</sup>

The nation-building narrative of "progress" as an evolutionary path taken by humanity from primitiveness to civilization varied between regions; these varying narratives are highlighted in the mastheads of the periodicals catering to different regions. The New York-based *Harper's Weekly* masthead establishes a sense of an intellectual, upper-class environment to which the reader is assumed to belong or at least aspire. A painting palette, an inkwell, and a lyre illustrate the refined, artistic nature of the paper while a telescope, a globe, a compass, and an open book indicate its scholarly and scientific dimensions. Between the words *Harper's* and *Weekly*, one hand passes the light of knowledge to another while the words *Journal of Civilization* form a gently curving arc bridging the two collections of images. As *Harper's Weekly's* masthead professes the journal to be an organ of civilization, so its lead article in the inaugural issue argues that the Union itself (which should, according to the article, be maintained at almost any cost and certainly the cost of compromise over slavery) is a manifestation of the same, "only another name for freedom, progress, and civilization" (3 Jan. 1857; 1). Anything outside the boundaries and margins of that Union consequently belongs to that which is not civilized — to the primitive and savage. What we see here is the most common form of othering during this mid-century period: those who belong are civilized and those who do not are primitive, inferior to the "active, intelligent, free citizens" who have voted for a continued compromise in the organization of the American states. In quite a different vein but still relying on the primitive, the masthead of the flagship Western publication, the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, shows an industrious, smoke-pumping town in the middle of the wilderness as seen by a voyeuristic (and clearly covetous) Indian through a hole in the forest foliage.

Other periodicals use their mastheads directly to emphasize the nationalistic interests they represent. New York's *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* highlights its Yankee status, the letters of its masthead running over, under, and through a precisely centered, majestic drawing of the country's Capitol Building.<sup>11</sup> The *Southern Illustrated News*, a Confederate organ commencing in September 1862 in Richmond, arches the letters of its title, dripping with Spanish moss, over a scene of Confederate tranquility: a war memorial with a mounted soldier on the upper pedestal occupies the image's center while a riverboat pumps steam over a marshy Southern river lined by plantation mansions. The war memorial functions in several ways. While paying tribute to the war currently being fought, it permits itself to be read as a memorial, indicating to the

Southern reader the paper's optimism that the war will soon be over and the Confederacy openly recognized. It also draws attention to the part that the very act of making war played in the Confederacy's process of building its own national image, the war itself being, as one writer for the *Southern Illustrated News* emphasizes elsewhere, what will literally and figuratively consolidate the Confederacy as a separate nation.<sup>12</sup> These images indicate a variety of national scenes with which these American publications struggled: a nation that had come into being not yet a hundred years before, a nation striving for autonomy and sovereignty, and a nation that was transporting itself into the so-called western frontier. The mastheads illustrate the tensions at work in the potential or — in the case of the South at least — attempted division of the United States at large.

In the middle of the Civil War, in August of 1862, war broke out on another front, in the newly admitted western state of Minnesota. The tribes of the Dakota, having been systematically cheated by Indian agents and traders out of their tribal annuities and subsequently starved, rose up against the white settlers whom they recognized as largely responsible for their misery. The tribe was led by Little Crow, a generally conciliatory leader who favored peace and compliance with white ways and laws but who, when approached by the younger warriors of the Dakota, agreed to lead his people into battle. The conflict began when one brave seeking food dared another to steal eggs from a white farmer; his companion claimed he would show his courage by shooting the whites of the farm. Fighting continued throughout the summer, leading to the deaths of hundreds of whites and Dakota, the imprisonment of some three hundred warriors, and the largest formal execution in US history when thirty-eight Dakota men were hanged the day after Christmas in 1862.<sup>13</sup>

Coverage of this conflict varied between regions. The sensational nature of the uprising certainly caught the attention of many northeastern papers, but it also provided an opportunity for affirming the white, Euro-American identity of the periodical's readership. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* ran a half-page engraving on the cover of its October 25, 1862 edition depicting a murdered family: two women and one man lie on the ground, victims of what the caption calls the "Indian Outrages in the North-West," with the most gruesome detail being a naked infant skewered to a tree (1). The caption reads, "An American Family Murdered by the Sioux Indians, in a Grove Near New Ulm, Minnesota," highlighting the need for readers to identify with the victims and to perceive the attack as an act of war against the entire American community, not only those living in the West. In this instance, then, the presentation of the primitive serves to strengthen the national ties between northeastern and western readers and to eclipse the national otherness of the citizens of New Ulm — a primarily German settlement — with the racial difference of the Sioux.

Despite such "sympathetic" reports, though, the western press generally believed that its eastern counterpart was much too forgiving of the Dakota's actions (this stemmed mostly from the eastern press's attempts to open up the question of possible white wrongdoing as an origin for the trouble). In fact, in 1864, Charles S. Bryant and Abel B. Murch co-authored their *History of the Great Massacre by the Sioux Indians, in Minnesota, Including the Personal Narra-*

*tives of Many Who Escaped* in part as an attempt to counter the calls for sympathy the Dakota had supposedly received in the eastern press. Bryant and Murch discount that any of the Sioux-sympathetic causes proposed for the conflict are correct; the "antecedent exciting causes of this massacre" are listed, but according to Bryant and Murch, each theorist is "satisfied that the great massacre of August 1862 had its origin in some way intimately connected with his favorite theory, and were the question raised, What was the cause of the great Southern rebellion? the answers would be perhaps quite as various" (46). By begging the question, Bryant and Murch draw attention to the different wars being fought in America at the time and to the different nations fighting to win them. Nevertheless, *this* war, unlike that going on between the North and South, does contain a primary cause which the authors then reveal:

Let us, for a moment, look at the facts in relation to the two races who have come into close contact with each other, and, in the light of these facts, judge of the probable cause of this fearful collision. . . . The white race stood upon this undeveloped continent ready and willing to execute the Divine injunction, to replenish the earth and SUBDUE it. The savage races in possession, either refused or imperfectly obeyed this first law of the Creator. On the one side stood the white race in the command of God, armed with his law; on the other, the savage, resisting the execution of that law. The result could not be evaded by any human device. God's laws will ever triumph, even through the imperfect instrumentality of human agency. In the case before us, the Indian races were in the wrongful possession of a continent required by the superior right of the white man. This right, founded in the wisdom of God, eliminated by the ever-operative law of progress, will continue to assert its dominion, with varying success, contingent on the use of means employed, until all opposition is hushed in the perfect reign of the superior aggressive principle. (48-9)

The quotation on the text's cover page is thus fitting for its authors' purpose: "For that which is unclean by nature thou canst entertain no hope; no washing will turn the Gipsy white" (1). Bryant and Murch rehearse the prevailing racist belief that, given the dictates of Manifest Destiny, only God can or should alter the movement of white Euro-Americans into the western territories and homelands of the native tribes. In the end, then, for these writers, there is no analogy between the war in the South and the war in the West, for the western war is propelled by an act of God, a divinely sanctioned process reliant upon skin color — "on the one side stood the white race in the command of God, armed with his law [to replenish the earth and SUBDUE it]; on the other, the savage, resisting the execution of that law" (48-9).

The weekly *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat* covered the Dakota Wars with clear intent: it highlighted the Sioux threat to future white settlement of Minnesota in order to reclaim those men called to fight in the war with the Confederacy, and thus to replenish the state's dwindling reserve of white fighters. The press, in order to affirm that there was as great a need for an American military presence in the West as there was in the South, emphasized the dan-

ger posed by the Sioux not only to the settlers of the region but to the idea of America overall; this was effected largely by feminizing America “herself,” a common move in nationalist rhetoric. The western press drew a portrait of Dakota “savagery” that linked the vulnerability of the region with the vulnerability of its white women, who were depicted as representatives of American morality and purity.<sup>14</sup> Over three hundred Sioux warriors were taken captive after the August battles, and the Minnesota press registered the locals’ desire to hang them all. In the rhetorical exchange between Minnesota legislators and the White House regarding the fate of the Sioux prisoners, allegations of rape — murderous gang rape — of white women emerged as the most common “evidence” of the Sioux’s savagery. Governor Alexander Ramsey in a September speech to the Minnesota House and Senate detailed the destruction in terms of “infants hewn into bloody chips of flesh, or nailed alive to door posts” as well as of “rape joined to murder in one awful tragedy, young girls, even children of tender years, outraged by their brutal ravishers till death ended their shame” (12 Sept. 1862; 5). In its December 20, 1862 edition, *Harper’s* printed a woodcut that was captioned, “Identification of Indian Murderers in Minnesota by a Boy Survivor of the Massacre”; in it a small white boy points his finger at a hulking darkened warrior whom the boy accuses of “the murder and outrage” of his mother and sisters (801). Despite the heightened emotional quality of this rape rhetoric, President Lincoln noted in his pardon of all but thirty-nine of the warriors that after “careful examination of the records of the trials,” he could find only two seemingly valid accounts of rape (*New York Tribune* 20 Dec. 1862; 3).

Nevertheless, the Euro-American settlers and government of Minnesota wanted brutal retribution. Lieutenant Governor Ignatius Donnelly wrote that “with prompt action [the Sioux] can be exterminated or driven beyond the State line, and the State once more placed on such a footing that she can, with some prospect of success, invite immigration . . . There should be no restoring of the Sioux to their old status . . . [T]hey must disappear or be exterminated” (*St. Paul Pioneer* 5 Sept. 1862; 1). In his speech to a joint Minnesota House and Senate meeting, Governor Ramsey described the “outrages” of the war, highlighting the need to establish definitive boundaries for the nation that was being carved out of the region — social as well as geographic boundaries — and reinforcing the *lack* of boundaries observed by the Dakota, a lack that here signals a missing morality on which the idea of a “civilized” America depends:

Our course then is plain. The Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the *borders* of the state. . . . They have themselves made their annihilation an imperative social necessity. Faithless to solemn treaty obligations, to old friendships, to the ties of blood, regardless even of self interest when it conflicts with their savage passions, incapable of honor or of truth or gratitude; amenable to no law; *bound* by no moral or social restraints — they have already destroyed in one monstrous act of perfidy every pledge on which it was possible to found a hope of mutual reconciliation. (*St. Paul Pioneer* 14.13, 12 September 1862, 5; emphasis added)

No mention is made, of course, of the agents' thieving of the Dakota's promised annuities for the land they "sold" to the United States government, just as no mention is made of the government's attempts to destroy tribal unity by economically and ideologically undermining their religious and cultural beliefs and practices. The political rhetoric of Minnesota's white government relies on nineteenth-century conceptions of the primitive and the savage to outline the limits of national membership. While it is, according to Governor Ramsey, the Dakota's "savage passions" that make it impossible "to found a hope of mutual reconciliation," it is in fact the representation of those same "passions" that make possible the definition of a group to whom the Dakota would finally be forced to submit.

White western officials needed to keep the fires of the Indian wars burning in order to insure continued financial and material support from the federal government. One October *St. Paul Pioneer* editorial reads, "We are surprised, pained, even alarmed, to find the idea gaining ground in many circles that this war is over. . . . This war is not alone with the Sioux of the Mississippi; it is a war of the white race against the brutal, inhuman savages that infest the country between the Mississippi and the Pacific" (31 Oct. 1862; 6). But the fact that writers and legislators had to assert, in such powerful terms, the ongoing threat posed by this "infestation" of native peoples may indicate the perceived fragility of and ambivalence toward that threat in the minds of the American public at large. Reports of the execution invariably included this emotionally charged and even sympathetic description: "The most touching scene on the drop was their attempts to grasp each other's hands, fettered as they were. . . . We were informed by those who understand the language, that their singing and shouting was only to sustain each other — that there was nothing defiant in their last moments, and that no 'death-song,' strictly speaking, was chanted on the gallows. Each one shouted his own name, and called on the name of his friend, saying, in substance, 'I'm here! I'm here!'" (Bryant and Murch 477). The execution was itself pictorially depicted in both *Harper's Weekly* and *Leslie's Illustrated* (see fig. 3). The representation literalizes the containment of the Dakota favored by the whites of Minnesota: perfect squares of militia and townspeople surround the central structure, indicating not only the vastly more numerous representatives of the white race in this space of supposedly endangered whiteness but their apparent ability to surround and strike down those who threaten them. The city buildings of Mankato, Minnesota, site of the execution, form the scene's background, and it is a significantly more "civilized" scene than one might expect, given the sensational descriptions of the West that have preceded its appearance.

In the periodicals of the Northeast, though, the savage as a rhetorical category extends beyond the warring Dakota to include the Confederate, even while it continues to draw on popular ideas regarding the Indians themselves. When it received coverage in *Harper's Weekly*, the Dakota uprising was presented in such a way as to link the western drama with that of the war being played out in the South. The first mention of the uprising occurred on September 6, 1862, and on September 13, 1862, a cartoon (fig. 4) showing Indians fighting alongside Confederates appeared with a caption described as extracted



from “JEFF DAVIS’s last message” that will supposedly “serve to explain the News from Minnesota”: “I am happy to inform you that, in spite . . . of . . . threats, used in profusion by the agents of the government of the United States, the Indian nations within the confederacy have remained firm in their loyalty and steadfast in the observance of their treaty engagements with this government” (13 Sept. 1862; 592). The connection between Confederate savage and Indian savage is here brought powerfully to the fore as the Confederacy’s president supposedly affirms the tribal allegiance to the Southern nation-in-waiting, an allegiance underscored by an illustration of the most recent acts of “barbarism” committed by the most savage of American savages, the Sioux. In these instances, *Harper’s* reiterates the theme that those who contest the Union (which, as I noted above, was described in the *Weekly’s* first issue as simply another name for civilization itself) must be savages, primitives opposed to the construction of a higher civil/social order.

During the years 1862 and 1863, the primitive was the discourse of choice for northeastern periodicals representing the Confederates; in one specific instance, it also served to represent those who supported the Confederacy.<sup>15</sup> A woodcut appearing in the February 15, 1862 issue of *Harper’s Weekly* bears the intentionally ironic title, “BRITISH CIVILIZATION’ — HOW THE ENGLISH TREAT PRISONERS OF WAR — BLOWING SEPOYS FROM GUNS IN INDIA, 1857.” Four prisoners, their arms tied to the sides of cannons, are about to be executed as rows of British soldiers fill the surrounding hillside and background. The description explains that

the execution was a dreadful sight. . . . [A] prisoner was bound to each gun — his back placed against the muzzle, and his arms fastened firmly to the wheels. . . . The discharge, of course, cuts the body in two; and human trunks, heads, legs, and arms may be seen for an instant flying about in all directions. As there were only 10 guns used on this occasion [and forty prisoners to execute], the mutilated remains had to be removed four times.  
(109)

The editors note that the illustration originally appeared in 1857 but that, since “the circumstances of the case bear some analogy to those which are recurring at the present time in our Southern States,” the image has been reprinted. Of course, the two situations differ — “the natives of British India[,] whose grounds of discontent with their Government, unlike those of the Southern rebels, were substantial and grievous, rose in arms to strike for their freedom” (109) — so while the situations *seem* to be analogous, the writer makes it clear that the claims of the Southerners are not justifiable, unlike those of their rebellious counterparts in the East. The real attack here, however, is aimed at the British, who by way of this ghastly image are portrayed as barbarians, effectively neutralizing Britain’s protest of the Union’s blockade against the Confederacy: “In connection with the British protests against the stone blockade, on the ground of humanity, these reminiscences are instructive” (110). Calling the British barbaric in war serves to counter British assertions that the Yankee blockade of the South was barbaric. The image is further juxtaposed with that

of a recaptured runaway slave, his neck locked into a collar with three foot-long prongs extending from it. The engraving bears the title, "Instrument of Torture Used by Slaveholders," again literalizing by way of illustration who is calling whom "uncivilized."

The theme of the savage Confederate is developed further in other issues of *Harper's Weekly*. John Morgan's Raiders merit two large woodcuts in the same months that the Euro-American settlers of Minnesota were fighting the Dakota in the West. This simultaneity allows for a kind of rhetorical exchange or borrowing of imagery; the depictions of Morgan's "Highwaymen" in *Harper's Weekly* utilize a range of images most commonly found in captivity narratives. In these engravings, the men riding with Morgan swing Yankee infants by their feet to crush their skulls against trees and buildings; similarly, Mary Rowlandson had described Native American braves murdering infants by "knocking" them on the head in her prototypical captivity narrative. Confederate guerrillas torture and brutalize children and animals by shooting at or around them, and lascivious Raiders lead women with downturned faces suggestively away. One description accompanying an engraving appearing on August 30, 1862, entitled, "John Morgan's Highwaymen Sacking a Peaceful Village in the West," states the following:

The bond which unites members of a guerrilla band together is love of plunder, lust, and violence. War, as carried on by *civilized* armies, has no attractions for them. . . . Such God forsaken wretches can not be found anywhere in the world out of the Feejee Islands and the Southern Slave States. (555; emphasis added).

This writer calls upon the reader's popular conception of the inhabitant of the "Feejee Islands" to complete this image of the savage Confederate; in the popular imagination of the period, the Fiji Islands constitute the primary global site of cannibal activity — cannibals being, as Torgovnick points out, a mainstay of primitive and savage representation.<sup>16</sup> In 1872, thirty years after Barnum had exhibited his first "Cannibal Chief" at the American Museum and more than forty years after the first South Pacific cannibal had appeared anywhere on display in the American museum circuit, four "Fiji Cannibals" appeared in Barnum's Great Traveling Exhibition, "savages" supposedly captured during a raid by a Christianized Fiji king (Bogdan 179-80).

The savagery associated with cannibalism appears in other forms in Northern depictions of the Confederate. A few months earlier, *Harper's* had published a report in its "Domestic Intelligence" column titled, "Our Wounded and Dead Scalped and Mangled." Drawing on a letter written by S. R. Curtis, Brigadier-General, the report states that "the General regrets that we find on the battle-field, contrary to *civilized* warfare, many of the Federal dead who were tomahawked, scalped, and their bodies shamefully mangled, and expressed a hope that this important struggle may not degenerate to a *savage* warfare" (29 March 1862; 195; emphasis added). While such a letter points to Confederate-Native American alliances and conflates the "savagery" of Indians with the "savagery" of Rebel soldiers, reports of more shocking Confederate behavior are

reflected in cartoons like one that appeared in *Harper's*: products of "Secesh Industry" cover the page like artifacts in museum cases, items such as a goblet made from a "Yankee's skull," paperweights made out of Northern soldiers' jawbones, furs stitched from scalps and beards, hair-pieces and necklaces made out of Union teeth, and a doorbell handle constructed from the skeleton of a Union soldier's hand (7 June 1862; 368). *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* ran a similar cartoon a month earlier called "The Rebel Lady's Boudoir" (see fig. 5). The featured room is a study in Yankee skulls, one resting under a bell jar on a table built out of the leg bones of a dead Union soldier, another fashioning a teakettle and matching cup, and yet another lending authenticity to a skull-and-crossbones wall hanging. The ironically demure "Rebel Lady" placidly reads a letter as her baby plays with his very own Yankee skull. The caption, supposedly taken from the "Report of the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War," is telling:

The outrages upon the dead will revive the recollections of the cruelties to which savage tribes subject their prisoners. They were buried in many cases naked, with their faces downward. They were left to decay in the open air, *their bones being carried off as trophies*, sometimes, as the testimony proves, to be used as personal adornments, *and one witness deliberately avers that the head of one of our most gallant officers was cut off by a Secessionist, to be turned into a drinking-cup on the occasion of his marriage.* (17 May 1862; 64)

Here the Northern press writer grafts the popular conception of Indian savagery and primitivism onto the figure of the Confederate soldier; just as the "savage tribes" have used their enemies' body parts for trophies or left them "to decay in the open air," so the Southern male — a *white* male at that — has similarly used those of his Yankee opponent. In his letter to "my dearest wife," the Confederate soldier responsible for furnishing the Rebel boudoir says that he is "about to add . . . to your collection . . . a baby-rattle for our little pet, made out of the ribs of a Yankee drummer-boy" (64).

The northeastern popular press did not neglect to point out the so-called primitive nature of other, more commonly primitivized groups (Native Americans, Africans, African Americans, and so on). Rather, it extended this classification, primitivizing the figure who most immediately — and dangerously — threatened the definition of nationality most relevant to its region. Even without the visible markers of race and pronounced cultural difference, the northeastern press managed to "other" the Confederate by way of primitivizing discourse. A physical threat to those living in the Northern states, the Confederate was depicted as threatening the very concept of civilized humanity, a concept for which, as *Harper's* had already proclaimed, the Union undeniably and singly stood. Although the African-American slave was often represented as infantile and primitive, the Confederate soldier was thought to endanger the civilized boundaries of American citizenry as only the "savage" Sioux of the western plains could. What is most ironic about these representations, however, is how *little* they rely on the barbarism of the Southern slavery system to prove the barbarism of the Southern slaveholder. Confederates were usually

seen as savage *not* because they perpetuated the enslavement and debasement of other human beings but because they threatened the physical well-being and the national identity of the Union soldier.

The savage as a rhetorical strategy, as I have shown, was used by a range of communities to benefit their individual causes and strengthen the sense of each community's borders overall. The western press highlighted the savage nature of the Dakota in order to regain military, financial, and public support for the ongoing and increasingly hostile movement of Euro-Americans into native lands. The Northern press used the savage in part to echo these conclusions — conclusions that had a more immediate effect and relevance in the West than they did in the East — but moreover extended the domain of the savage to include the Confederate him- *and* herself. But the savage for the likes of P. T. Barnum was valuable in an even more local and individualized way. Savage discourse as Barnum used it made him a monetary profit; it did so because he showed not only how "truly" savage the Indian was but how effectively that "savagery" could be contained by the skillful and courageous white showman. Barnum relied upon this rhetoric to build a sense of intrigue and danger that, in turn, created a spectacle worth paying for. Like the writers, illustrators, and editors responsible for the depiction of the "savage" Indian in the popular press, Barnum commodified Native Americans to effect his own purpose. Using the racist rhetoric available to him, Barnum appropriated primitive and savage discourses to construct a community over which he represented himself as having singular control. Rather than a national or regionalized community, however, Barnum constructed a capitalist hierarchy in his freak exhibitions of Native Americans, a paternalistic and economic relationship that positioned him as the leader of a group he further defined by using the primitive and savage discourses already in place as markers of national identity.

In 1843, almost twenty years before the Dakota uprising, Barnum brought what he called simply "a band of Indians from Iowa" to perform war dances in the American Museum's Lecture Room. In his autobiography, he notes that the dances seem to be considered by the Native Americans as "realities" rather than entertainments and claims that "when they gave a real War Dance, it was dangerous for any parties, except their manager and interpreter, to be on the stage" (*Barnum's Own* 126). Lydia Maria Child, who attended one such performance at the Museum, described it as "terrific to both eye and ear," saying that she "looked at the door, to see if escape were easy" (189). She claims that she "was never before so much struck with the animalism of Indian character," and she backs up her observations with appropriate metaphors: "Their gestures were as furious as wildcats, they howled like wolves, screamed like prairie dogs, and tramped like buffaloes" (189).<sup>17</sup>

Beyond emphasizing the reality of the performance itself, Barnum's strategy for showing the Indians was simultaneously to heighten and to contain the "danger" they posed. He used a rope to draw a physical barrier between the dancing warriors and audience members, and interpreters and managers to "handle" the natives much as a circus tamer handles big cats. In all cases, Barnum represented himself, the white show man, as completely in control of the Native Americans' movement. Twenty years after Child visited the Museum,

Barnum again exhibited a group of ten or so chiefs there. In his autobiography he recounted his introduction of Yellow Bear from the Kiowas, saying that he called the chief “probably the meanest, black-hearted rascal that lives in the far West. . . . He has tortured to death poor, unprotected women, murdered their husbands, brained their helpless little ones; and he would gladly do the same to you or to me, if he thought he could escape punishment” (*Barnum’s Own* 334-5). During this introduction, however, Barnum would pat Yellow Bear “familiarily upon the shoulder, which always caused him to look up to me with a pleasant smile, while he softly stroked down my arm with his right hand in the most loving manner” (334). Barnum here depicts himself as shaping the audience’s experience of Yellow Bear by positioning him within a specific narrative and by maintaining control of that narrative, speaking a language to which Yellow Bear does not apparently have access. Barnum therefore emphasizes his control of this “black-hearted rascal” by exploiting both halves of the monster/child binary, telling the story of Yellow Bear’s barbarism while making him look like a docile, not-very-bright child. But not only the Native Americans are rhetorically contained in Barnum’s exhibition of them; his audience as well sits within his theater, passively consuming the commodified oddities Barnum feeds them.

Barnum featured Sioux chiefs and their songs and dances again at the Museum during the winter of 1863, following the execution of the thirty-eight Sioux warriors in Mankato. During this several-month period, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* ran news accounts of ongoing Sioux attacks in Minnesota simultaneously with informal advertisements for Barnum’s shows in an entertainment/gossip column called “The Idler About Town.” While on the one hand highlighting the danger that the Sioux continued to pose to white western settlers — “Towns are still building stockades and block houses for refuge, and prowling bands of Indians steal and murder constantly” (5 Sept. 1863; 373) — *Leslie’s* “Idler” column also depicted the chiefs in Barnum’s employ as “wild children of Nature” whose “songs and dances are among the most curious exhibitions we ever witnessed” (12 Sept. 1863; 399), and who again according to the “Idler” deserve to be called “the most consistent friends of the white men” because they decided to extend their museum stay (24 Oct. 1863; 67). In an explanation of a November 14 woodcut, “Sioux Dancing the Scalp Dance,” a *Leslie’s* reporter remarked that having “a scene like this sent to an illustrated newspaper in the middle of the nineteenth century seems strange and more strange when it comes from within the borders of one of the States, and not from the yet unbroken wilderness. But the Sioux war is still raging” (125). Such coverage served not only to identify the nation emerging from the “yet unbroken wilderness” but also to amplify the fascinated fear that Barnum counted on to fill the seats of his lecture hall in the American Museum. This fear, of course, was not Barnum’s own. In fact, what Barnum thought and felt about the “savages” he displayed was apparently motivated by quite different forces than those brought out by *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*.

In a letter to Moses Kimball, proprietor of Boston’s version of the American Museum and a close friend, Barnum complained about the Native Americans who performed at the American Museum in 1843, “5 Indians, 2 squaws,

and a little [ʔpapoose] five or s[i]x years old" (*Selected Letters* 22). Given that Kimball was to be the next to show this group ("You may as [well] get your puffs preliminary in the papers," Barnum told him; "I [ʔthink] that I can let them leave here Saturday after[noon]"), Barnum related his own experiences with these supposedly savage "curiosities":

The lazy devils want to be *lying down* nearly all the time, and as it looks so bad for them to be lying about the Museum, I have them stretched out in the workshop all day, some of them occasionally strolling about the Museum. D—n Indians *anyhow*. They are a lazy, shiftless set of brutes — though they will *draw*. (*Selected Letters* 22)

Despite his "insider" position, Barnum clearly agreed with the general popular consensus that Native Americans are, as he put it, "brutes." But for Barnum, this was not a distinction that helped to separate Northerner from Southerner or even American pioneer from Indian savage; it was, rather, a distinction between a cooperative employee who works in tandem with his or her employer to attain market-driven goals, and a less complicitous worker who does not accept the market's — and therefore his capitalist employer's — goals as his or her own. It is, to say the least, ironic that for Barnum, conqueror and controller of these dangerous warriors, the biggest problem with Indians is that they "want to be *lying down* nearly all the time."

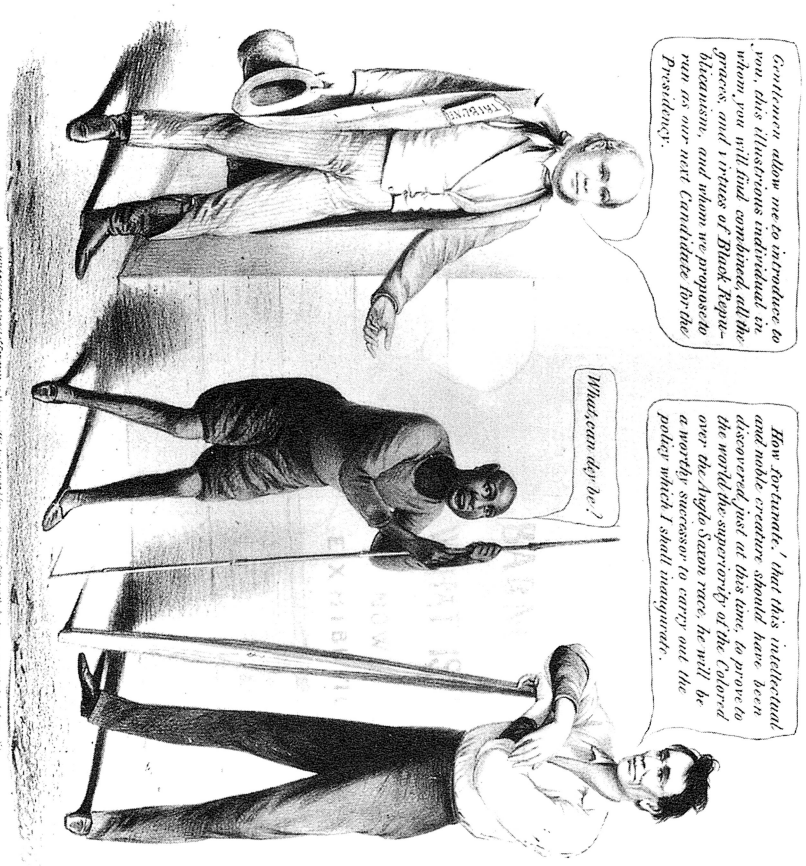
Whether the Sioux war was still raging or not, clearly it was in the best interests of a number of different groups to believe that it was. For the western press, continuation of the war meant maintaining public support for an organized move into Dakota lands that necessitated removal of the Dakota themselves to insure continuing white domination of the area; perpetuating the idea of an Indian threat to white settlers was the best argument western officials could make for increasing their share of military resources at a time when such resources were scarce indeed. In the northeast, however, where concentrated populations of potential soldiers were greater and the decisions regarding the war in the South were primarily being made, the Dakota conflict supplied the press with a fresh supply of imagery to delineate further whom and what Northerners were dying for in the South. If the Union was itself an actualization of civilization, then those who had taken a stand against it could only be uncivilized; to emphasize the threat of secession — in this scheme, literally a move away from civilization — it made sense to align the Confederate soldier imagistically with the raping-and-killing savage currently being recirculated as a result of the renewed conflict in Minnesota. For P. T. Barnum, savagery sold, as did the self-congratulatory sense of superiority that his largely white urban audience members saw reaffirmed on the stages of the American Museum. Behind the scenes, Barnum's creation of a community was less driven by nation-building — itself an economic issue driven by the rush to claim resources — than propelled by personal gain, but Barnum's appropriation of the rhetoric of nation-building tells us one thing very clearly: in order to be constructed, America had to be sold. As America's capitalist economy was beginning to take shape and companies competed for patrons, so the image of the

nation itself was appropriated by competing groups, each attempting to present a version of America that would bring its members the most resources, the most power, and the most legitimate claim to national membership.



Fig. 1. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society





Published by Currier & Ives

**AN HEIR TO THE THRONE,**  
OR THE NEXT REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE

1872. Currier & Ives

Fig. 2. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

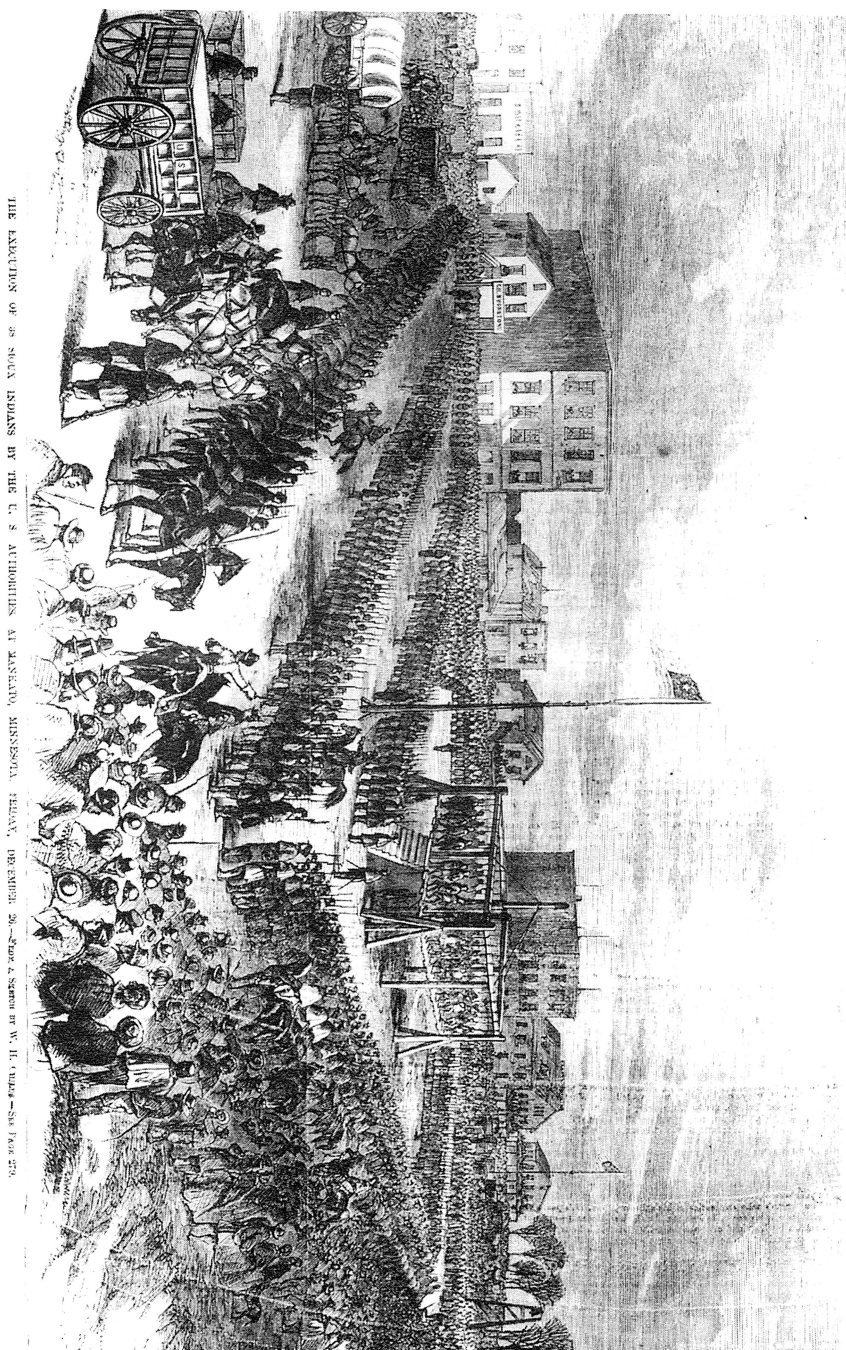


Fig. 3 Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society



Fig. 4. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society



"The outrages upon the dead will revive the recollections of the cruelties to which savage tribes subject their prisoners. They were buried in many cases naked, with their faces downward. They were left to decay in the open air, their bones being carried off as trophies, sometimes, as the testimony proves, to be used as personal adornments, and one witness deliberately avers that the head of one of our most gallant officers was cut off by a Secessionist, to be turned into a drinking-cup on the occasion of his marriage.

"Monstrous as this revelation may appear to be, your Committee have been informed that during the last two weeks the skull of a Union soldier has been exhibited in the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives which had been converted to such a purpose, and which had been found on the person of one of the rebel prisoners taken in a recent conflict."—*Report of the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War.*

THE REBEL LADY'S BOUDOIR.

LADY (reads)—"My dearest wife, I hope you have received all the little relics I have sent you from time to time. I am about to add something to your collection which I feel sure will please you—a baby-rattle for our little pet, made out of the ribs of a Yankee drummer-boy." &c., &c.

Fig. 5 Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society

## Notes

An early version of this essay was presented at the American Studies Association meeting in Boston, Massachusetts in November of 1993. The research for this project was funded in part by a Research Development Grant from the Pennsylvania State University, Wilkes-Barre and in part by *Journal x*. Thanks go to Marilyn Grush and Eddie Luster of the Mervyn H. Sterne Library at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, the staffs of the American Antiquarian Society — especially Georgia Barnhill, Joanne Chaison, Marie Lamoureux, and Eileen Rogers — and of the William Stanley Hoole Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama, and those colleagues and friends who offered both their criticism and support at various stages of this essay's composition: Deanna Calvert, Theresa Kemp, and the trusty members of the UAB Faculty Reading Group — Rebecca Bach, David Basilico, Amy Elias, Mark Jeffreys, and Scott and Nancy Miller.

1. Born Robert Carter, Leslie supervised the engraving department of the *London Illustrated News*, the model for most American illustrated newspapers, before coming to America. Leslie then worked for Frederick Gleason on one of the first illustrated weeklies in America, the Boston-based family miscellany *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*. After Barnum sold the *Illustrated News* to Gleason, Leslie went on to make his own publishing history with *Frank Leslie's Lady's Gazette of Fashion*, the first of what would be some fifty Frank Leslie titles. For more on Leslie, see Stern 180-9, and Mott 452-65.

2. See Balibar; Smith-Rosenberg; and B. Anderson for more on these ideas.

3. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

4. For an overview of the freak show's birth and decline as an American institution of popular entertainment, see Bogdan's landmark text, especially 25-68. See also Fiedler, and Thomson.

5. Barnum's success as a "humbug showman" of course skyrocketed with his management of the career of "General Tom Thumb." While Barnum briefly entertained himself with periodical publishing, his ties to the publishing community extended beyond his work with the *Illustrated News*. His hiring of Frank Leslie as chief engraver for the *News* and for the American Museum's catalog provided Leslie with a stepping stone to his own editorship of the successful and numerous Frank Leslie titles and probably accounts for the fairly frequent mention of current shows at Barnum's Museum in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.

6. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

7. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

8. Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.

9. Zboray argues that as publishers attempted to reach the widest group of readers possible, particularly in their publication and circulation of a fiction that was largely formulaic, readers "took on the role of creators themselves, adjusting and adapting the meanings of these new commodities, these books, to their own lives, at first in a very personal and local way, and later in partial conformance to the emergent national fictive identity. . . . These readers helped to

devise the symbolic forms and cultural practices that would allow for the construction of a national identity applicable to a diverse people scattered over an immense and varied landscape" (193, 194). By "fictive people," then, Zboray refers to both the fiction-reading public and the identity that emerged from that practice.

10. Moreover, while a reader in, say, Ohio may in fact have been reading the New York periodical *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, s/he may not have been doing so at the same time her or his New York counterpart would have been; often periodicals were circulated through the mail among family and friends, a practice that extended a periodical's network of readership and the time frame in which it might be consumed.

11. Leslie was not always a good Union man. Waiting to take a political stand in the North/South conflict until 1861, Leslie attempted to work both sides of the issue until it became impossible for him to continue to do so. See Mott 459.

12. In an extract reprinted from the *London Times*, it is noted that the British find the condition of the South "perilous" but that they remain "full of hope for the Southern people. Unrecognized, as it is, it has succeeded in making itself a nation" (*Southern Illustrated News*, 18 October 1862; 3). The Confederate writer of the piece expresses his or her pleasure that this supportive remark indicates that "whatever may be the issue to us, each and all, individually, of this unhappy war, we shall come out of it, *as a people*, if we are true to ourselves, with the respect of mankind" (4; emphasis added).

13. For a very general introduction to the Dakota Wars, see Schultz. Other sources include G. Anderson; Anderson and Woolworth; Brown; Bryant and Murch; Carley; Heard; Namias; Oehler; and Wakefield.

14. Smith-Rosenberg in her treatment of the Republican subject of the eighteenth century notes that "formal iconographic tradition . . . represented nations as women" ("Dis-Covering" 869); America was typically represented in European discourse as a naked Indian woman.

15. Oddly, the Confederate press does not seem to turn the primitive gaze back on its Northern opponents. Rather, relatively little mention is made of Northern activities outside of published Northern commentary about the South, its people and the Southern press; the "Yankee" principles by which Confederate children may be infected if they continue to consume Northern texts and philosophy; and, of course, limited reports on the war itself. More effort seems to go into an overt pronouncement of the ideals of the Confederacy itself, a construction that appears to stem as much from the proclamation of war as from a set of cultural assumptions regarding what constitutes Confederate nationality.

16. See Torgovnick 22 regarding cannibalism's role in primitivism, and Bogdan 179-87 for more on the "Fiji cannibals."

17. Karcher in her introduction to Child's novel *Hobomok* notes that, despite her early ignorance of American injustice to Native American peoples, Child's 1828 *The First Settlers of New-England* "launched a career of campaigning against Indian dispossession, crowned forty years later by her eloquent *Appeal for the Indians* (1868)" (xxxiii). Child disparages the spectacle that Bar-



num made of the Indians she saw at the Museum and in Letter 36 of *Letters from New-York* claims that

it always fills me with sadness to see Indians surrounded by the false environment of civilized life; but I never felt so deep a sadness, as I did in looking upon these western warriors; for they were evidently the noblest of their dwindling race, unused to restraint, accustomed to sleep beneath the stars. And here they were, set up for a two-shilling show, with monkeys, flamingoes, dancers, and buffoons! If they understood our modes of society well enough to be aware of their degraded position, they would doubtless quit it, with burning indignation at the insult. (187)

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